Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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7 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

7.1 Executive Summary

7.1.1 The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and record the potential effects that the Proposed Development will have on physical elements of the landscape; landscape character; areas that have been designated or otherwise identified for their scenic or landscape-related qualities; and views from various locations such as settlements, routes, tourism features and other sensitive locations. The potential cumulative effects that will arise from the addition of the Proposed Development to other wind farms are also considered.

7.1.2 The study area for the LVIA covers a radius of 45 km from the outer turbines in the Proposed Development. The assessment has shown that the effect on the landscape and visual resource of the great majority of this study area will be not significant, which means that the effect of the Proposed Development will not be one of the defining influences, and the existing characteristics of the landscape and views will continue to prevail. The assessment indicates that the Proposed Development will not significantly affect any national landscape planning designations and will not significantly affect local scenic designations with the exception of the Ben Wyvis SLA.

7.1.3 While the effect on the landscape and visual resource of the majority of the study area will be not significant, as described above, the LVIA has indicated that there is potential for the Proposed Development to result in some significant effects within the 20 km study area that has been defined for the detailed assessment. The LVIA has identified that there is potential for significant effects to arise as follows:

- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on the landscape character of the site and some parts of its surroundings up to a maximum of approximately 5.5 km away from the nearest turbine, including the following landscape character types (LCTs):
  - Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331);
  - Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330);
  - Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329);
  - Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341);
  - Strath - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 340);
  - Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335);
- localised intermittent significant effect on the Ben Wyvis SLA;
- significant effect on one of the Wild Land Qualities (WLQs) of Wild Land Area (WLA) 29, up to a maximum of approximately 5 km away from the Proposed Development;
- very intermittent significant effects on views from the settlements of Contin (as seen at Viewpoint 23) and Garve (as seen at Viewpoint 1), restricted to areas where there is a clear, open view with high visibility of the Proposed Development;
- intermittent significant effects on views from residential areas (that are not classified as settlements) around Gorstan (as seen at Viewpoint 2), Lochluichart (Viewpoint 27), Marybank (Viewpoint 10) and Tarvie (Viewpoint 3);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from several stretches of the A835, including in the vicinity of Contin (Viewpoint 23) and the south end of Loch Garve (Viewpoint 24);

- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from several stretches of the A832, including in the vicinity of Marybank (Viewpoint 10) and Torriegorrie (Viewpoint 28);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from several stretches of the Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line, including in the vicinity of Garve (Viewpoint 1), the south end of Loch Garve (Viewpoint 24) and Lochluichart (Viewpoint 27);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from paths (including core paths), up to a maximum of approximately 10 km away, where there is a clear, open view with high visibility of the Proposed Development, including:
    - core path at Loch Kinellan (Viewpoint 8);
    - core path at Knockfarrel (Viewpoint 11);
    - Peffery Way at Fodderty Cemetery (Viewpoint 12);
    - views from hilltops/walking destinations at:
    - Little Wyvis (Viewpoint 4);
    - An Cabar (Viewpoint 5); and
    - Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis) (Viewpoint 6).

7.1.4 As well as assessing the effect of the Proposed Development itself, the LVIA considers the cumulative effect that may arise when the Proposed Development is added to various scenarios of operational, under-construction, consented and application-stage wind farms. The 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 four viewpoints – Tarvie (Viewpoint 3), 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 (LCT 329), the Ben Wyvis SLA, and one of the WLQs of WLA 29.

7.1.5 The hours of darkness assessment has indicated that a significant effect is likely to arise from visible aviation lighting in the 200 candela (cd) scenario at the following locations:

- views from residential areas at Gorstan (as seen at Viewpoint 2) and Tarvie;
- views from hilltops/walking destinations at Little Wyvis and An Cabar (and an effect on WLA 29 at these locations);
- the core path at Loch Kinellan;
- intermittent/very intermittent effect on views gained by people travelling on the A835 between Garve (Viewpoint 1) and the south end of Loch Garve (Viewpoint 24) but not at these viewpoints;
- the view gained by people who have stopped in the layby on the A835 at Viewpoint 24;
- intermittent/very intermittent effect on views gained by people travelling on the A832 at and around Torriegorrie;
- very intermittent significant effects on views gained by people travelling on the Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line on the stretch between east of the Black Water bridge and west of Gorstan; and
- views from core paths up to approximately 5.5 km away from the Proposed Development.

7.1.6 This summary indicates that the Proposed Development will result in some significant effects, including hours of darkness effects, on aspects of the landscape and visual resource. It is important to note, however, that assessments of this type tend to focus on those locations and receptors where significant effects may arise. There are large parts of the 45 km study area where Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) diagrams show that there will be no visibility of the

wind farm at all or very limited visibility, and this should be taken into consideration in the review of significant effects of the Proposed Development.

7.2 Introduction

7.2.1 This chapter of the EIA Report contains the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for Carn Fearna Wind Farm (the Proposed Development). The LVIA considers the effects on the landscape and visual resource of the site and the wider study area, including effects on landscape elements, landscape character, wild land, views and visual amenity, and cumulative effects.

7.2.2 This LVIA has been prepared by landscape architects at SLR Consulting Limited, directed by James Welch FLI BA Hons, Chartered Landscape Architect.

7.2.3 This chapter is supported by the following Technical Appendices and Figures:

- Technical Appendix 7.1: LVIA Methodology;
- Technical Appendix 7.2: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment;
- Technical Appendix 7.3: Additional Wild Land Wirelines;
- Technical Appendix 7.4: Additional Cumulative Wirelines;
- Figures 7.1 – 7.15 plan figures (Volume 3a);
- Figures 7.16 – 7.48 Visualisations for Viewpoint 1 – Viewpoint 33 (following NatureScot standards) (Volume 3b); and
- Figures 7.49 – 7.81 Visualisations for Viewpoint 1 – Viewpoint 33 (following The Highland Council standards) (Volume 3c).

7.3 Legislation, Policy and Guidelines

7.3.1 The following guidance and information/data sources have been considered in the LVIA and the presentation of graphics:

- Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3).
- Landscape Institute (2019a). Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19.
- Landscape Institute (2019b). Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment.
- Landscape Institute (2024). Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01.
- NatureScot (2020/2023). Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas Technical Guidance Revised August 2023 to reflect NPF4.
- NatureScot (2021). Guidance - Assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of onshore wind energy developments.
- NatureScot (2024). Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment.
- Scottish Government (2023). National Planning Framework 4.
- SNH (June 2014). Map of Wild Land Areas.
- SNH (2017a). Description of Wild Land Areas.
- SNH (2017b). Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Version 3a.
- SNH (2017c). Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2.
- The Highland Council (THC) in partnership with SNH (2011). Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas.

- THC (November 2016). Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017).
- THC (July 2016). Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.

7.3.2 Online resources:

- NatureScot (2024a) NatureScot pre-application guidance for onshore wind farms. Available at https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-pre-application-guidance-onshore-wind-farms%20. Accessed on: 10 September 2024.
- NatureScot (2023) Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions. Available at https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions. Accessed on: 10 September 2024.

Planning Policy

7.3.3 Planning policy relevant to this chapter is detailed within section 7.7.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 Table 7.1 below provides a summary of consultation that has taken place in relation to the LVIA.

Table 7.1 – Consultation

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
Energy Consents Unit (ECU)		
Scoping Opinion Sept 2023	Ministers note further viewpoints have been requested by consultees. As the tip height exceeds 150 m, LVIA to include robust Night Time Assessment with agreed viewpoints to consider aviation lighting, and how chosen lighting mitigates the potential effects.	The final viewpoint list takes account of consultation responses and has been agreed with THC and NatureScot. The LVIA includes a robust Night Time Assessment in accordance with best practice guidance (NatureScot, 2024).
The Highland Council (THC)		
Scoping Opinion August 2023	LVIA should refer to the ten criteria set out in THC OWESG.	These criteria are considered a planning matter and are discussed in the planning statement rather than the LVIA.
	The EIA Report should consider the landscape and visual impact, conforming with the GLVIA3. THC makes a distinction between the two, they require separate assessment and presentation of visual material differently. These images should form part of the EIA Report and not be separate from it.	The LVIA conforms with GLVIA3 and provides two separate sets of visualisations, one in accordance with NatureScot guidance and the other with THC guidance. Both form part of the EIA Report.
	Photomontages should follow THC Visualisation Standards. Separate hard copy volumes of visualisations to be prepared to THC Standards and NS guidance. THC's volume preferred in A3 ring bound folder. The use of monochrome for specific viewpoints is useful where there are a number of different wind farms in the view. All existing turbines to be re-rendered even if they appear to be facing the viewer to ensure consistency. The visual impact of the tracks, substations, battery storage and on-site borrow pits to be considered and with own site layout/ elevation plans.	The LVIA takes account of applicable NatureScot and THC guidance. Monochrome images have not been requested by THC. The visual impact of the tracks, substation and on-site borrow pit search areas is considered along with other infrastructure. Operational turbines have not been removed and rendered back into the photomontages. This is because where they are visible, they are seen at considerable distance and are not material to the effect of the Proposed Development on the view. Site layout/elevation plans are included to accompany Chapter 3 of the EIA Report.
	Cumulative study area should be as for LVIA, minimum 45 km. Updated interactive Wind Turbine map to identify other schemes in Study Area. Viewpoints to correspond with those used for existing wind farms in area. The applicant to present images in the Panoramic Digital Viewer deployed by THC.	The cumulative study area starts at 60 km and is then reduced to 45 km for the detailed assessment. The cumulative sites included have been agreed with THC, as have the LVIA viewpoints (all viewpoints are assessed in cumulative terms). Panoramic Digital Viewer images have not been requested by THC.
	Viewpoints to be informed by site survey, mapping and predicted ZTVs to avoid abortive work and delays. Viewpoints requests from Community Councils and any pre-app discussions with community to be taken into account.	Viewpoints have been informed by site visits and include locations suggested by THC, NatureScot, various community councils, Mountaineering Scotland, and people who visited the first round of exhibitions in November 2023. The final viewpoint list has

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
	The Landscape Officer is satisfied with methodology/scope of LVIA, and requests that consideration is given to the following viewpoints: – On the Great Glen Way, near Ladycairn – In the area of the Fodderty Cemetery/A834 – On the A835 in the vicinity of Garbat – On the A832 between Achanalt and Knockban – Around Heights of Fodderty/Heights of Keppoch.	been agreed with THC and NatureScot and includes the suggestions of THC or nearby locations where relevant.
	LVA to consider effects on combinations/ interactions of LCTs and features that give rise to local sense of place as well as individual LCTs.	The LVIA considers these interactions, often in the visual assessment where the relationship between LCTs is apparent in views.
	Some viewpoints to be 'Specific Viewpoints', addressing key and promoted views others to be 'representative viewpoints' showing effects applicable to similar areas, as well as some 'illustrative views' chosen to demonstrate a particular effect. These categories to be confirmed in the visual impact assessment and effects on specific view and general amenity assessed. THC generally prefers the term 'Hours of Darkness' over 'Night-Time' in recognition of how extensive hours of darkness can be in the Highlands. Hours of darkness effects will be visible during the working day for a significant part of the year and sensitivities of receptors must take account.	The purpose of each viewpoint is stated in the assessment. The hours of darkness assessment takes into account the sensitivities of receptors, with reference to best practice guidance (NatureScot, 2024).
	GDLs aspects relating to landscape setting, or relationship to the wider landscape to be considered in the LVIA chapter, in addition to the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (ACH) Chapter.	Where relevant, the setting and relationship of Garden and Designed Landscape (GDLs) to the wider landscape is considered in the LVIA.
	THC notes potential micrositing of viewpoints to avoid intervening screening etc.	Noted.
	Forestry is not considered a permanent fixture and LVIAs to assume bare earth, along with ‘permanent’ physical infrastructure.	It is acknowledged that forestry is not a permanent fixture in the landscape. However, it is not considered possible to assess a ‘bare earth’ scenario for receptors where forestry wholly or partially screens views. This is because it is not possible to predict what other screening features may lie behind the forestry (e.g. deciduous woodland, which is likely to be retained when coniferous forestry is felled) and the level of visibility and impact of the Proposed Development can therefore not be accurately predicted. Moreover, forestry is generally planted and felled in coupes, ensuring that a whole area of forestry is unlikely to be felled at one time without some areas having been replanted.
	The purpose of VPs should be stated i.e. landscape, visual impact, cumulative, sequential, or representative, or for assessment of impact on designated sites, communities, or individual properties.	The LVIA states the relevance/representation of each viewpoint.
	Content with a study area of 45 km; detailed assessment of effects to be undertaken for the whole study area.	A detailed assessment has been carried out for those landscape and visual receptors that have potential for a significant effect to arise, throughout the study area.
	The LVIA should clearly set out the methodology including: – Definitions of each point on the scale of magnitude of change – Definitions of each point on the scale of sensitivity – The threshold to which the applicant considers a significant effect is reached. The Council consider that Moderate impacts can be significant. – A clear matrix approach supported by descriptive text setting out the conclusion of effects	The full LVIA methodology is set out in Appendix 7.1. Moderate effects can be either significant or not significant in the methodology used.
	Assess all paths and long-distance trails, including sequential assessment in relation to existing and consented wind farms.	Effects (including cumulative effects) on views from long-distance trails are considered in the LVIA. The effects on views from core paths are not assessed individually due to the number of such routes, but viewpoints located on core paths are included in the viewpoint list and conclusions are drawn as to the level of

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
		visibility and effect that the Proposed Development will have on views from core paths.
	Assess impacts on landscapes designated at a national and local scale, SLAs and WLAs. SLAs to be assessed using SLA citations.	Designated landscapes are considered in the LVIA, and the SLA citations are referenced. WLAs are also considered.
	Assess impacts of aviation lighting, including on WLAs, SLAs and dark skies.	The assessment of visible turbine lighting is carried out in accordance with best practice guidance (NatureScot, 2024).
	RVAA to be assessed for all properties, settlements, and housing groups within 2 km of turbines in LVIA.	A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has been undertaken for all properties within 2 km of turbines and is presented in Technical Appendix 7.2.
	THC request that their four-point scale is used advising any effect to be either strong positive, positive, negative, or strong negative.	A full LVIA methodology is provided in Appendix 7.1. THC's four-point scale does not conform with GLVIA3 and has therefore not been referenced.
THC Pre-Application Meeting 13 September 2023	We have considerable concerns about the potential landscape, visual and environmental impacts of the proposal. It would be extremely challenging to accommodate a wind energy development of this scale in this location, without giving rise to unacceptable residual effects. NS shares these concerns. The site does not clearly relate to existing clusters of wind energy development in the area, bringing development into a locus which provides a valued respite from wind energy development. Cumulative landscape impacts of the proposals are likely to be felt by residents/travellers through the area and by recreational users of the outdoors and other special interest groups.	Noted. Considerable changes have been made to the layout that was presented at scoping stage, including a reduction in both the number and height of turbines.
	The site would potentially be highly visible from the A832 and A835 as well as further afield, leading to a large number of potential visual receptors. In its current form, there is a risk that the development could result in significant impacts on the Ben Wyvis SLA and detract from the scale of Ben Wyvis as a landmark in the surrounding area.	These landscape and visual receptors have been considered in the LVIA. As noted above, changes have been made to the layout that was then current, including a reduction in the number and height of turbines.
	NatureScot has highlighted that it would be challenging to accommodate a wind farm of the proposed scale on this site. It is located partly within the Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis Wild Land Area (WLA 29) and there is potential for significant impacts on the WLA due to the height of the turbines in addition to the potential impacts of aviation lighting during the hours of darkness.	An assessment of effects on WLA 29 is included in the LVIA.
	The Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance lists ten landscape and visual criteria that the Council use as a framework for assessing proposals. The assessment should pay attention to these criteria, as these will be used in the future appraisal of the application and should form part of the applicant's own assessment.	The ten criteria are considered in the Planning Statement.
	Sensitive receptors should include residents and visitors, particularly including areas of settlement, transport routes and visitor/recreational attractions and routes. Detailed information and assessment will be required in order to establish the significance of impacts. You are encouraged throughout the process to explain the design iterations and how they have responded to assessment of impacts.	Residents, visitors, areas of settlement, transport routes and visitor/recreational attractions and routes are considered in the LVIA and represented by a series of viewpoints. Design iterations and their response to the assessment are described in the Design Statement (DS).
	Visualisations should accord with THC's Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments. Assessments should cover impacts of all elements of the development, not only turbines, where these elements are not covered under a separate application.	A set of visualisations (Volume 3c) has been prepared in accordance with THC's visualisation standards. The LVIA includes consideration of infrastructure as well as turbines.
	Within the LCA the susceptible characteristics are setting of Ben Wyvis and the Ben Wyvis SLA. While the LCA is not visible from these locations there is potential for turbines within the BL42 LCA to impact on the setting of Strathpeffer Conservation Area and the Spa Gardens GDL. Ben Wyvis is a pivotal landmark feature of the Cromarty Firth, particularly in its upper reaches, and its prominence which is a Special Quality of the SLA should be protected as such; while Ben Wyvis itself lies outwith the LCA, the LCA 'bookends' the massif to the west such that development would be seen to be intimately associated with the Ben.	There is no visibility of the Proposed Development from Strathpeffer Spa Gardens or the Conservation Area. The effects on the Ben Wyvis SLA are assessed in the LVIA, and many viewpoints illustrate the relationship of the Proposed Development with the Ben Wyvis massif and the hills that surround it.
	BL41: Ben Wyvis Massif (South) The northernmost part of the site lies in BL41 with LCT – Rounded Mountain Massif and you should have regard to the appraisal, particularly in respect to people using key routes; cyclists, walkers and residents of the region. The appraisal identifies a degree of sensitivity of 1 (the highest level).	No part of the site is within BL41 and there are no turbines located within the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329). Effects on the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) are assessed in the LVIA, with due regard to

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
		its sensitivity. The effect of the Proposed Development on views gained by people using this LCT are also considered in the LVIA.
	The turbine heights are above the threshold for aviation lighting and an assessment of darkness hours (not just night-time) effects will be required. This should include visualisations at a range of viewpoints to be agreed with THC and NatureScot. The visualisations should be produced following a methodology agreed with NatureScot. A scheme should be prepared in agreement with CAA/ HIAL, with consideration given to limiting light pollution. Details of any potential lighting scheme should be provided as part of any application.	An hours of darkness assessment is included in the LVIA, based on a reduced lighting scheme that has been agreed with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The five 'hours of darkness' viewpoints have been agreed with THC and NatureScot and the visualisations follows the methodology suggested by NatureScot. The methodology for the hours of darkness assessment also follows NatureScot guidance (NatureScot, 2024).
	The proposal must consider the Ben Wyvis SLA, Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie SLA, Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA and their citations. The citations will be used to assess the impacts of the proposal.	The SLAs are considered in the LVIA with reference to their citations.
	There are a number of residential properties within 2 km of the western site boundary. It should be clearly demonstrated how any potential impacts on their amenity have been avoided or mitigated.	A RVAA has been carried out for properties that lie within 2 km of the nearest turbine, in accordance with best practice guidance.
	The DS should outline the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development and: – explain the policy or approach adopted as to design and how policies relating to design in the development plan have been taken into account; – describe the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and demonstrate how the design of the development takes that context into account in relation to its proposed use; and – state what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation.	The DS covers these considerations.
	The following is noted: a) There would appear to be visibility from the A835/A832 as well as the Kyle Railway Line. A series of wireframes in the form of a route assessment should be provided. b) Visibility is noted within Dingwall. Tesco Car Park would be a suitable location. c) Viewpoints on northbound A9 in Inverness and Inverness Castle Tower/Ness Bridge should be included. d) 23/03238/SCOP noted that the following additional viewpoints may also be required: – the Great Glen Way near Ladycairn – in the area of Fodderty Cemetery/A834 – on the A835 in the vicinity of Garbat – on the A832 between Achanalt and Knockban – Heights of Fodderty/Heights of Keppoch e) Nighttime visualisations would be required from Viewpoints 13 and 14. f) Any future submission should also include a supplementary ZTV for the ancillary aspects of the project, covering the access tracks, substation compound and Battery Energy Storage System (if not incorporated within this)	a) This has been considered but was not felt to be suitable at this site due to the very extensive tree cover (a variety of birch scrub, naturalised deciduous woodland and forestry) along the routes of the A832, A835 and railway line, which ensures that wirelines would present an unrealistic impression of visibility from the routes. Instead, viewpoints with photomontage visualisations have been included to illustrate visibility of the Proposed Development from relevant stretches of the routes. b) Tesco car park in Dingwall has been included as a viewpoint (Viewpoint 13). c) A suitable viewpoint could not be found on the A9 in Inverness due to screening of the theoretical visibility, and Inverness Castle has been used instead, with the agreement of THC. d) These viewpoints have been included in the LVIA, where relevant and as agreed with THC and NatureScot. e) Hours of darkness visualisations have been included for five viewpoints, as agreed with THC and NatureScot. f) A Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is not incorporated in the Proposed Development. ZTVs are not produced for infrastructure (e.g. access tracks/substation). This is because the Terrain 5 landform data used for the ZTVs is not sufficiently detailed to accurately illustrate where infrastructure might be visible from and could provide a misleading picture. Long-term elements of infrastructure are included in the photomontages where relevant, in accordance with best practice guidance (SNH, 2017).

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
	The main landscape and visual impacts relating to the Ben Wyvis SLA arise looking toward it, particularly from Inverness/northern part of the Black Isle. Views toward Ben Wyvis currently have limited influence of large-scale wind energy development. Cumulative impacts of the proposals and Abhainn Dubh need to be considered, especially impacts on the perception of scale of Ben Wyvis.	Effects on this aspect of the SLA have been considered in the LVIA, including cumulative effects.
THC Wind Farm Design Workshop 18th March 2024	The proposed list of 33 LVIA viewpoints that was issued with wirelines prior to the meeting was agreed as the final LVIA Viewpoint list. This includes key design viewpoints: – Layby on A835 - a key location for receptors travelling westbound on the A835/ NC500. – A835 Contin - most useful for representing a large number of receptors travelling through Contin, a noted point on the A835/NC500 and last chance westbound stopover for supplies. – Knockfarrel – gives a comprehensive understanding of the wider landscape context of the proposed turbines, inc Ben Wyvis and surrounding hills. Also useful for understanding cumulative impacts in combination with e.g. Novar and Fairburn. – Peffery Way –a valuable design viewpoint that indicates visual impacts on routes along the floor of Strath Peffer, including the Peffery Way/A834. – A832 Lochluichart – a useful design viewpoint for understanding potential impacts on eastbound A835/NC500 route. – A9 Black Isle & A835/B9169 Crossroads –provide a useful understanding of landscape and visual impacts on users of A9/A835 travelling north from Inverness/residents of the Black Isle.	These viewpoints are included in the LVIA visualisations and written assessment, and have been considered in the layout design of the Proposed Development.
	Key issues identified in relation to landscape and visual effects (individual and cumulative): – Visual impacts beyond those of the scheme Visual impacts on A835 (NC500)/A9 routes – Impact on views towards Ben Wyvis and across/along Strath Peffer – Impacts during the hours of darkness due to aviation lighting – Consideration of Criteria in Onshore Wind Energy SG – Criterion 6 – Existing pattern of wind energy. The relationship of the proposals to the existing pattern of consented development was discussed, particularly in terms of the previous refusal for the proposed Carn Gorm windfarm – Criterion 8 - Increased potential for significant impacts on Perception of Scale and Distance in the Landscape, with regard to the setting of Ben Wyvis – Composition of Development – some concerns regarding the siting of turbine 5, which can be seen almost to base, marking it as a more prominent visible outlier from the grouping from several viewpoints. – Potential impacts on local CH features, including the Castle Leod and Spa Gardens GDLs	Points noted. The noted visual impacts are considered in the LVIA. Criteria in Onshore Wind Energy SG are considered in the Planning Statement. Subsequent to the meeting, T5 was relocated in order to reduce the proportion of the turbine that is visible. The ZTV shows no visibility of the Proposed Development from the Spa Gardens and very limited theoretical visibility from Castle Leod GDL.
	Potential Solutions: THC suggests reviewing blade tip height of the turbines to see if a reduction is possible to under 150 m, which could potentially reduce landscape impacts and remove concerns regarding lighting during hours of darkness.	It is not possible to reduce the blade tip height of the turbines to below 150 m. However, four turbines were reduced from 200 to 180m. tip height and a reduced lighting scheme whereby only four of the turbines are fitted with visible lighting has been agreed with the CAA.
Email correspondence September – November 2024	The list of wind farms included in the detailed cumulative assessment was agreed. It was agreed that scoping sites will not be included in the main cumulative assessment but four relevant scoping sites (Ballach, Ceislein, Fairburn Extension and Tarvie) will be shown in a separate set of cumulative wirelines. It was also agreed that the proposed SSEN 400kV OHL between Spittal and Beauly will not be included in the cumulative assessment as the route has not yet been finalised.	Noted. Wirelines that include the four relevant scoping sites are included in Technical Appendix 7.4.
	Viewpoints to be included as hours of darkness photomontages was agreed as follows: – A835 in Garve (near bus stop) – Gorstan	Hours of darkness photomontages are included for these viewpoints (plus one additional viewpoint, as suggested by NatureScot, see below).

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
	– A835 layby at south end of Loch Garve – A835/B9169	
NatureScot		
Scoping Opinion July 2023	Should this proposal significantly affect the qualities of the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA and the mitigation proposed to reduce impacts on this WLA is deemed insufficient, this may lead NatureScot to object. The Applicant should consult NatureScot on the proposed scope of the Wild Land Assessment, including WLA qualities to be assessed and proposed assessment/ viewpoints.	A full assessment of effects on the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA is included in the LVIA. The wild land qualities considered in the assessment and the provision of additional wirelines within the WLA have been agreed with NatureScot.
	Paragraph 6.3.12 states that night-time visualisations from three viewpoints will be included and that these are agreed with us in advance. It should also be noted that the cumulative effects of lighting will also be required.	Hours of darkness visualisations have been produced for five viewpoints, in agreement with THC and NatureScot. The hours of darkness assessment considers cumulative effects.
	The Wild Land assessment should set out how design, siting, or other mitigation measures have been and will be used to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of this WLA.	The mitigation of effects on the WLA is described in the DS.
	We recommend the EIAR considers the potential for the wind farm to affect people's enjoyment of the Ben Wyvis NNR and thus upon the objectives of NNR designation and its overall integrity. While there is no 'standard' method of assessment for NNRs, NatureScot suggested that it would seem reasonable for an assessment to follow LVIA methods, using visuals taken from key viewpoints within the NNR and that potential impacts to the NNR should be scoped in.	Matters pertaining to NNRs are not relevant to LVIA, and the LVIA is not considered to be an appropriate vehicle for the assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on people's enjoyment of the Ben Wyvis NNR. The LVIA does include one viewpoint within the NNR (Viewpoint 5) and one on the edge of the NNR (Viewpoint 6), and the assessment of the effects at these viewpojnts provides a description of the effect that the Proposed Development will have on views from these locations within/on the edge of the NNR.
THC Pre-Application Meeting 13 September 2023	A comprehensive night-time assessment of the effects of turbine lighting on the WLA will be required, together with details of proposed mitigation. Our advice on assessment and mitigation options for turbine lighting has recently been updated and can be found in Annex 1 of our pre-application advice document.	Turbine lighting is considered in relation to the wild land qualities where relevant. Updated NatureScot guidance (NatureScot 2024) in relation to visible aviation lighting has been referenced in the hours of darkness assessment.
	A cumulative impact assessment should be undertaken to consider cumulative impacts on the WLA including lighting effects.	Cumulative effects, including lighting, have been considered in the LVIA.
Email correspondence March - April 2024	The final list of 33 viewpoints was agreed.	Noted.
Email correspondence November – December 2024	The scope of the wild land assessment was agreed, to include WLQs 1, 3 and 4 of WLA 29. Additional wirelines from locations within WLA 28 and WLA 29 were requested.	The wild land assessment considers these three WLQs. Additional WLA wirelines as requested have been included in Technical Appendix 7.3.
	Hours of darkness visualisations were requested from the viewpoint on the A835 at Loch Glascarnoch in addition to the four hours of darkness viewpoints as agreed with THC.	Hours of darkness visualisations have been produced for this viewpoint (LVIA Viewpoint 25).
Mountaineering Scotland		
Scoping Opinion July 2023	Mountaineering Scotland propose that Am Faochagach be used instead of Ben Dearg since both are Munros but the former is closer to the proposal. This list omits any viewpoint in the Fannichs - a very popular range of hills to the west. We suggest the Munro An Coileachan be included to assess cumulative impact with the Lochluichart/Corriemoillie cluster. We request that any new application show how it has addressed the specific reasons for the Carn Gorm refusal in 2014.	As suggested, Am Faochagach (Viewpoint 32) has replaced Ben Dearg in the final viewpoint list, and An Coileachan (Viewpoint 31) has been included in the viewpoint list. The Planning Statement should be referred to for policy matters in relation to previous applications.
Contin Community Council		
Scoping Opinion	ZTV maps need to include zoomed-in and zoomed-out versions, such that visibility can be assessed in nearby settlements. We ask for the inclusion of a map calculated for hub height, since this indicates substantial visibility.	The ZTVs in the LVIA figures include various scales/sizes of mapping (Figures 7.7a-d and 7.8a-d). Hub height ZTVs are included.
	Viewpoints should be consistent with Tarvie Wind Farm and all views should include both developments. Viewpoint 6 (Contin) should be selected to be an accessible point in the village giving the clearest view of the proposed development.	The Proposed Development is at a more advanced stage than Tarvie Wind Farm (scoping stage) and a final viewpoint list has not yet been confirmed for Tarvie. An

Consultee and Date	Consultation Response (summarised)	Applicant Response
	CCC request that a viewpoint is added for View Rock.	additional set of wirelines that show Tarvie has been included as Appendix 7.4 to the LVIA. The LVIA viewpoint in Contin (Viewpoint 23) is located on the footpath of the A835 as it passes through the village and gives a clear, open and easily accessible view of the Proposed Development. A viewpoint at View Rock is included in the LVIA (Viewpoint 7).
	It is important the generated views include zoomed-in views, equivalent to that perceived by the eye without moving the head, as well as wider views. We consider the Ben Wyvis massif to be an area of high landscape sensitivity. We would point out that Ben Wyvis is the nearest Munro to the large population centre of Inverness.	The visualisations include a variety of fields of view, including single frame and wider views, in accordance with THC and NatureScot guidance. The sensitivity of the Ben Wyvis massif has been considered in the LVIA.
	There are a number of wind farms already operating in the area, and proposals for 3 others immediately adjacent. We need a ZTV map that combines all visible tips, both built and currently proposed. Both wide-area and zoomed-in so that we can see the detailed effect around settlements.	The operational and proposed wind farms within a 60 km and 45 km radius of the Proposed Development are shown in Figures 7.14a and b. Cumulative ZTVs that show the Proposed Development in conjunction with each of the operational, consented and application stage cumulative wind farms are included in the LVIA (Figures 7.15a-ab).
	ZTV maps should be calculated for the height of a first floor window; this is what you see when you get up or go to bed – a daily reminder.	ZTVs are calculated at a viewer height of 2 m, in accordance with NatureScot guidance (SNH 2017c)).
	Given that other electricity infrastructure is an integral part of the policies that might permit this development, the possible Spittal-Beauly link should be scoped-in to these assessments.	The Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV Connection does not yet have a defined route and it is therefore not possible to include it in the assessment, as agreed with THC.
Ferintosh Community Council		
Scoping Opinion	The viewpoint from Culbokie needs to be identified and added to the viewpoint list. Viewpoints from other communities also need to be identified and clarified.	Viewpoint 14 is located in Culbokie and is considered to represent visibility that will be gained from the settlement. Viewpoints in other settlements that will gain visibility of the Proposed Development have also been included in the LVIA.

7.5 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

7.5.1 The full methodology is set out in Technical Appendix 7.1, and this section provides a summary of key points.

Study Area

7.5.2 The initial step in the LVIA is the establishment of the Study Area. In accordance with NatureScot guidance, a study area with a radius of 45 kilometres (km) from the outer wind turbines in the Proposed Development has been utilised, as shown in Figure 7.1. Mapping of the various characteristics and features of the Study Area that are relevant to the assessment (i.e. landscape character types and landscape-planning designations) and ZTV mapping is presented with both 45 km and 20 km study areas in order that the wider context can be seen at a broad scale while the local context can also be clearly seen.

7.5.3 The cumulative assessment is carried out to an initial 60 km radius (Figure 7.14a), with the detailed assessment focussing on a 45 km radius (Figure 7.14b).

7.5.4 The hours of darkness assessment has a 20 km study area, which is the upper limit suggested by NatureScot in its guidance (NatureScot, 2024). This is shown on Figures 7.9a, 7.9b and 7.9c.

Desk Study

7.5.5 The assessment is initiated through a desk study of the site and 45 km radius study area. This study identifies aspects of the landscape and visual resource that need to be considered in the landscape and visual assessment, including landscape planning designations, landscape character typology, Wild Land Areas (WLAs), operational and potential cumulative wind farms, and views from routes (including roads, railway lines, National Cycle Route (NCRs), core paths and long distance walking routes), and settlements.

7.5.6 The desk study also utilises Geographic Information System (GIS) and Resoft Windfarm software to explore the potential visibility of the Proposed Development. The resultant ZTV diagrams and wirelines provide an indication of which landscape and visual receptors are likely to be relevant to the assessment.

Site Visit

7.5.7 Field surveys are carried out throughout the 45 km radius study area, although the focus is on the areas shown on the ZTV to gain theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. The baseline field survey has five broad stages:

- A preliminary familiarisation around the study area in order to visit the aspects of the landscape and visual resource that have been identified through the desk study and verify their existence and importance. Important features and characteristics that have not become apparent through the desk study are also identified, and particularly sensitive receptors are noted in order to inform the design process.
- A visit onto the site itself, in order to establish the potential of the site for wind farm development and identify the most suitable areas for the Proposed Development in landscape and visual terms, along with any constraints that may restrict the developable area.
- Further field survey around the study area, concurrent with the design process for the Proposed Development, to identify those receptors that are likely to be particularly important in the assessment and inform the layout design, possible turbine height, and the extent of the Proposed Development.
- The identification of representative viewpoints to include in the landscape and visual assessment, including a wide range of receptors, landscape character, and directions and distances from the Proposed Development.
- An on-site review of the special qualities/wildness qualities of landscape planning designations and WLAs, which informs the likely effect of the Proposed Development on these qualities and its effect on the overall integrity of the designations/WLAs.

Categories of Effects

7.5.8 In this assessment, potential effects on the landscape and visual resource are grouped into six categories.

7.5.9 **Effects on Physical Elements**: are restricted to the area within the site and are direct effects on the existing landscape fabric, such as alteration to ground cover. This category of effects is made up of landscape elements, which are the components of the landscape, such as moorland, that may be directly and physically affected by the Proposed Development.

7.5.10 **Effects on Landscape Character**: landscape character is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and the way that this pattern is perceived. Effects on landscape character arise either through the introduction of new elements that physically alter this pattern of elements, or through visibility of the Proposed Development, which may alter the way in which the pattern of elements is perceived. This category of effects is made up of landscape character receptors, which fall into two groups; landscape character types and landscape-related designated areas.

7.5.11 **Effects on Wild Land Areas**: the assessment of effects on Wild Land Areas (WLAs), as identified by NatureScot.

7.5.12 **Effects on Views**: the assessment of effects on views is an assessment of how the introduction of the Proposed Development would affect views throughout the study area. The assessment of effects on views is carried out in two parts:

- the effects that the Proposed Development will have on a series of viewpoints; and
- the effects that the Proposed Development will have on views from principal visual receptors, which include relevant settlements and routes throughout the study area.

7.5.13 **Cumulative Effects**: arise where the study areas for two or more wind farms overlap so that multiple wind farms are experienced at proximity where they may have a greater incremental effect, or where wind farms may combine to have a sequential effect.

7.5.14 **Hours of Darkness Effects**: the effect that visible aviation lighting on the Proposed Development turbines will have on the landscape and visual resource.

Assessment of Potential Effect Significance

7.5.15 The broad principles used in the assessment of significance of the six categories of effects are the same (other than the assessment of effects on WLAs) and are described below. The detailed methodology for the assessment of significance does vary and the specific criteria are described in Technical Appendix 7.1.

7.5.16 The objective of the assessment is to predict the likely significant effects that the Proposed Development will have on the landscape and visual resource. The EIA Regulations require that the direct and indirect significant effects of the Proposed Development are identified, described and assessed, and the LVIA effects are therefore assessed to be either significant or not significant. The LVIA does not define intermediate levels of significance as the EIA Regulations do not provide for these. GLVIA3 also provides guidance on this, noting that (paragraphs 3.32 and 3.33):

> *"LVIAs should always distinguish clearly between what are considered to be the significant and non-significant effects…it is not essential to establish a series of thresholds for different levels of significance of landscape and visual effects, provided that it is made clear whether or not they are considered significant."*

7.5.17 The significance of effects is assessed through a combination of the sensitivity of the landscape receptor, visual receptor or view and the magnitude of change that will result from the addition of the Proposed Development. While this methodology is not reliant on the use of a matrix to arrive at the conclusion of a significant or not significant effect, a matrix is included below in Table 7.2 to illustrate how combinations of sensitivity and magnitude of change can lead to levels of effects and significant/not significant effects.

Table 7.2 – Significance of Effect

	Magnitude						
Sensitivity		**High**	**High-medium**	**Medium**	**Medium-Low**	**Low**	**Negligible**
	High	Major (Significant)	Major (Significant)	Major-Moderate (Significant)	Moderate (Significant/ Not Significant)	Moderate - Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)
	High-medium	Major (Significant)	Major-Moderate (Significant)	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate - Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)
	Medium	Major-Moderate (Significant)	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate - Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)
	Medium-Low	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate - Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)	Negligible (Not significant)
	Low	Moderate (Significant / Not Significant)	Moderate - Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)	Minor (Not significant)	Negligible (Not significant)	Negligible (Not significant)

7.5.18 Effects with a level of 'major' or 'major/moderate' are considered to be significant, while effects with a 'moderate' level may be significant or not significant, subject to the assessors' professional judgement and depending on the specific factors that arise at a particular landscape or visual receptor. In accordance with GLVIA3, experienced professional judgement is applied to the assessment of all effects and reasoned justification is presented in respect of the findings of each case. Effects assessed as being 'moderate-minor', 'minor' or 'negligible' are considered to be not significant.

7.5.19 A significant effect occurs where the Proposed Development would provide one of the defining influences on a landscape element, landscape character receptor or view. A not significant effect occurs where the effect of the Proposed Development would not be material, and the baseline characteristics would continue to provide the definitive influences.

7.5.20 This assessment assumes clear weather and optimum viewing conditions. This means that effects that are assessed to be significant may be not significant under different, less clear conditions.

Sensitivity

7.5.21 Sensitivity is an expression of the ability of a landscape receptor or view to accommodate the Proposed Development and is determined through a combination of the value of the receptor and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development. The factors that determine these criteria are described in Technical Appendix 7.1. Levels of sensitivity (high, high-medium, medium, medium-low and low) are applied in order that the judgement used in the process of assessment is apparent.

Magnitude of Change

7.5.22 Magnitude of change is an expression of the extent of the effect on landscape receptors and views that would result from the introduction of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change is assessed in terms of a number of variables, including the size and scale of the impact and the geographical extent of the affected area. The factors that determine these criteria are described in Technical Appendix 7.1. Levels of magnitude of change (high, high-medium, medium, medium-low, low and negligible) are applied in order that the judgement used in the process of assessment is apparent.

Nature of Effects

7.5.23 The 'nature of effects' relates to whether the effects of the Proposed Development are beneficial or adverse. Effects may also be neutral. Guidance provided in GLVIA3 (paragraph 3.22) states that "*thought must be given to whether the likely significant landscape and visual effects…are judged to be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in their consequences for landscape or for views and visual amenity*". The nature of effect is a matter that requires interpretation and reasoned professional opinion.

7.5.24 In relation to other disciplines covered in this EIA Report identifies positive and negative effects under the term 'nature of effect'. The landscape and visual effects of wind farms are difficult to categorise in either of these brackets as, unlike other disciplines, there are no definitive criteria by which these effects can be measured as being categorically positive or negative. For example, in disciplines such as noise or ecology it is possible to identify the nature of the effect of a wind farm by objectively quantifying its effect and assessing the nature of that effect in prescriptive terms. However, this is not the case with landscape and visual effects, where the approach combines quantitative and qualitative assessment.

7.5.25 This assessment adopts a precautionary approach, which assumes that significant landscape and visual effects will be weighed on the negative side of the planning balance, although positive or neutral effects may arise in certain situations. Unless stated otherwise, the effects of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual amenity are considered to be negative.

Duration and Reversibility

7.5.26 The duration and reversibility of effects are based on the period over which the Proposed Development is likely to exist and the extent to which it could be removed and its effects reversed at the end of that period. The effects of the Proposed Development are of variable duration, and are assessed as short-term or long-term, and permanent or temporary/reversible. It is anticipated that the operational life of the Proposed Development will be 50 years. The wind turbines, substation and access tracks will be apparent during this time, and these effects are considered to be long-term.

7.5.27 Other infrastructure and operations such as the construction processes and plant (including tall cranes for turbine erection) and construction compounds will be apparent only during the initial construction period of the Proposed Development and are considered to be short-term effects. Borrow pit excavation will also be short-term, as borrow pits would be restored at the end of the construction process.

7.5.28 The reversibility of effects is variable. The most apparent effects on the landscape and visual resource, which arise from the presence of the wind turbines, are temporary/ reversible as the turbines would be removed on decommissioning. The effects of the tall cranes and heavy machinery used during the construction and decommissioning periods would also be temporary.

7.5.29 Access tracks will be left in-situ, which will reduce potential environmental impacts associated with potential sediment migration into watercourses as a result of removing all tracks. Turbine foundations (except for the top 1 m which will be removed) and underground cabling will be left in-situ below ground with no residual landscape and visual effects. Chapter 3 (Section 3.8) provides more detail on the decommissioning process.

7.5.30 In order to avoid repetition, the duration and reversibility of effects are not reiterated throughout the assessment.

Hours of Darkness Assessment

7.5.31 The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) requires that 'en-route obstacles' at or above 150 m above ground level are lit with visible lighting to assist their detection by aircraft flying at night. As the turbines in the Proposed Development are more than 150 m to tip height there is a requirement for the turbines to display medium intensity ‘steady’ red aviation lights (emitting 2,000 candela (cd)) at night, which will be fitted to the nacelles of four of the Proposed Development turbines (T1, T4, T7 and T9). Tower lights will not be required. All nacelles will also be fitted with infra-red lighting for Ministry of Defence (MoD) purposes; this is not visible to the human eye and is therefore not relevant to the landscape and visual impact assessment.

7.5.32 The assessment of visible aviation turbine lighting constitutes an assessment of the effects of visible aviation lighting on views experienced by people during hours of darkness. The assessment of visible aviation lighting is largely a visual effect because the lighting will not be activated during daylight hours when physical aspects and characteristics of the landscape are most clearly apparent. The hours of darkness assessment therefore focusses on viewpoints and visual receptors. However, while many aspects of the landscape become indistinct or less distinct during hours of darkness, other characteristics can remain as important features or increase in importance. This is noted in NatureScot guidance (NatureScot, 2024) (paragraph 21), which states:

> *“Some characteristics are weakened by darkness and are ultimately no longer present, as they are less visible, such as evidence of cultural settlement, variations in landcover and habitats, or an appreciation of key vistas. Other perceptual characteristics can however be strengthened, such as the apparent absence of development, or the profile of an important skyline.”*

7.5.33 The assessment of hours of darkness effects at viewpoints therefore makes reference to landscape features and characteristics that are discernible during the hours of darkness, or at dawn and dusk, such as important skylines and the lack of any baseline lighting.

7.5.34 The hours of darkness assessment also considers the effect that visible aviation lighting might have on relevant designated areas where there are documented special qualities that are specific to the hours of darkness environment.

7.5.35 Visible aviation lighting will be required on the nacelles of four turbines in the Proposed Development; T1, T4, T7 and T9. Intermediate tower lights will not be required. In accordance with guidance (NatureScot, 2024), photomontages that illustrate the theoretical visibility of 200 cd light fittings have been included for five viewpoints that have been agreed with NatureScot and THC. This updated guidance no longer requires photomontages or an assessment of magnitude of change to be produced for the 2,000 cd lights scenario, as was previously required, on the basis that dimming mitigation will be incorporated into the Proposed Development. Civil Aviation Authority 2017 Policy Statement permits automatic dimming of the intensity of the nacelle light to not less than 10% of the minimum peak intensity if the horizontal meteorological visibility in all directions from every wind turbine in the group is more than 5 km. Meteorological visibility is measured using a sensor mounted on the turbine nacelle(s). When meteorological visibility is less than 5 km, the lights will operate at 2,000 cd, but a person’s ability to perceive the lights at this intensity is likely to be affected by compromised visibility (poor weather conditions).

7.5.36 This dimming mitigation option allows for the maximum emitted lighting intensity to be substantially reduced, and as the Applicant has committed to this mitigation, the 2,000 cd scenario does not require to be illustrated or assessed in the hours of darkness assessment.

7.5.37 In addition to dimming mitigation, a reduction in lighting intensity may also be achieved through vertical directional intensity mitigation. This is achieved through the use of a light that has a reduced lighting intensity dependent on the degree of the vertical angle of view from the light in relation to landform. Vertical directional intensity mitigation is described in a report produced by Wind Power Aviation Consultants Ltd (WPAC) 'Wind Farm Aviation Lighting and Mitigation Technical Appendix for Carn Fearna Wind Farm V2.0', which is included as Technical Appendix 15.1 of the EIA Report. This report makes specific reference to one specific light (CEL-WT-MIC) that can be used to achieve vertical directional intensity mitigation. In the report, the cd values for reduced intensities when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into account are given for each of the assessment viewpoints. It should be noted that distance, which will further diminish brightness, is not factored into these figures but is described in the hours of darkness viewpoint assessments.

7.5.38 It is important to note that the vertical directional intensity mitigation figures are provided as an illustrative example, and the Applicant has not committed to using this specific light, as this choice is normally made at turbine procurement stage.

7.5.39 The assessment of hours of darkness effects is therefore principally focussed on a 200 cd light intensity, which takes dimming mitigation into account. The further assumed reductions in brightness that might be achieved through the use of vertical directional intensity mitigation are referred to in a secondary, supplementary assessment that should be considered as illustrative only.

7.6 Baseline Conditions and Preliminary Assessment

7.6.1 The baseline section of the LVIA records the existing conditions of the study area. Establishing a baseline helps to gain an understanding of the important components or characteristics of the landscape and is instrumental in the identification of the landscape character receptors, visual receptors and viewpoints that are included in the assessment. This section is presented under the following headings:

- landscape character;
- landscape planning designations;
- wild land areas;
- principal visual receptors;
- hours of darkness environment;
- viewpoints; and
- cumulative wind farm developments.

7.6.2 This section also identifies which of the landscape and visual receptors have potential to undergo significant effects or significant cumulative effects as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore require to be assessed in detail. This is implemented through a two-stage filtering process. Firstly, ZTV mapping is used to identify receptors which would gain any theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, and where there is no visibility, receptors are discounted from the assessment. Secondly, the receptors that are shown on ZTV mapping to gain some visibility of the Proposed Development have a preliminary assessment to ascertain if they have potential to undergo significant effects. This preliminary assessment considers factors that determine the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change that would result from the addition of the Proposed Development. Various methods of verification are used in this second stage, including site visits, ZTVs, GIS mapping, wirelines and aerial photography.

7.6.3 In the case of some receptors, this preliminary assessment indicates that the landscape or visual receptor does not have potential to undergo a significant effect as a result of the Proposed Development, despite gaining visibility of it. This is most frequently due to the limited predicted level of visibility and influence of the Proposed Development. Where this is the case,

the potential effects on the receptor do not need to be assessed in any further detail and at this stage they can be discounted from the assessment. Where the preliminary assessment indicates that there is potential for the receptor to undergo a significant effect or cumulative effect as a result of the Proposed Development, this is assessed in detail subsequently in this chapter.

7.6.4 It should be noted that where the baseline text below refers to distances between the Proposed Development and the potential receptors, this refers to the distance to the nearest turbine in the Proposed Development.

Future Baseline in absence of Proposed Development

7.6.5 In the absence of the Proposed Development, it is likely that the site area would continue to be used for upland grazing.

Landscape Character

7.6.6 Landscape character is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and the way that this pattern is perceived. Landscape character information for the Study Area is drawn from NatureScot's 2019 digital dataset of landscape character (NatureScot, 2023). The NatureScot 2019 dataset divides the landscape into tracts that are referred to as landscape character types (LCTs).

7.6.7 The site lies on the western periphery of the area covered by THC's 'Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal: Black Isle, Surrounding Hills and Moray Firth Coast, Caithness'. In relation to sensitivity studies, Landscape Institute guidance (2024) notes in Section 9(1) that:

> *"GLVIA3 acknowledges that where there are existing landscape sensitivity and capacity studies 'they may provide useful preliminary background information for the assessment.' (paragraph 5.41).*
>
> *Caution should also be exercised in using capacity studies (and some sensitivity studies) as they may consider aspects of potential effects arising from development (e.g. upon nearby visual receptors) which are not relevant to landscape sensitivity."*

7.6.8 In this case, it is considered that the criteria that are followed in the 'Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal: Black Isle, Surrounding Hills and Moray Firth Coast, Caithness' do not completely align with the criteria for landscape assessment as outlined in GLVIA3, and the NatureScot dataset and descriptions are therefore used as the basis for the assessment.

7.6.9 Landscape character across the Study Area is shown on Figure 7.3a (to a 45 km radius) and Figure 7.3b (to a 20 km radius) and in relation to the blade tip ZTV on Figure 7.10a (to a 45 km radius) and Figure 7.10b (20 km radius). Many LCTs are extensive, sometimes covering several areas that are geographically separate, and the effects of the Proposed Development can vary across a single landscape character type. Several of the landscape character types have therefore been divided into 'units', which are referred to in Table 7.3 and shown on Figure 7.3b and Figure 7.10b. The landform of the site and study area is of relevance in the survey of landscape character, and this is shown on Figure 7.2.

7.6.10 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development lie within the Rounded Rocky Hills - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 331) (referred to hereafter as Rounded Rocky Hills LCT). There are three closely related areas of this LCT, separated by various strath and glen LCTs, of which the host unit for the Proposed Development (referred to as the Carn Fearna unit) lies to the north-east, with the other two, larger, areas lying to the west (the Lochluichart unit) and south-west (the south of Strathconon unit). This LCT forms a transition between the rounded hills and mountains to the north and the rugged mountain massif LCTs to the south and west.

7.6.11 Two other LCTs are also directly affected by site infrastructure; the site entrance off the A835 and a stretch of access track approximately 1.3 km long lie within the Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 330) (referred to hereafter as Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT), and a further stretch of access track approximately 800 m long lies within the Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329).

7.6.12 Table 7.3 includes the preliminary assessment of the LCTs and units that are found in the 20 km radius Study Area and indicates which of them are considered to have potential to undergo a significant effect as a result of the Proposed Development. The LCTs/units that do

have potential to undergo a significant effect are assessed in full subsequently in this chapter. LCTs that lie outwith a 20 km radius are discounted from the assessment as the preliminary assessment has indicated that these do not have potential to undergo a significant effect due to a combination of distance and lack of, or limited, visibility and influence of the Proposed Development. The host LCTs/units are listed first, followed by other LCTs in alphabetical order.

Table 7.3 – Preliminary Assessment of LCTs within the 20 km Study Area

Landscape Character Type	Comment
Included in detailed assessment due to level of influence and visibility of the Proposed Development	
Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331): Carn Fearna unit	The Proposed Development turbines and the majority of infrastructure are within this unit.
Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330): Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit	The site entrance and a stretch of access track lie within this unit and there is intermittent and limited theoretical visibility of turbines from a minimum of approximately 800 m away.
Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329): Ben Wyvis unit	A stretch of access track lies within this unit and there is intermittent/limited theoretical visibility of turbines from a minimum of approximately 450 m away.
Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341): Kinellan unit	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 4.1 km away.
Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330): Strath Sgitheach unit	ZTV shows intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 1.7 km away.
Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331): Lochluichart unit	ZTV shows very intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 3 km away.
Strath - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 340)	ZTV shows sometimes intermittent/limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 2 km away.
Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335)	ZTV shows sometimes intermittent/limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 1 km away.
Not included in detailed assessment: no/negligible visibility; limited and/or distant visibility/influence of the Proposed Development; no specific association with the site	
Enclosed Farmland (LCT 229)	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from a minimum of approximately 19 km away.
Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 345): Fairburn unit	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from the northern part of the unit, a minimum of just over 8 km away. While parts of this unit are orientated towards the Proposed Development, there is no specific association between the receptor and the LCT that covers the site area, with the focus being more across the lower slopes of the River Conon valley, east of Contin. This is a heavily wooded landscape, with many vegetated field boundaries, which screens visibility and creates an enclosed landscape.
Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 345): Strathpeffer unit	ZTV shows very intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 6 km away. The landform of this unit is orientated southwards and south-westwards across the River Conon valley, away from the Proposed Development, so when there is theoretical visibility, there is little association between the receptor and the Proposed Development. Local high points will gain higher levels of visibility and influence of the Proposed Development, but these are more distant and the Proposed Development will be one of a number of influences on landscape character. This is a heavily wooded landscape, which further screens visibility.
Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 345): other areas	ZTV shows extensive areas of no visibility with intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just under 16 km away.
Farmed River Plains (LCT 342)	ZTV shows intermittent/very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 5.6 km away. This is an extensive, low-lying LCT formed of river valley flood plains. There is no specific association between the site area and the LCT due to landform orientation and the relatively flat nature of this LCT. The area that lies closest to the Proposed Development is adjacent to the Black Water and, completely flat, gains external influence primarily from Tor Achilty, which encloses it to the west. This is a well-treed landscape, which screens visibility, and is also surrounded by woodland and forestry in many aspects.
Farmed Strath – Inverness (LCT 227)	ZTV shows no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development.
Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341): other areas	ZTV shows intermittent/very intermittent theoretical visibility with extensive areas of no visibility. The closest area of theoretical visibility, approximately 7.6 km away, is forested and orientated away from the Proposed Development, focussed around the River Orrin valley. Landform throughout the wider LCT is generally orientated away from the Proposed Development. Woodlands and trees are key components of this landscape, and these provide enclosure and screening.

Landscape Character Type	Comment
Inland Strath (LCT 339): Contin unit	ZTV shows very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 4.8 km away. This is a small, discrete low-lying LCT that lies to the west of the Black Water. There is no specific association between the site area and the unit due to landform orientation and the relatively flat nature of this LCT. This is a well-wooded landscape, with forestry covering the majority of area that gains theoretical visibility.
Inland Strath (LCT 339): Strathconon unit	ZTV shows very intermittent theoretical visibility from the upper southern slopes at the eastern end of the strath only, a minimum of just under 6 km away. Much of this area is wooded, and the strath has an enclosed, insular character that reduces the influence of external features.
Inland strath (LCT 339): Strathrusdale unit	ZTV shows no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development.
Open Farmed Slopes (LCT 346): Jamestown unit	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 6.6 km away. The landform of this small unit is orientated strongly across the River Conon and Black Water valley, away from the Proposed Development.
Open Farmed Slopes (LCT 346): Knockfarrel unit	ZTV shows intermittent/very intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 6.5 km away. Theoretical visibility is gained from high points and upper north-facing slopes. This unit has a strong innate character as well as being influenced by many different elements, internal and external, and the addition of the Proposed Development will not be definitive.
Open Farmed Slopes (LCT 346): Marybank unit	ZTV shows theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 8.2 km away. This north-facing unit is influenced by many different external elements and the addition of the Proposed Development will not be definitive.
Open Farmed Slopes (LCT 346): other areas	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just under 13 km away.
Open Steep Farmed Slopes (LCT 347): Heights of Fodderty unit	ZTV shows very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 5.3 km away. The landform of this unit is orientated strongly southwards across the River Peffery, away from the Proposed Development.
Rounded Hills - Caithness & Sutherland (LCT 135)	ZTV shows negligible theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from a minimum of 19 km away.
Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330): other areas	ZTV shows extensive areas of no visibility with very limited/intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just over 11 km away.
Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329): other areas	ZTV shows extensive areas of no visibility with very limited and/or intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 9.2 km away. The closest theoretical visibility is gained from the site of Lochluichart Wind Farm and thus is already strongly characterised by wind energy development.
Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331): other areas	ZTV shows extensive areas of no visibility, with intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just over 7 km away. These are vast, open upland areas that have a strong innate character and also gain many external influences due to their elevation, and the addition of the Proposed Development will not be definitive.
Rugged Massif – Inverness (LCT 220)	ZTV shows limited and very intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 13.3 km away.
Rugged Mountain Massif - Caithness & Sutherland (LCT 139)	ZTV shows negligible theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from just under 20 km away.
Rugged Mountain Massif - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 328)	ZTV shows extensive areas of no visibility with very intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just under 14 km away.

Landscape Planning Designations

7.6.13 The site itself is not covered by any known international or national landscape-related planning designations. The eastern periphery of the site is, however, within the Ben Wyvis Special Landscape Area (SLA) as designated by THC, and various designated areas are found elsewhere in the Study Area. These are shown on Figure 7.4a (to a 45 km radius) and Figure 7.4b (to a 20 km radius), and in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV on Figure 7.11a (to a 45 km radius) and Figure 7.11b (to a 20 km radius).

7.6.14 There are three ways in which landscape designations can be relevant to the LVIA.

- The presence of a designation indicates a recognised value that may increase the sensitivity of a landscape character receptor, viewpoint or visual receptor, and may therefore affect the significance of the effect on that receptor.
- The presence of a relevant designation can lead to the selection of a representative viewpoint within the designated area.

- Designated areas may be included as landscape character receptors so that the effects of the Proposed Development on these qualities of the landscape that have been accorded particular value can be assessed.

7.6.15 The relevant designations are described below, along with a preliminary assessment of how they may be affected by the Proposed Development.

National Scenic Areas

7.6.16 National Scenic Areas (NSAs) are considered to be important on a national level. The Town and Country Planning (National Scenic Areas) (Scotland) Designation Directions 2010 defines a National Scenic Area as an area *"of outstanding scenic value in a national context."* The relevant policy of NPF4 is Policy 4c, which states that:

> *"c) Development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve will only be supported where:*
>
> *i. The objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or*
>
> *ii. Any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance."*

7.6.17 There are four NSAs within or partially within the 45 km Study Area:

- Dornoch Firth NSA.
- Glen Affric NSA.
- Glen Strathfarrar NSA.
- Wester Ross NSA.

7.6.18 Of these, the closest is the Glen Strathfarrar NSA, which is a minimum of over 20 km to the south of the site while the other NSAs are all over 30 km away. The ZTV shows that there is no visibility of the Proposed Development from the Dornoch Firth, Glen Affric or Glen Strathfarrar NSAs, and very limited theoretical visibility from the Wester Ross NSA at nearly 35 km away.

7.6.19 The lack of/very limited level of theoretical visibility and the distance of the NSAs from the Proposed Development ensure that any effects on the special landscape qualities (SLQs) and integrity of the designated areas as a whole will be not significant. The NSAs are therefore discounted from the assessment and are not considered in any further detail.

Gardens and Designed Landscapes

7.6.20 Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) are considered in Policy 7i of NPF4, which is concerned with 'Historic assets and places'. Policy 7i states that:

> *"i) Development proposals affecting nationally important Gardens and Designed Landscapes will be supported where they protect, preserve or enhance their cultural significance, character and integrity and where proposals will not significantly impact on important views to, from and within the site, or its setting."*

7.6.21 As GDLs are considered as historic assets rather than landscape designations, effects on GDLs and their settings in cultural heritage terms are considered in Chapter 11: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.

7.6.22 In its scoping response, THC requested that:

> *"Gardens and Designed landscapes are considered as assets due to their design and relationship to the wider landscape in addition to their historic nature. Therefore, it would be appropriate for any aspects relating to landscape setting, or relationship to the wider landscape to be considered in the LVIA chapter, if necessary in addition to appearing in the Cultural Heritage Chapter."*

7.6.23 Where it is relevant in terms of aspects relating to landscape setting, or relationship to the wider landscape, GDLs have been referred to in this chapter and are shown in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV on Figures 7.11a and 7.11b.

Special Landscape Areas

7.6.24 Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are areas of land considered to be important at a local level, as designated by THC. Detailed citations for each of the 27 SLAs that lie within THC administrative area are provided in 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' (THC in partnership with SNH, 2011). These citations describe each SLA in terms of its "*key landscape and visual characteristics, the special qualities for which it is valued, its key sensitivities to landscape change, and possible measures for its enhancement*."

7.6.25 There are six SLAs within or partially within the 45 km study area:

- Ben Wyvis SLA.
- Cromarty Sutors, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA.
- Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA.
- Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA.
- Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.
- Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA.

7.6.26 The closest SLA to the Proposed Development is Ben Wyvis SLA; the easternmost periphery of the Proposed Development lies within this SLA, with three turbines and associated infrastructure just within the SLA, as shown on Figures 7.11a and 7.11b. The other SLAs are a minimum of over 13 km away and are shown on the ZTV to have very intermittent and distant theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development.

7.6.27 The effects on the Ben Wyvis SLA are considered subsequently in this chapter. The other SLAs have been discounted from the assessment due to their distance from the site and the very limited visibility/influence of the Proposed Development, which ensures that there will not be a significant effect on the designated areas.

Wild Land Areas

7.6.28 Wild Land Areas (WLAs) are shown on Figure 7.5a (to a 45 km radius) and Figure 7.5b (to a 20 km radius), and in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV on Figure 7.12a (to a 45 km radius) and Figure 7.12b (to a 20 km radius). WLAs are identified on NatureScot's 2014 wild land mapping and referred to in Policy 4g of NPF4, which states that:

> *"Development proposals in areas identified as wild land in the Nature Scot Wild Land Areas map will only be supported where the proposal:*
>
> *i. will support meeting renewable energy targets; or,*
>
> *ii. is for small scale development directly linked to a rural business or croft, or is required to support a fragile community in a rural area.*
>
> *All such proposals must be accompanied by a wild land impact assessment which sets out how design, siting, or other mitigation measures have been and will be used to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of the wild land, as well as any management and monitoring arrangements where appropriate. Buffer zones around wild land will not be applied, and effects of development outwith wild land areas will not be a significant consideration."*

7.6.29 There are six WLAs within or partially within the 45 km study area:

- WLA 24 Central Highlands.
- WLA 26 Coulin & Ledgowan Forest.
- WLA 27 Flowerdale - Shieldaig – Torridon.
- WLA 28 Fisherfield - Letterewe – Fannichs.
- WLA 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis.
- WLA 34 Reay – Cassley.

7.6.30 The south-eastern part of the site lies within the southern extremity of WLA 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis, and an assessment of effects on the wild land qualities (WLQs) of

this WLA is included within this chapter. The remaining five WLAs are discounted from the assessment due to the location of the Proposed Development outwith their boundaries.

Principal Visual Receptors

7.6.31 A number of visual receptors such as settlements and travel routes are considered in the assessment as views from them may be affected by the Proposed Development. It is not practical to consider every potential visual receptor in the Study Area due to the extent of ground that it covers and the assessment therefore concentrates on 'principal' visual receptors that may gain visibility of the Proposed Development. Principal visual receptors are shown on Figure 7.6a (45 km radius) and Figure 7.6b (20 km radius), and in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV on Figure 7.13a (45 km radius) and Figure 7.13b (20 km radius).

Settlements

7.6.32 Settlements considered in the assessment are those that lie within a 20 km radius of the site and are recognised in Local Development Plan (LDP) mapping. Settlements are shown on Figure 7.6b and in relation to the ZTV on Figure 7.13b. The 20 km radius has been ascertained through a preliminary assessment of effects on views, which indicated that significant visual effects on settlements are very unlikely to arise beyond 20 km from the nearest turbine.

7.6.33 LDP mapping identifies various tiers of settlements, including 'main settlements' and 'growing settlements' (Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2, adopted June 2024). The closest recognised settlement to the Proposed Development is the growing settlement of Garve, while other nearby settlements include Contin, Strathpeffer, Marybank, Dingwall, Muir of Ord and Conon Bridge.

7.6.34 Table 7.4 includes the preliminary assessment of settlements and indicates which of them are considered to have potential to undergo a significant effect.

Table 7.4 – Preliminary Assessment of Settlements within the 20 km Study Area

Settlement	Comment
Included in detailed assessment due to visibility of the Proposed Development	
Contin	ZTV shows theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 5.5 km away.
Garve	ZTV shows limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 2.6 km away.
Not included in detailed assessment: no/negligible visibility; limited and/or distant visibility/influence of the Proposed Development; no specific association with the site	
Beauly	ZTV shows no theoretical visibility.
Conon Bridge	ZTV shows theoretical visibility from the eastern part of the settlement at a minimum of approximately 12.5 km away. Buildings and vegetation, including those in the western part of the settlement, will further screen visibility.
Culbokie	ZTV shows theoretical visibility a minimum of approximately 16.5 km away. Buildings and vegetation will screen visibility, and the Proposed Development will be seen peripheral to the main north-western orientation of views. Distance will also ensure that any actual visibility is limited. Viewpoint 14 is in Culbokie and illustrates the higher type of visibility available.
Dingwall	ZTV shows very limited and intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just over 10 km away. Buildings and vegetation will further screen visibility. Viewpoint 13 is in Dingwall and illustrates the higher type of visibility available.
Evanton	ZTV shows no theoretical visibility.
Maryburgh	ZTV shows negligible theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 11.5 km away.
Muir of Ord	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just under 14 km away. Buildings and vegetation will screen the majority of visibility and distance will ensure that any actual visibility is limited.
Strathpeffer	ZTV shows negligible theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 6.3 km away.
Tore	ZTV shows no theoretical visibility.

Routes

7.6.35 Routes include roads, long-distance recreational routes (including cycle routes) and railways that lie within a 20 km radius of the Proposed Development. The 20 km radius has been ascertained through a preliminary assessment of effects on views, which indicated that significant visual effects on routes are very unlikely to arise beyond 20 km from the nearest turbine. The routes included as principal visual receptors in the assessment are determined by four criteria:

- the extent to which the route extends across the Study Area or a notable part of it;

- the proximity of the route to the Proposed Development;
- the importance of the route in terms of recognition, traffic volume and usage; and
- the potential for the Proposed Development to contribute to cumulative effects along the route.

Roads

7.6.36 The closest A-class road is the A835, which passes to the south, west and north-west of the Proposed Development at a minimum distance of approximately 2 km away. The A832 joins the A835 at Gorstan, just over 3 km to the west of the Proposed Development. Both of these roads form part of the North Coast 500 tourist route (NC500) and this gives them particular sensitivity.

7.6.37 A minimum of 11.5 km to the east of the site is the A862, which passes through Beauly and Muir of Ord and is part of the NC500 as well as the Moray Firth tourist route. The A834 passes a minimum of approximately 6.5 km to the south-east of the site, where it runs through Strathpeffer.

7.6.38 The key road routes that pass through the study area are the A9, A832, A834, A835 and A862, which are followed over some stretches by the NC500 and Moray Firth tourist routes. There is one stretch, between Moy Bridge and Gorstan, over which the A832 and A835 are multiplexed, which is signed as the A835.

Railway Lines

7.6.39 The Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh line passes around the south, east, and west of the site at a minimum distance of approximately 2 km away, and the Far North line passes a minimum of approximately 12 km to the east.

National Cycle Routes

7.6.40 National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1) passes approximately 11.5 km to the east of the Proposed Development.

Long Distance Recreational Routes

7.6.41 The closest long distance recreational route is the John O'Groats Trail, which passes a minimum of just under 16 km to the east of the Proposed Development. The Affric-Kintail Way and Great Glen Way pass a minimum of approximately 30 km and 25 km to the south and south-east respectively, and the Scottish National Trail/Cape Wrath Way passes a minimum of 31 km to the north-west.

Core Paths

7.6.42 The effects on views from core paths are not assessed individually due to the number of such routes, but, as with the roads, viewpoints located on core paths are included in the representative viewpoint list and broad conclusions are drawn from the viewpoint assessment as to the level of visibility and effect that the Proposed Development would have.

7.6.43 Table 7.5 includes the preliminary assessment of the routes described above and indicates which of them are considered to have potential to undergo a significant effect.

Table 7.5 – Preliminary Assessment of Routes within the 20 km Study Area

Route	Comment
Included in detailed assessment due to level of influence and visibility of the Proposed Development	
A832	ZTV shows theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 3.2 km away, to the west of the Proposed Development.
A835	ZTV shows theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 2 km away, to the north-west of the Proposed Development. There is also theoretical visibility to the south of the Proposed Development, a minimum of approximately 3 km away.
Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line	ZTV shows theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 2 km away, to the south of the Proposed Development.
Not included in detailed assessment: limited and/or distant visibility/influence of the Proposed Development and no specific association with the site	
A9	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just under 16 km away to the east of the site. The closest stretch of the route is on the north side of the Black Isle (see Viewpoint 21), where

Route	Comment
	views from the road are strongly orientated north-east/south-west, whereas the Proposed Development lies to the north-west. Vegetation screens and filters much of the theoretical visibility from parts of the route.
A831	ZTV shows no visibility of the Proposed Development within the 20 km study area.
A834	ZTV shows intermittent and often limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 6.5 km away. The closest stretch of the route is in Strathpeffer, where theoretical visibility is very limited, and buildings and vegetation will further screen visibility. The full length of this road is approximately 11 km long, and much of this route is lined with vegetation. The A834 does not have any specific sensitivity as a recognised tourist route.
A862	ZTV shows intermittent/very intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 11.5 km away to the east of the site, in Dingwall. Actual visibility will be further reduced due to screening by buildings and vegetation. Much of the route runs perpendicular to the Proposed Development and direct views towards the site will not generally be gained. Viewpoint 15 is on the A862 to the west of Inverness and Viewpoint 13 is in Dingwall, close to the A862; both of these are assessed as having not significant effects.
Far North railway line	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of just over 12 km away. The closest stretch of the route is in Dingwall, where theoretical visibility is very limited, and buildings and vegetation will further screen visibility.
NCR1	ZTV shows intermittent theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 11.5 km away. The closest stretch of the route is in Dingwall, where theoretical visibility is very limited, and buildings and vegetation will further screen visibility. Viewpoint 13 is in Dingwall, close to NCR1, and is assessed as having a not significant effect.
John O'Groats Trail	ZTV shows very intermittent theoretical visibility from approximately 16 km away to the east of the site. The closest stretch of the route is on the north side of the Black Isle, where the Proposed Development will be seen peripheral to the main orientation of the view (see Viewpoint 14 (Figures 7.29 and 7.62), which is assessed as having a not significant effect).

Viewpoints

7.6.44 The assessment of landscape and visual effects is informed by a series of viewpoints that represent visibility from locations around the Study Area, including visual receptors, a variety of LCTs, and landscape planning designations. These include points of specific importance such as recognised viewpoints, designated landscapes, settlements and routes, and the locations have been agreed with NatureScot and THC.

7.6.45 The viewpoint assessment is used to inform and illustrate the assessment of effects on landscape character as well as the assessment of effects on views and principal visual receptors. The viewpoints used in the assessment are described in Table 7.6.

7.6.46 Viewpoint locations are shown with the blade tip ZTV on Figures 7.7a (A3 size, 45 km radius), 7.7b (A3 size, 20 km radius), 7.7c (A1 size, 45 km radius) and 7.7d (A0 size, 45 km radius) and with the hub height ZTV on Figures 7.8a (A3 size, 45 km radius), 7.8b (A3 size, 20 km radius), 7.8c (A1 size, 45 km radius) and 7.8d (A0 size, 45 km radius).

Table 7.6 – Viewpoints

Viewpoint Number and Name	Grid Reference Distance to nearest turbine	Comment
1. Garve	239475, 861514 2.86 km	View from the A835 (NC500) as it passes through Garve, located near the bus stop. A similar view will be gained by people travelling on the Kyle of Lochalsh railway line.
2. Gorstan	238621, 862623 3.42 km	View from the residential area of Gorstan.
3. Tarvie	242340, 858473 3.35 km	View from the residential area of Tarvie, located on elevated ground to the south of the A835 at the southern end of Loch Garve.
4. Little Wyvis	242946, 864425 980 m	Viewpoint located at the high point of Little Wyvis, within the Ben Wyvis SLA and on the edge of WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis.
5. An Cabar	245044, 866573 3.97 km	Viewpoint located at the intermediate summit of Ben Wyvis, view gained by the majority of people walking up Ben Wyvis as it is on a well-used path route. Within the Ben Wyvis SLA and WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis.
6. Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)	246293, 868374 6.15 km	Viewpoint located at the highest summit of Ben Wyvis. Within the Ben Wyvis SLA and WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis.
7. View Rock	245953, 857344 5.60 km	View from a local high point and known viewpoint adjacent to a core path, near Strathpeffer. There is theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, but this is currently screened by forestry and this viewpoint is therefore illustrated by a baseline photograph and wireline only.

Viewpoint Number and Name	Grid Reference Distance to nearest turbine	Comment
8. Loch Kinellan	246832, 857769 5.37 km	View from a core path at Kinellan, a popular walking area near Strathpeffer.
9. A834, Jamestown	247728, 856757 6.72 km	View from the A834 near the settlement of Jamestown.
10. Marybank	247940, 853746 9.37 km	Viewpoint close to the Fairburn Memorial Hall in Marybank.
11. Knockfarrel	250535, 858548 7.81 km	Viewpoint included to represent the outlook gained by visitors to Knockfarrel, with a panoramic view and located on a core path.
12. Peffery Way at Fodderty Cemetery	251199, 859173 8.17 km	View from the Peffery Way as it passes the elevated southern edge of Fodderty Cemetery.
13. Tesco Dingwall	254934, 858891 11.81 km	View from the Tesco car park in Dingwall, included to represent views gained by people in Dingwall.
14. Culbokie	260284, 859249 16.97 km	View from the beer garden/car park of the Culbokie Inn, included to represent views gained by people in Culbokie.
15. A862, west of Inverness	260468, 846196 23.17 km	Viewpoint on the A862 (NC500 and Moray Firth tourist route) to the west of Inverness.
16. Great Glen Way near Ladycairn	256054, 838986 26.21 km	Viewpoint on the Great Glen Way/minor road on the north-western side of Loch Ness.
17. Inverness Castle	266627, 845053 28.65 km	Viewpoint at Inverness Castle, included to represent views that will be gained by visitors to the Castle.
18. Milton of Leys Primary School	269594, 842174 32.75 km	Viewpoint included to provide a long, open view from the elevated southern part of Inverness.
19. Culloden battlefield	274231, 844814 35.18 km	Viewpoint located on the signed path route at Culloden Battlefield, historic location and visitor attraction.
20. Simpsons Garden Centre	269561, 844146 31.56 km	Viewpoint included to provide a long, open view from the elevated south-eastern part of Inverness.
21. A9, Black Isle	259049, 858071 16 km	Viewpoint located in a layby on the A9 as it crosses the Black Isle.
22. A835/B9169 Crossroads	256018, 853765 14.96 km	Viewpoint located at the crossroads between the A835(T) and the B9169.
23. A835, Contin	245850, 855850 6.59 km	Viewpoint located on the A835 (NC500) in the village of Contin.
24. A835, south end of Loch Garve	242500, 858973 2.83 km	Viewpoint located in a layby adjacent to the A835 (NC500) at the southern end of Loch Garve.
25. A835, Loch Glascarnoch	231283, 872275 14.10 km	Viewpoint on the A835 as it passes Loch Glascarnoch.
26. A832, Strath Bran	222005, 860859 20.13 km	Viewpoint on the A832 (NC500) as it passes through Strath Bran.
27. A832, Lochluichart	232957, 863116 9.06 km	Viewpoint located on the A832 (NC500) in the hamlet of Lochluichart. A similar but less elevated view will be gained by people travelling on the Kyle of Lochalsh railway line.
28. A832 near Torriegorrie	237292, 863152 4.72 km	Viewpoint located on the A832 (NC500) approximately 1.7 km to the west of the junction with the A835(T), north of Garve.
29. Sgùrr a' Mhuilinn	226468, 855741 17.09 km	Viewpoint on one of the Strathconon Corbetts, within the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA.
30. Beinn a' Bha'ach Ard	236057, 843478 19.54 km	Viewpoint on a Corbett on the northern side of Glen Strathfarrar, within WLA 24 Central Highlands.
31. An Coileachan	224177, 868005 18.52 km	Viewpoint on a Munro within the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA and WLA 28 Fisherfield - Letterewe – Fannichs.
32. Am Faochagach	230407, 879329 19.78 km	Viewpoint on a Munro within the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA and WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis.
33. Cnoc Fyrish monument	260739, 869751 18.71 km	View from popular walking destination at the Fyrish Monument, on a core path.

7.6.47 The hours of darkness visual assessment has been informed by photomontages for the following five viewpoint locations, in agreement with THC and NatureScot.

- Viewpoint 1 Garve.
- Viewpoint 2 Gorstan.
- Viewpoint 22: A835/B9169 Crossroads.
- Viewpoint 24: A835, south end of Loch Garve.
- Viewpoint 25: A835, Loch Glascarnoch.

Hours of Darkness Environment

7.6.48 The theoretical baseline hours of darkness environment is represented on a Baseline Light Pollution map (Figure 7.9a), which illustrates baseline light pollution across the 20 km study area and also shows the LVIA viewpoints.

7.6.49 While this map provides a useful basis for gauging theoretical levels of lighting during hours of darkness, it is important to remember that it does not indicate the presence of localised lighting such as domestic or security lighting that can locally affect views during hours of darkness. Personal lighting is also not represented; that is, lighting within or attached to a vehicle or train (e.g. internal lighting, headlights, dashboard etc.) that will be experienced by people travelling on roads and railway lines, which can have a considerable effect on the way that the hours of darkness environment is experienced by people. Torches and cycle lights are also used by people walking or cycling during hours of darkness, and this light affects their environment and ability to adapt to light sources.

7.6.50 Nonetheless, the map does provide a useful indication of lighting levels throughout the study area and at the viewpoints. Not surprisingly, baseline lighting is concentrated in the south-eastern part of the study area where there are a number of settlements and key routes. Away from this south-eastern area, there are small pockets of lighting at Garve, Grudie Hydro-Electric Power Station and, interestingly, at the top of Ben Wyvis. Elsewhere, across the majority of the study area, the map shows no light pollution. The highest baseline light levels within the 20 km study area are found at Conon Bridge, Dingwall, Evanton Industrial Estate, Maryburgh and Muir of Ord.

7.6.51 Hours of darkness visualisations are provided for five viewpoints, and the photographs at these viewpoints illustrate the baseline hours of darkness environment. The relevant text also describes the baseline environment.

Cumulative Wind Farm Developments

7.6.52 Cumulative effects are defined in guidance (NatureScot, 2021) as the "*combined effect of a set of developments"* and may arise where a landscape receptor, visual receptor or view is affected by more than one wind farm or other relevant development. This occurs where the study areas for two or more developments overlap so that multiple developments are experienced at proximity where they may have a greater incremental effect, or where developments may combine to have a sequential effect, irrespective of any overlap in visibility.

7.6.53 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 Beauly 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.

Wind Farm Sites Included in the Cumulative Assessment

7.6.54 In accordance with best practice guidance (NatureScot, 2021), the cumulative assessment initially covers a radius of 60 km from the Proposed Development, and includes wind farms that are operational, consented, planning or Section 36 applications, and scoping stage (shown on Figure 7.14a). Single turbines and those under 50 m to blade tip are excluded from the assessment in line with NatureScot guidance (NatureScot, 2021), which states that "*due to the very large number of small scale (three or fewer wind turbines) proposals in the planning system in some areas of Scotland it may not be practical to include all of these in the search area base plan*".

7.6.55 The next step is to ascertain which of these sites will be relevant to the detailed cumulative assessment. A wind farm is considered to be relevant if the addition of the Proposed Development to this and other wind farms could result in a significant cumulative effect on a landscape character receptor, view or visual receptor. Guidance (NatureScot, 2021) suggests that the study area for detailed cumulative assessment will generally extend to a "*35 km radius from the outer boundary of proposal but may be extended due to the nature of likely cumulative effects identified above. The study area may need to be wider for larger turbines*".

7.6.56 In the case of the Proposed Development, this radius has been increased to 45 km due to the study area radius of the Proposed Development itself being 45 km. Wind farm sites outwith the 45 km radius may be included where, for example, a distant wind farm would be seen from the

same route as the Proposed Development and the visibility of both sites could lead to significant cumulative effects. In the case of the Proposed Development, no wind farms that lie beyond 45 km away are considered to be relevant to the assessment.

7.6.57 The assessment includes operational, under construction, consented and application stage wind farms. Scoping stage wind farms are not included unless they are of particular relevance or if their application date is anticipated to be prior to or around the same time as the application for the Proposed Development. In this case, it has been agreed with THC that four scoping wind farms - Ballach, Ceislein, Fairburn Extension and Tarvie - are illustrated in a separate set of wirelines (Technical Appendix 7.3) in order that the relationship between these sites and the Proposed Development can be seen. These sites are not included in the written cumulative assessment due to the lack of certainty that they will form part of the future cumulative situation and the potential for the layouts/dimensions of the turbines to change prior to an application being made. It is very often the case that the scoping layout will change in both numbers and tip height of turbines prior to an application being made, and to include scoping layouts in the assessment therefore has considerable potential to misrepresent the scoping sites as well as misrepresent the relationship that the Proposed Development has with them. The scoping data for these sites is as follows:

- Ballach: 36 turbines, 200 m/230 m tip height.
- Ceislein: 20 turbines, 250 m tip height.
- Fairburn Extension: 14 turbines, 200 m tip height.
- Tarvie: 11 turbines, 200 m tip height.

7.6.58 The cumulative situation changes frequently as applications are made, refused or withdrawn, and the layouts of submitted application wind farms are changed, and it is therefore necessary to decide on a cut-off date when the sites and layouts to be included are fixed. The final list of sites to be included was agreed with THC on 14th November 2024, and this is therefore the cut-off date for this cumulative assessment. Any changes in the cumulative situation after this date are not incorporated in the assessment.

7.6.59 Table 7.7 lists the wind farms that are considered in the detailed cumulative assessment, within 45 km of the Proposed Development (shown on Figure 7.14b). Other scoping sites in addition to the four listed above are also shown on Figure 7.14b in order to illustrate a full picture of potential future development in the study area.

7.6.60 The relevant sites as listed in Table 7.7 are shown in the wirelines for each of the representative viewpoints in Figures 7.16 to 7.49. The cumulative wirelines are produced in increments of 90º and cover a variable width of the view, ranging from 90º to 360º, dependent on the horizontal field of view that has been used for each viewpoint. In some instances, wind farms appear in the wirelines although they are beyond their own study area radius (i.e. the radius that is appropriate for the turbine tip height of the wind farm in accordance with NatureScot guidance (2021)). Where this occurs, the wind farm is discounted from the written assessment as it is considered to lie beyond the radius within which it may contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

7.6.61 Cumulative ZTVs that show the visibility of the relevant sites along with that of the Proposed Development have been included for relevant wind farms (Figures 7.15a to 7.15b).

Table 7.7 – Wind Farms Included in the Cumulative Assessment (45 km Radius)

Wind Farm Name	Status	Number of Turbines	Turbine Dimensions	Approx. Distance to Proposed Development
Abhainn Dubh	Application	9 turbines	149.9 m to blade tip	9.5 km
Achany	Operational	19 turbines	100 m to blade tip	41 km
Acheilidh	Application	12 turbines	200 /230 m	42 km
Achany extension	Consented	18 turbines	149.9 m to blade tip	43 km
Auchmore 1&2	Operational	2 turbines	79 m to blade tip	13 km
Beinn Tharsuinn (including Beinn an Oighrean)	Operational	19 turbines	80 m/99.5 m to blade tip	25 km
Bhlaraidh	Operational	32 turbines	125 m/135 m	40 km
Bhlaraidh extension	Consented	15 turbines	180 m	40 km
Coire na Cloiche	Operational	13 turbines	99.5 m to blade tip	23 km

Wind Farm Name	Status	Number of Turbines	Turbine Dimensions	Approx. Distance to Proposed Development
Corriemoillie	Operational	17 turbines	125 m	8 km
Corrimony	Operational	5 turbines	100 m	37 km
Chrathaich	Application	14 turbines	149.9 m	40 km
Fairburn	Operational	20 turbines	100 m	9 km
Farr	Operational	40 turbines	101 m	42 km
Garvary	Application	24 turbines	180 m	41 km
Glen Kyllachy	Operational	20 turbines	110 m	43 km
Kirkan	Consented	17 turbines	175 m	7 km
Lairg	Operational	3 turbines	100 m to blade tip	44 km
Lairg II	Consented	10 turbines	150 m/180 m/200 m to blade tip	42 km
Loch Liath	Application	13 turbines	180 m/200 m	36 km
Lochluichart and extension	Operational	23 turbines	125 m	9 km
Lochluichart Extension II	Consented	5 turbines	149.9 m	10 km
Meall Buidhe	Consented	8 turbines	144.5 m/149.9 m to blade tip	31 km
Moy	Operational	20 turbines	126.5 m	42 km
Novar and extension	Operational	50 turbines	55.5 m/99.5 m	13 km
Rosehall	Operational	19 turbines	90 m to blade tip	41 km
Strathoykel	Application	11 turbines	200 m	35 km
Strathrory Redesign	Consented	7 turbines	149.9 m/160 m/ 180 m to blade tip	36 km

7.7 Standard Mitigation

7.7.1 The nature of landscape and visual effects means that landscape and visual mitigation is embedded into the design of the Proposed Development. The site selection rationale and the iterative design process is described in Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution and in the DS for the Proposed Development.

7.8 Receptors Brought Forward for Assessment

7.8.1 The preliminary assessment carried out in Section 7.7 identifies those receptors that have potential to undergo a significant effect as a result of the Proposed Development. These are:

Landscape Elements

- Rough grassland/moorland; and
- woodland.

Landscape Character Receptors

Landscape Character Types

- Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331): Carn Fearna unit, Lochluichart unit;
- Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330): Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit and Strath Sgitheach unit;
- Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329): Ben Wyvis unit;
- Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341): Kinellan unit;
- Strath - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 340); and
- Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335).

Landscape Designations

- Ben Wyvis SLA.

Wild Land Areas

- WLA 29. Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis.

Viewpoints

7.8.2 All of the 33 viewpoints are assessed in detail.

Principal Visual Receptors

- Contin;
- Garve;
- A832;
- A835;
- Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line; and
- core paths.

7.8.3 The following sections include the assessment of effects on the landscape and visual receptors that are listed above. The assessment is presented in four categories:

- effects on landscape elements;
- effects on landscape character;
- assessment of effects on wild land; and
- assessment of effects on views.

7.8.4 The assessments of cumulative effects and hours of darkness effects are incorporated into these categories where relevant.

7.9 Effects on Landscape Elements

7.9.1 The first category of effects covered in the assessment is physical effects on landscape elements, which are direct effects on the fabric of the site such as changes to ground cover. Physical effects are found only on the site, where existing landscape elements may be removed or altered by the Proposed Development. In this case there are two elements involved: rough grassland/moorland and woodland. It should be noted that these landscape elements are assessed with reference to their contribution to the landscape resource rather than in ecological terms, which are discussed in Chapter 8.

Rough Grassland/Moorland

7.9.2 The construction of access tracks, turbine foundations, hard standings, and other infrastructure will require the removal of rough grassland/moorland from the site.

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.9.3 The rough grassland/moorland that covers the site is typical of the upland area within which the Proposed Development lies. The value of this element is medium; it is a relatively widespread ground cover that is not rare or specifically recognised for its value but it is a characteristic element of the LCT that covers the site and surrounding areas; the NatureScot 2019 description of this LCT notes that "*Vegetation consists mainly of low, rough heather and grasslands on glacial deposits and thin peaty soils…".* The susceptibility to change of this landscape element is medium-low due to the potential for reinstatement and restoration of the ground cover following construction and at the end of the lifetime of the Proposed Development. The combination of a medium value and medium-low susceptibility to change of the landscape element results in a **medium** sensitivity for rough grassland/moorland ground cover.

Magnitude of Change

7.9.4 The area of rough grassland/moorland to be removed or disturbed in the construction and operation of the Proposed Development is limited in relation to the total area found on the site and beyond, and the magnitude of change of this removal is medium-low.

Significance of the Effect

7.9.5 The effect of the Proposed Development on rough grassland/moorland will be **not significant** due to the medium sensitivity of the landscape element and the medium-low magnitude of change on it.

Woodland

7.9.6 The construction of the Proposed Development will require the removal of approximately 1.2 hectares (ha) of woodland from the site.

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.9.7 Three areas of woodland will be affected by the Proposed Development; at the site entrance, at the temporary construction compound near the site entrance (TCC1), and on one section of access track in the northern part of the site.

The affected areas consist of:

- an area of largely broadleaf woodland at the new site access, with pockets of relatively old and more mature trees;
- part of an older, largely broadleaf, shelterbelt at the temporary construction compound; and
- an area of young woodland, planted under a woodland scheme, at the access track in the northern part of the site.

7.9.8 The value of the woodland to be removed is medium. It has no recognised value and the areas to be removed are not a key characteristic of the landscape. The area of young woodland in the northern part of the site has not thrived, is in poor condition and is not well managed.

7.9.9 The susceptibility to change of this landscape element is medium due to the condition of the areas of proposed removal and the potential for mitigation, as compensatory woodland planting will be implemented in accordance with good forestry practice.

7.9.10 The combination of the medium value and medium susceptibility to change of the landscape element results in a **medium** sensitivity for the woodland.

Magnitude of Change

7.9.11 The total area of woodland that will be removed for the Proposed Development extends to approximately 1.2 ha. This area is very limited in relation to the total area of woodland found in the vicinity and the magnitude of change of this removal is considered to be **medium-low**.

Significance of the Effect

7.9.12 The effect of the Proposed Development on woodland will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the medium sensitivity of the landscape element and the medium-low magnitude of change upon it.

7.10 Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

Introduction

7.10.1 The assessment of effects on landscape character covers two groups of receptors: LCTs and landscape planning designations.

7.10.2 Effects on landscape character arise both on the site, where the pattern of elements that characterise the landscape could be directly altered by the addition of the Proposed Development, and off-site, where visibility of the Proposed Development may alter the way in which this pattern of elements is perceived. For example, if the Proposed Development is visible from an area of Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), the perceived experience of this LCT may be altered as visibility of the Proposed Development introduces a new external influence.

7.10.3 It should be noted that levels of magnitude of change on landscape character receptors are generally found to be lower than the magnitude of change on viewpoints that lie within these landscape character receptors. This means that if a viewpoint is assessed to undergo a high-medium magnitude of change, for example, it does not necessarily follow that the landscape receptor within which it lies would undergo a medium-high magnitude of change, but may undergo a lower magnitude of change instead.

7.10.4 This is because while viewpoints are usually specifically selected to gain a direct view towards the Proposed Development, the characteristics of a landscape receptor are not necessarily

determined so specifically by the outlook over the Proposed Development, and there are many other considerations, both visual and perceptual. This means that the Proposed Development may have a lesser degree of influence on a landscape character receptor than on a specific view. In the immediate vicinity of the site the magnitude of change on viewpoints and landscape character receptors is more likely to be similar, but beyond this, the magnitude of change on landscape character receptors is often found to diminish more rapidly as the influence of the turbines is subsumed in many other influences.

7.10.5 Notwithstanding this, viewpoints are referred to in this assessment as they give a useful indication of the appearance of the Proposed Development in the landscape setting from specific locations within the various landscape receptors.

7.10.6 This assessment considers both the effects of the Proposed Development itself, in relation to the baseline characteristics of landscape receptors, and the cumulative effects that may arise from the addition of the Proposed Development to other wind farms. The assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development itself is carried out in relation to the baseline characteristics of landscape receptors, which does, where relevant, include consideration of operational and under construction baseline wind energy development. The cumulative assessment considers various possible scenarios of other wind farm development, including operational, under construction, consented and application stage wind farms. The application stage wind farms are considered on a case-by-case basis for each landscape receptor as there is no certainty as to whether or not they would form features in the landscape in the future.

7.10.7 Effects on landscape character receptors are assessed below, covering LCTs first, followed by landscape planning designations.

Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331): Carn Fearna unit

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.8 All of the turbines and the great majority of the infrastructure of the Proposed Development lie within the Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331). There are three incidences of this LCT in the 20 km study area, all clustered in the same area and separated by straths and areas of Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335). This LCT forms a transition between the northern rounded hills and mountains and the more rugged mountains that lie to the south, and consists of hills with a rounded profile that are of smaller scale and more closely grouped than adjoining rounded mountain and hill types.

7.10.9 The key characteristics of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) are described as follows by NatureScot:

- “Moderate scale, well-defined hills with rounded and domed profiles, relatively steep sides and rocky moorland surface texture.
- Hills separated by low, curving glens, lochs and straths.
- High proportion of exposed, glaciated rock at upper levels, with perched lochans, bogs and burns.
- Mosaic of vegetation and variety of textures at lower levels consisting of heather, rough grassland, pockets of broad leaved woodland and regenerating trees, and coniferous forests.
- Rocky landform and low, moorland land cover contrasts with surrounding sheltered wooded glens and smoother moorlands.
- Low intensity land use and limited access contrasts with adjacent farmed plains and straths.
- Extensive views of adjoining plains, firths and mountains from higher levels.
- Occasional masts and pylons tend to be visually absorbed by rocky landforms and vegetation.
- Wild character in the south-west area, which is more remote and has few built structures.”

7.10.10 These characteristics are largely relevant to the Carn Fearna unit other than the final point regarding the wild character of parts of this LCT; the Carn Fearna unit is the north-eastern area of the LCT and lacks the wild character that is specifically noted in the south-west. This is because it is a relatively small area of the LCT and lies within a more settled landscape, adjacent to straths and farming landscapes that are characterised by transport corridors and human influences, thus lacking the vast extents of hill landscape that is found in the other incidences of the LCT. This is referred to in the NatureScot description, which notes that:

> *"The presence of conifer forests and wind turbines, and close proximity to more settled valleys in the north of this type means that wildness characteristics tend to be most apparent in the south-west, adjoining the more remote and rugged landscapes of Inverness District."*

7.10.11 The description also includes the following comment:

> *"Overall this landscape lacks manmade features, most of which occur in the north and are absorbed by the complex texture and landform. One moderate-sized wind farm* [Fairburn Wind Farm] *is a prominent feature, and occasional masts and pylons are visible on skylines."*

7.10.12 The landform of the Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) forms a plateau or 'shelf' above the adjacent Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) (Strath Garve) that lies immediately to the west. The plateau is enclosed to the west by the landforms of Carn Fearna and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich (with its masts), which rise steeply up from Strath Garve; to the north by Beinn a' Ghuilbein; and to the east by Carn Gorm and Meall Odhar Beag. Within the dished landform of the plateau are three lochans and a number of minor watercourses.

7.10.13 There are no viewpoints within this receptor, but Viewpoint 4 overlooks part of the plateau from a more elevated location in the adjacent LCT and provides a useful overview of the Carn Fearna unit.

7.10.14 There are no wind farms within this unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331). However, Fairburn Wind Farm lies within a larger area of this LCT to the south of the Proposed Development, a minimum of approximately 7 km away from this unit, and has intermittent theoretical visibility. There is also some limited theoretical visibility of Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension, which lie a minimum of approximately 7.5 km away to the north-west. Their influence is found primarily on the western edge of the receptor due to landform orientation, and the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II will add to this influence. There is no visibility of Novar and Extension.

7.10.15 The Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) has a medium value, which arises from a combination of the moderate quality of the landscape - which retains distinctive characteristics of the LCT - and the coverage of the north-eastern part of the unit by the Ben Wyvis SLA. However, value is tempered by the limited extent of the unit, which ensures that the landscape characteristics are less strong than they appear in other units and the external influences that the landscape is exposed to as a result of this. Moreover, there is no specific recreational value in the Carn Fearna unit, with no core paths or long distance routes, and no specific recreational destinations. There is, however, a track up to the masts on Meall Ruighe an Fhirich that provides informal access to the high ground for walkers and cyclists, contributing to the medium value. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium. While this is a generally undeveloped, upland landscape with which the built form, colour, texture and movement of the Proposed Development will contrast, it is affected to some degree by baseline human influences that include, internally, forestry, masts and the access track and externally, influences of transport corridors, settlement, and wind farms. The scale and simplicity of the landform and landscape patterns also tempers susceptibility.

7.10.16 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.17 All of the turbines and the majority of the infrastructure of the Proposed Development are located within this unit, and the area covered by the Proposed Development will undergo direct physical effects from the construction and operation of the turbines, access tracks (new and upgraded) and hardstandings, borrow pits, temporary construction compound and

substation compound, as well as perceived effects that arise through visibility of the Proposed Development.

7.10.18 The ZTV indicates that this receptor will gain fairly consistent theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development on the turbine area and within the landform shelf that encloses the site. Theoretical visibility drops away on the eastern and western edges of the unit, where the eastern slopes of Carn Gorm and western slopes of Carn Fearna and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich fall away from the Proposed Development. Visibility also decreases on the northern and southern edges due to outward-facing landform. There is one smaller area of visibility on the western edge of the unit, on a small plateau that lies on the lower western slopes of Carn Fearna.

7.10.19 This is a relatively small unit, with its full area lying within a maximum of 2.4 km away from the turbines.

7.10.20 In this host unit, the Proposed Development will have both direct physical effects on the landscape and perceived effects that rise through visibility of various elements, including primarily the turbines but also access tracks, substation and other infrastructure. On the site itself, the magnitude of change will be **high** for the following reasons:

- this is an upland moorland landscape and the addition of the Proposed Development (including associated infrastructure) to this setting will result in a major direct effect on this baseline character through the addition of new, unfamiliar features, primarily the turbines, providing a highly visible, prevailing influence and introducing uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures;
- in addition to the physical effects, there will be a perceptual alteration to the character of the landscape setting, arising from visibility of the colour, movement, scale, texture and form of the turbines, which will be uncharacteristic of the landscape;
- the characteristic "*low intensity land use and limited access* [that] *contrasts with adjacent farmed plains and straths*" that is noted in the NatureScot description will be altered by the Proposed Development, with land use intensity and access opportunities both increasing; and
- the "*extensive views of adjoining plains, firths and mountains from higher levels*" will be affected by visibility of the Proposed Development (although it should be noted that there are no key renowned viewpoints or hillwalking destinations within the receptor).

7.10.21 While the magnitude of change on the site will be high, there are factors that mitigate this to some extent:

- the landform of the site and its vicinity provides containment and enclosure of the Proposed Development, and the location of the turbines within the interior of the unit with a 'buffer' area around them ensures that they do not appear to extend up to the boundary of the receptor but are in a broader area of consistent landscape type;
- the large-scale and simple landscape patterns that characterise the receptor prevent uncomfortable scale comparisons and provide an appropriate receiving environment for the Proposed Development;
- the location of the Proposed Development in the enclosed plateau that lacks the more complex steep slopes found to the east and west of the receptor ensures containment and also prevents uncomfortable scale comparisons;
- this receptor lacks the "*wild character in the south-west area*" of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) and is already affected by the development of the masts and access track; this reduces the contrast between the Proposed Development and its landscape context; and
- the Proposed Development will not affect the contrast that this unit has with "*surrounding sheltered wooded glens and smoother moorlands"* or blur the distinction between LCTs.

7.10.22 Away from the site itself, the Proposed Development will cease to have direct effects on the landscape and all effects will be perceived, arising from visibility of the turbines and other elements of infrastructure, leading to a reduction in the magnitude of change to a **high-medium** level. This will apply to those parts of the receptor that gain theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development outwith the site itself.

7.10.23 Where there is no or very limited visibility of the Proposed Development – on the northern, southern, western and eastern areas that slope away from the Proposed Development – the maximum magnitude of change will be **low**, and some areas will undergo no change.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.24 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) will vary. The effect on the majority of the unit will be major-moderate or moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors considered in the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the high or high-medium magnitude of change that arises from the direct presence of the Proposed Development and the level of visibility and influence on the nearby surrounding areas. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the consistency of visibility from the central part of the receptor and the high level of visibility of the turbines.

7.10.25 Where there is no or very limited visibility of the Proposed Development, the effect will be **not significant** due to the maximum low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Cumulative Effects

7.10.26 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above; these are Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Lochluichart and Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II. Other current and predicted baseline sites have no or very limited visibility from the receptor due to distance and landform orientation. There is a very small area of theoretical visibility of the application site at Abhainn Dubh at the eastern edge of the receptor, a minimum of 10 km away, but visibility of this site is very limited and it would have very little influence on landscape character.

7.10.27 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II).

7.10.28 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a wind energy development into the receptor, which already has external influence of baseline wind farms. The Proposed Development will have a direct influence on the unit and will itself have a significant effect on landscape character.

7.10.29 The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the limited and relatively distant theoretical visibility of the cumulative wind farms; their external influence, which ensures that they will have no direct effects on the characteristics of the receptor; the grouping together of Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension, which means that external operational cumulative influence is effectively restricted to two wind farms; the location of these wind farms to the north-west and south-west, which ensures that the majority of the setting to the receptor will remain unaffected by wind energy development; and the setting of Fairburn in the same LCT as the Proposed Development, which increases their integration and gives cohesion between cumulative sites.

7.10.30 When the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered in the predicted baseline, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium-low**. Both of these sites have a strong association with the operational cluster and, while they will increase the proximity and level of

external influence of wind energy development, they will not extend wind farm influence to another aspect of the setting to the receptor. This ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes consented sites will not notably increase from its effect in the current baseline scenario.

7.10.31 The cumulative effect on this receptor in the current and predicted baseline scenarios will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331): Lochluichart unit

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.32 The Lochluichart unit of Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) is an extensive area of this LCT that lies to the west of the Proposed Development, separated from the Carn Fearna unit by Strath Garve (Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340)). The key characteristics of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) are described above in relation to the Carn Fearna unit.

7.10.33 The key characteristics are largely relevant to the Lochluichart unit and are more apparent than in the Carn Fearna unit due to the larger size of this area. The "*wild character*" is more apparent in some of the internal parts of this unit that are enclosed by landform (e.g. the eastern part of Lochluichart and Gleann Marcarsaidh) and thus do not gain external influences from the busier and more developed straths that surround the north, south and east of the receptor. The northern, eastern and, to a lesser extent, southern edges and the elevated central parts of the receptor have limited internal development but are strongly influenced by the surrounding transport networks (particularly the A832, A835 and Kyle of Lochalsh railway line) as well as the high voltage overhead line that runs around the north-eastern edge of the unit, and the wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extensions. There are no viewpoints within this receptor.

7.10.34 There are no wind farms within this unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331). However, Fairburn Wind Farm lies within a further area of this LCT to the south of this unit, a minimum of approximately 5.5 km away, and has very intermittent theoretical visibility, gained almost entirely from the south-west-facing slopes that rise to the east of Loch Luichart and the south-facing slopes of Sgurr Marcasaidh and Droman Riabhach. There is very little intervisibility between the Proposed Development and Fairburn, with this being limited to a few isolated high points. To the north of the receptor are the operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension, which have theoretical visibility from the northern and central parts of the receptor, a minimum of approximately 3 km away. Intervisibility between these sites and the Proposed Development is found on north and north-west-facing slopes in the receptor. There is no notable influence of other operational wind farms. The consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II will add to the influence of operational sites at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension.

7.10.35 The Lochluichart unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) has a medium value, arising from the quality and integrity of the landscape, which retains distinctive characteristics of the LCT, and is particularly apparent in the enclosed interior areas that are less affected by external influences of development. However, the great majority of the unit is not covered by any scenic designation (an extremely small area at the western extremity of the unit lies within the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA) and there is no specific recreational value in the unit, with no core paths or national long distance routes, and no specific recreational destinations. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the association that the eastern end of the unit has with the Carn Fearna unit, as together they enclose the eastern and western sides of Strath Garve, facing each other across the strath. This is also a generally undeveloped, upland landscape type with which the external influence of the Proposed Development will contrast; however, it is affected by internal and, to a greater degree, external baseline human influences of forestry, transport corridors, settlement, and wind farms and this tempers susceptibility, as does the scale and simplicity of the landform and landscape patterns.

7.10.36 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Lochluichart unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.37 The Proposed Development lies outwith this receptor and effects will therefore arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects on landscape character.

7.10.38 The visibility, and in turn the influence, of the Proposed Development on this receptor is dictated largely by the notable landform at the eastern end of the unit. Here, the steep ridge of Cnoc na h-Iolaire, which forms the eastern end of the unit, rises to enclose the western side of Strath Garve, separating the strath from Loch Luichart. These slopes, which are a minimum of just over 3 km from the Proposed Development, face eastwards and north-eastwards and have high theoretical visibility (e.g. visibility of up to seven to nine turbines). However, 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 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.

7.10.39 Visibility then ceases again at the high points of these hills and, other than the western part of Loch Luichart, the remainder of the unit has very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. Visibility is higher from the western part of the loch, a minimum of approximately 6.5 km from the Proposed Development, due to the nature of the landform.

7.10.40 Magnitude of change will vary across this unit due to the extensive nature of the LCT, its distinctive landform, and the variable influence of the Proposed Development. The highest magnitude of change will arise on east-facing slopes which are between approximately 3 km and 4.5 km away and are orientated towards the Proposed Development. On these slopes, the level of change will be **high-medium** to **medium**, dependent on the level of visibility (the closer locations are on the lower slopes and have more limited visibility due to landform screening of the turbines) and distance from the Proposed Development. This will arise as a result of the following considerations:

- the site area, which is a part of the setting to the receptor, is an upland moorland landscape with limited evidence of large-scale built form or development, other than the masts, and the presence of the Proposed Development will result in a very readily apparent or readily apparent perceptual alteration to the character of this setting, arising from visibility of the colour, movement, scale, texture and form of the turbines, which are uncharacteristic of the landscape;
- the landform of this part of the receptor is orientated towards the Proposed Development, across Strath Garve, and this association will emphasise the influence of the Proposed Development; and
- the Proposed Development will affect the key characteristic of "*extensive views of adjoining plains, firths and mountains from higher levels",* as it will appear in the eastwards outlook from this part of the receptor.

7.10.41 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum high-medium or medium level are as follows:

- there will be no direct physical effects on this receptor, and effects are perceived only; this ensures that a number of important characteristics of the landscape including those related to topography, landform, land cover, land use, access and settlement patterns will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- this eastern part of the receptor lacks the "*wild character*" found elsewhere in Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), being already affected by the high voltage overhead line and the transport corridors of the A835, A832 and the railway line, and this reduces the impact of the Proposed Development as an external influence;

- the landform of Strath Garve proves a visual separation between the receptor and the Proposed Development, ensuring that the turbines will not be perceived as encroaching towards the receptor; and
- the distance between the Proposed Development and this part of the receptor will reduce its influence as the inherent character of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) will continue to be apparent, along with other external influences on the receptor.

7.10.42 Away from these east-facing slopes at the eastern end of the receptor, the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium**. This will arise on the north-east-facing slopes that form the north-eastern corner of the unit and the small 'finger' that extends to the south of Loch Garve, covering Carn Faire nan Con. In these areas the landform is not specifically orientated towards the Proposed Development, reducing the importance of the Proposed Development as an external influence and thus leading to the reduced magnitude of change. The increased distance from the Proposed Development (a minimum of approximately 4.5 km) is also important as it ensures that the Proposed Development will form a limited part of the setting to the receptor, with many other influences apparent.

7.10.43 The magnitude of change on the slopes that rise to the west of Loch Luichart and the western part of Loch Luichart will be **medium** to **medium-low**, with the reduction in the level of change due to the increased distance from the Proposed Development (a minimum of approximately 5.3 km) and the resultant reduction in the importance of it as an external influence, while other influences become more important.

7.10.44 Elsewhere where there is visibility of the Proposed Development, the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium-low** due to its limited and distant influence. The great majority of the unit will have no change due to lack of visibility of the Proposed Development.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.45 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Lochluichart unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) will vary. The effect on the great majority of the unit will be **not significant** due to lack of or limited visibility and influence of the Proposed Development. However, there will be a localised moderate and **significant** effect at the eastern extremity of the receptor due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the high-medium or medium magnitude of change on it. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the orientation of the landform towards the Proposed Development and the association of the receptor with the site area, as they form the enclosing eastern and western sides of Loch Garve.

7.10.46 Further away, on the north-east-facing slopes that form the north-eastern corner of the unit and the small finger of the LCT that covers Carn Faire nan Con, the effect will be moderate and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the medium magnitude of change on it. This moderate effect is assessed to be not significant as the landform of these areas is not orientated towards the Proposed Development, and the increased distance ensures that the Proposed Development will affect a limited part of the setting to the receptor, ensuring that there are many other influences on the character of the landscape (including development in Strath Garve).

7.10.47 Elsewhere where there is visibility of the Proposed Development, the maximum effect will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Cumulative Effects

7.10.48 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above; these are Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Lochluichart and Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II. Other current and predicted baseline sites have no or very limited visibility from the receptor. There is very limited and intermittent theoretical visibility of the application site at Abhainn Dubh from a minimum of 15 km away, and this site is discounted from the assessment as it would have very little influence on landscape character.

7.10.49 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II).

7.10.50 The cumulative magnitude of change will vary across this receptor. The most influential sites lie to the north (the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster) and south-east (Fairburn), while the Proposed Development lies to the east. The location of these sites around the receptor and the nature of landform of the receptor ensure that the great majority of the unit will be influenced by a maximum of one or two wind farms, while other sites are not visible, and therefore not influential, as they are screened by landform. This ensures that the cumulative magnitude of change arising on the majority of the receptor as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development will be a maximum of **low** due to the small number of influential wind farms, with the Proposed Development being seen by itself, or in conjunction with either the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster or Fairburn.

7.10.51 There are, however, several very specific locations at the eastern end of the receptor where the Proposed Development might be seen in conjunction with both the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster and Fairburn. These locations are limited to several high points, including Sgurr Marcasaidh, Cnoc na h-Iolaire, Creag Loch nan Dearcag, from where views are available in all directions. Here, the Proposed Development will add wind farm influence to a part of the setting to the landscape that is not otherwise affected, so that wind farm influence is seen to the east as well as the north and south-east.

7.10.52 At these locations, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline scenario will be **medium-low**. The magnitude of change is tempered to this level by the lack of any direct effects on the characteristics of the LCT; the location of the wind farms to the north, east and south-east, so that the majority of the panoramic setting to these high points will remain unaffected by wind energy development, including the most dramatic setting to the west; the very small part of the unit that will be affected; and the very intermittent theoretical visibility of the windfarms, and particularly Fairburn.

7.10.53 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain a maximum of **low** over the majority of the receptor and **medium-low** at the specific high points described above. Both of these sites have a strong association with the operational cluster and, while they will increase the proximity and level of external influence of wind energy development, they will not extend wind farm influence to another aspect of the setting to the receptor. This ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes consented sites will not notably increase from its effect in the current baseline scenario.

7.10.54 The cumulative effect on this receptor in the current and predicted baseline scenarios will be moderate-minor or minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low or low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330): Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.55 The Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) lies to the north, west and north-west of the Proposed Development. The site entrance, temporary construction compound and a stretch of access track (new and upgraded) lie within this unit and there is intermittent and limited theoretical visibility of turbines from a minimum of approximately 800 m away. There are no viewpoints within this receptor.

7.10.56 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) covers large tracts of upland across the southern and eastern part of Ross and Cromarty, weaving between the more mountainous Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) and Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross and Cromarty (LCT 328) LCTs. This LCT consists of smooth rounded hills, sweeping moorland slopes and broad, upland straths, and often abuts Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), where the

landform, moorland vegetation, and similar sweeping lines of the two types merge to create an overall landscape of vast scale.

7.10.57 The Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit has been distinguished from the much wider area of the LCT on the basis of its landform and the resultant levels of visibility and influence of the Proposed Development, with distance from the Proposed Development also taken into consideration. The unit has been extended slightly northwards into an area of no visibility in order to cover the new off-site turning circle at Inchbae.

7.10.58 The key characteristics of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) are described as follows by NatureScot.

- "Broad, rounded hills and upland moorlands with smooth, gentle slopes down to broad straths, creating an undulating skyline.
- Occurs in a large tract which weaves around and between the adjoining Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) and Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross & Cromarty (LCT 328) and unifies the mountain groups.
- Large areas of uniform moorland vegetation with occasional surface detail of rivers, lochs, riparian woodland, woodland patches, and regenerating trees.
- Large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes.
- Broad straths with natural, meandering rivers and occasionally highlighted by green, unenclosed, improved pastures and riparian trees.
- Occasional major trunk roads curve through the lowest major straths, with very little associated service development.
- Small groups of mainly traditional buildings around road junctions and at rail stations.
- Man-made structures of pylons, wind farms and reservoirs occur as occasional features within a large scale landscape.
- Many archaeological features on lower ground from prehistoric, medieval and later periods.
- Large, remote interior areas of vast scale with wildness characteristics."

7.10.59 Other parts of the description include the following:

> *"Occasional built structures give a measure of scale and distance which is otherwise absent. Long lines of pylons are often seen in the east of this type, crossing and climbing slopes where they appear stacked along the hillside and on the skyline. Two large groups of wind turbines occur on high ground in the centre* [Corriemoillie and Lochluichart] *and the east* [Beinn Tharsuinn and Coire na Cloiche]. *In views from adjoining mountains, hills and straths they form prominent, moving features on skylines. They are sometimes backdropped by other hills, and stand out against the dark heather.*
>
> *Occasional electricity substations, access tracks, electricity lines and pipelines also contrast with the simple form of the smooth hills and the sense of remoteness found in interior areas. Most people experience this landscape from the roadside where there is low-key human activity. In the broad straths, there is an overall experience of openness and exposure and simple form, with the strong, smooth textured sweeping slopes leading downwards and distant hills curving gently beyond…Away from the main roads and settlements, much of the interior of this character type possesses a sense of remoteness and is accessible only by rough tracks, which creates a very different experience to that of the service corridors. In remote areas away from roads and windfarms, the vast scale of this natural landscape has strong wild character."*

7.10.60 The majority of these characteristics are largely relevant to the Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit. There is notable baseline wind farm influence of the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms within and adjacent to the unit, which, along with forestry, has altered the character of the part of this unit that might otherwise be a "*large, remote interior area of vast scale with wildness characteristics*". Elsewhere in the unit, the A835 creates a corridor of development, although even here, in unforested areas, the vast, remote character of the landscape is apparent.

7.10.61 Part of the operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension lie within this unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), along with the whole of the consented Kirkan and a small part of the consented Lochluichart Extension II. There is intermittent theoretical visibility of the operational sites from the northern and western parts of the unit, and of Kirkan from the northern, western and central parts of the unit. Intervisibility between these sites and the Proposed Development is limited, with the majority of influence from the Proposed Development arising on the southern and eastern parts of the receptor. There is also very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility of Fairburn from a minimum of approximately 9.5 km away, from where it has a very minor influence on the landscape character of the receptor. There is no theoretical visibility of Novar and Extension, Coire na Cloiche or Beinn Tharsuinn wind farms from this receptor.

7.10.62 The Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) has a medium value, arising from the quality, integrity and sense of place that is found in parts of the landscape. This is most notable in unforested areas away from the wind farms, where the massive, remote and sometimes desolate character of the landscape is still apparent. However, many parts of the landscape have been affected by uncharacteristic elements that reduce integrity, intactness and distinctiveness, and this tempers the value of the landscape. It is also relevant that the unit is not covered by any scenic designation. While the majority of the unit does not have specific recreational value, there are several core paths at its southern extremity, at Silverbridge. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the more wild, remote and undeveloped parts of the unit. Susceptibility is tempered by the massive, simple landform of the unit and by the baseline wind farm influence within and adjacent to the unit, which ensures that the Proposed Development will not be entirely uncharacteristic as part of the landscape setting. The forested parts of the landscape also lack remote characteristics, reducing susceptibility of parts of the unit.

7.10.63 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.64 The great majority of the Proposed Development (including all of the turbines) is outwith this receptor and almost all effects will arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects. However, the site access, a temporary construction compound, a short section of new access track and a longer section of upgraded access track and the new off-site turning circle at Inchbae will lie within the LCT, and these will result in direct effects.

7.10.65 The ZTV shows intermittent and often limited theoretical visibility of the turbines from the LCT, ranging from approximately 800 m up to 2.5 km away. The area that lies closest to the site, between the south-western edge of the unit and the A835, has very limited theoretical visibility and is heavily forested. The area of highest theoretical visibility (e.g. visibility of up to seven to nine turbines) is gained from the forested south-east-facing slopes of Creagan an Eich Ghlais, Carn Bad Leabhraidh, Carn na Dubh Choille, and Carn Gaineamhach, which rise several kilometres to the north-west of the Proposed Development, between the A832 and A835.

7.10.66 The magnitude of change on the area that lies in closest proximity to the turbines – between around 800 m and 2.5 km – will be a maximum of **medium**, arising from the following factors:

- this area will be host to several elements of infrastructure that will have a localised direct effect on landscape patterns (the construction and operation of the access track (long term effect), upgrading and operation of access track, the temporary construction compound (short term effect) and the off-site turning circle (which will be topsoiled and reseeded after short term use, with the track remaining below the ground));
- the small parts of the receptor that are directly affected by infrastructure will have a localised higher influence, particularly during construction; and
- away from these direct effects, the external influence of the Proposed Development will result in an alteration to the landscape setting of the receptor, arising from visibility at close proximity of new, unfamiliar features

that provide a clearly visible influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures.

7.10.67 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum medium level in this closest area are as follows.

- the direct physical effects of infrastructure on this LCT will be very localised in extent and are not out of keeping with the baseline landscape patterns, which are characterised by forestry access tracks (part of the Proposed Development access track within this unit is upgraded existing track);
- other than this very localised direct effect of infrastructure that is already characteristic to this part of the receptor, there will be no physical effects on the landscape, and important characteristics including those related to topography, landform, land cover, and settlement patterns will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- this is a peripheral and relatively developed (the A835, forestry, existing tracks) part of the unit that lacks the *"wildness characteristics"* that can be found in "*large, remote interior areas of vast scale*" of the LCT, ensuring that this key characteristic will also remain unaffected;
- theoretical visibility of the turbines from this part of the receptor is very limited, restricted to small numbers of turbines and often small parts of turbines;
- as noted in the NatureScot reference to "*large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes",* forestry is an important feature of this landscape, ensuring that actual visibility, and influence, of the Proposed Development will be further reduced from the already limited theoretical visibility;
- the landform of this part of the unit slopes away from the turbines, reducing the association between the Proposed Development and the receptor; and
- where it is visible, the Proposed Development will be seen in the context of the large scale, simple landscape of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) and scale comparisons between the Proposed Development and its landscape setting will not arise.

7.10.68 This medium magnitude of change will extend to a maximum of approximately 2.5 km from the turbines. Beyond this, the magnitude of change will vary across the unit. Over the great majority of the unit, the magnitude of change will be a maximum of **medium-low** or **low** due to a combination of the lack of or very limited theoretical visibility of the turbines and, in some areas, the distance of the turbines, resulting in very limited influence of the Proposed Development on landscape character. In some areas, the baseline presence of wind farms (Lochluichart and Corriemoillie) also limits the additional influence of the Proposed Development.

7.10.69 However, the magnitude of change on the south-east-facing slopes of Creagan an Eich Ghlais, Carn na Dubh Choille and Carn Gaineamhach will be a maximum of **medium**. These slopes face towards the Proposed Development and therefore gain a greater influence from the turbines, which introduce a new, clearly visible influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures into the setting of the landscape. The magnitude of change is tempered by the perceived rather than direct nature of effects, which ensures that the key characteristics will almost all remain unaffected; and the baseline character of development that is already apparent in these areas (forestry and external influence of the A835), which ensures that it lacks the wildness characteristics with which the Proposed Development would have the greatest contrast. The heavy forestation in this area also limits visibility and the medium magnitude of change will arise very intermittently.

7.10.70 This maximum medium magnitude of change on the south-east-facing slopes of Creagan an Eich Ghlais, Carn na Dubh Choille and Carn Gaineamhach will extend up to a maximum of around 5 km from the turbines, where there is something of a natural break in visibility due to landform. This area covers the outer edge of the hills that face towards the site, forming the edge of the high ground of the LCT. There is visibility from the south-east-facing slopes of higher hills that lie behind this edge, but these areas will have a greater visual and physical separation from the Proposed Development due to the intervening landform of Creagan an

Eich Ghlais, Carn na Dubh Choille and Carn Gaineamhach, and this reduces the influence of the Proposed Development, as does distance – at over 5 km away, the turbines will not be a defining external influence on the strong innate landscape character of these areas.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.71 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) will vary. The effect on the great majority of the unit will be **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor. However, there will be a localised moderate and **significant** effect at the south-eastern periphery of the receptor, on the area that lies closest to the Proposed Development and on the south-east-facing hill slopes of Creagan an Eich Ghlais, Carn na Dubh Choille and Carn Gaineamhach, due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the medium magnitude of change on it. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to various combinations of the proximity of the landscape to the turbines; the direct effects that are found in a very localised area at the site entrance; and the orientation of landform towards the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effects

7.10.72 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above; these are Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, all of which have varying degrees of direct effect on the receptor as well as visual influence. Other current and predicted baseline sites, including Fairburn, have no or very limited visibility from the receptor. There is no theoretical visibility of relevant application stage sites, including Abhainn Dubh.

7.10.73 There are two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II).

7.10.74 In the current baseline scenario, the maximum cumulative magnitude of change on this receptor will be **medium-low**, which will arise on those few areas that gain clear visibility, and therefore influence, of both Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension and the Proposed Development. Here, the Proposed Development will introduce a further wind farm influence on the receptor, providing external influence from the south-eastern setting, while the operational wind farms are in the north-western area. The magnitude of change is tempered to this level by the very limited and localised direct effects of the Proposed Development on the LCT (these infrastructure elements are also not uncharacteristic in this landscape); the small number of cumulative wind farms; the location of the wind farms to the north-west and south-east, so that the majority of the setting to the LCT will remain unaffected by wind energy development; the small part of the unit that will be affected; and the intermittent and generally limited theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development.

7.10.75 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain a maximum of medium-low. Both of these sites have a strong association with the operational cluster and, while Kirkan in particular will increase the proximity and level of wind energy development within the receptor, they will not extend wind farm influence to another aspect of the setting to the receptor. This ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes consented sites will not notably increase from its effect in the current baseline scenario.

7.10.76 The cumulative effect on this receptor in the current and predicted baseline scenarios will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329): Ben Wyvis unit

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.77 The Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) lies to the north-east of the Proposed Development. A very short stretch of access track (upgraded and new) lies within this unit and there is intermittent and limited theoretical visibility of turbines from a minimum of approximately 450 m away. There are three viewpoints within this receptor; Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6.

7.10.78 Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) is found in patches across southern and eastern parts of Ross and Cromarty and consists of high, core mountain groups within a broad belt of lower, smooth rounded hills, moorland, slopes and straths. Generally, slopes are steeper, and summits higher and more angular and rocky than in the surrounding Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330). This unit forms part of the wider area of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) that covers the Ben Wyvis massif, and has been distinguished from the wider area on the basis of its landform and the resultant levels of visibility and influence of the Proposed Development.

7.10.79 The Ben Wyvis massif area of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) is almost entirely surrounded by the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) with the only other adjoining LCT being the Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331), which abuts the south-western corner of the receptor.

7.10.80 The key characteristics of the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) are described as follows by NatureScot.

- *"High, broad-based, smooth sided, lobed mountains found in discrete groups set within, and sweeping down to, smooth, lower hills and high level straths and u-shaped valleys, giving a sense of grandeur.*
- *Well-defined summits with either a rounded or angular profile. Often both occur on the same summit where rounded tops have been sculpted by glacial activity into corries and cliff faces.*
- *Similar height to Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross & Cromarty, but appear lower due to their landform.*
- *Fresh snow lines disclose the true height of the mountains.*
- *Rugged or stony summits and extensive moorland groundcover.*
- *Strong relationship with adjoining Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross & Cromarty type which unifies the mountain groups into a vast landscape.*
- *Limited settlement, few footpaths or other structures, and little evidence of historic or current land use.*
- *Far reaching views from upper reaches to the mountains, plains and firths in adjacent areas.*
- *Vastness of the landscape due to simple lines of mountain profile, sweeping horizons, undifferentiated ground cover, and few man-made structures to indicate scale.*
- *Wild character over much of the area."*

7.10.81 Other parts of the description include the following:

"Views in this landscape are far reaching and panoramic, across open, sweeping foreground landforms. On the hill tops, the eye is drawn to adjacent summits and across to distant mountains and hills, or to the farmed plains and firths to the east. Where there are multiple summits, the eye seeks a dominant focal point. Lower down, the curved upper slopes of the mountains often hide the true summit from the viewer, unless viewed from afar. The overall experience of this open, exposed landscape is one of vastness, emphasised by the undifferentiated ground cover and few scale indicators. Two large windfarms [one of which is Novar and Extension] occur on high ground to the east of this type, which form prominent,

moving features in views from adjoining mountains, hills and straths, giving a measure of scale and distance which is otherwise absent, and signifying the exposed nature of this landscape. Outwith these areas there is a sense of remoteness due to the overall lack of roads, settlement and built structures. Combined with the wide sweeping horizons, and the exposed and sometimes rugged summits, this creates a wild character in the landscape."

7.10.82 The majority of these characteristics are largely relevant to the Ben Wyvis unit. However, while there are "*few footpaths"* across much of the area, it is important to note that a well-made vehicular track zigzags up to Little Wyvis and beyond, and this notably reduces the "*wild character*" in this area. The path up Ben Wyvis is also very well-defined and well-used, which increases accessibility and also reduces the "*wild character*". An additional point to note is the external influence of wind farms that is apparent on many parts of the receptor, most notably from Corriemoillie and Lochluichart, which will be added to by the consented Kirkan, but also from Fairburn.

7.10.83 A number of operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from some parts of this receptor as seen at Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6, including Auchmore 1 and 2, Achany Extension, Coire na Cloiche, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, Lairg II, Lochluichart and Extensions, Meall Buidhe, Novar and Extension, and Strathrory Redesign. However, many of these sites are theoretically visible from too great a distance for them to contribute to notable effects on landscape character and the most relevant are the group at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension to the west, which will be added to by the consented Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Kirkan. Novar and Extension is to the north-east while Fairburn lies to the south-west. Other operational and consented wind farms have theoretical visibility but this is too limited and distant to contribute to significant cumulative effects. The landform of this unit ensures that there is very little intervisibility of these more relevant cumulative wind farms and the Proposed Development, with this being restricted to high points such as Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6, of which the latter two are particularly relevant as the external influence of wind farms in views from the ridgeline of Ben Wyvis may be relevant to the cumulative experience in the LCT. Elsewhere, simultaneous visibility of wind farms is generally limited to one or two, including the Proposed Development. The site that has the highest level of intervisibility with the Proposed Development is Fairburn, which has a limited influence on landscape character due to its distance from the receptor (over 10 km).

7.10.84 The Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) has a high-medium value, arising from the coverage of most of the unit by the local Ben Wyvis SLA designation, the quality, integrity and sense of place that is found in much of the landscape, and the recreational value afforded by the well-known and well-used route up Ben Wyvis. The Ben Wyvis massif is also a well-known, renowned landscape, and this adds to the value. A high level of value is, however, precluded by the local level designation of the landscape. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the more wild, remote and undeveloped parts of the unit. Susceptibility is tempered by the massive, simple landform of the unit and by the external baseline wind farm influence, which ensures that the Proposed Development will not be entirely uncharacteristic as part of the landscape setting.

7.10.85 The combination of a medium susceptibility and high-medium value of the landscape results in a **high-medium** sensitivity for the Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.86 The great majority of the Proposed Development is outwith this receptor and almost all effects will arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects. However, a very short section of upgraded/new access track will lie just within the south-western extremity of the LCT, and this will result in direct effects.

7.10.87 The ZTV shows very intermittent and often very limited theoretical visibility of the turbines from the LCT, ranging from approximately 450 m up to 6.5 km away, with some large areas of ZTV shading coinciding with commercial forestry plantation at lower elevations. The area of highest theoretical visibility (e.g. visibility of up to seven to nine turbines) is gained from the west and south-west-facing slopes of Little Wyvis, the west-facing slopes of Cnoc nan Each Mor, the

south-facing slopes of An Cabar, and the south-west-facing slopes that enclose the southern side of Coire na Feola.

7.10.88 The highest magnitude of change will be a **high-medium level**, which will arise on the west and south-west-facing slopes of Little Wyvis, between around 450 m and 2 km away from the nearest turbine. This magnitude of change will arise due to the following factors:

- the south-western extremity of this area will be host to a very short stretch of upgraded/new access track, which will have a localised direct effect on landscape patterns;
- the external influence of the Proposed Development will result in an alteration to the immediate landscape setting of the receptor, arising from visibility at close proximity of new, unfamiliar features that provide a very readily apparent influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures;
- the landform of this area is orientated towards the Proposed Development, and this will increase its external influence;
- the external influence of the Proposed Development will directly affect the key characteristic of "*far reaching views from upper reaches to the mountains, plains and firths in adjacent areas*"; and
- the Proposed Development will affect the way that several other key characteristics are perceived through the introduction of a new external influence, including "*vastness of the landscape due to simple lines of mountain profile, sweeping horizons, undifferentiated ground cover, and few man-made structures to indicate scale*" and "*…little evidence of historic or current land use*".

7.10.89 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum high-medium level on the south-west-facing slopes of Little Wyvis are as follows:

- the upgraded/new access track is not uncharacteristic in this part of the receptor, and will have a limited additional influence;
- other than the upgraded/new access track there will be no physical effects on the landscape, and important characteristics including those related to topography, landform, land cover, and settlement patterns will remain almost completely unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- this is a peripheral part of the unit that is already influenced by external and internal elements and lacks the "*wild character*" that can be found elsewhere the LCT, ensuring that this key characteristic will also remain unaffected;
- the Proposed Development will not be seen in the context of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330), with which this receptor has a "*strong relationship*", but rather in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331); and
- the large scale and simple patterns of this landscape ensure that scale comparisons between the turbines and the receptor will not arise.

7.10.90 The other areas of high theoretical visibility and influence of the Proposed Development are found on the west-facing slopes of Cnoc nan Each Mor, the south-facing slopes of An Cabar, and the south-west-facing slopes that enclose the southern side of Coire na Feola, between around 2 and 5.5 km away. Here, the magnitude of change will vary from a **high-medium** to **medium** level due to the increasing distance of the turbines, which reduces their influence on landscape character while other influences become more apparent, and the lack of any direct effects on the receptor.

7.10.91 There is theoretical visibility of the turbines from the area around the summit of Glas Leathad Mor but this is very limited (as seen at Viewpoint 6), and the maximum magnitude of change on landscape character will be **low** due to very limited visibility and influence of the turbines and the great number of other influences – both internal and external - on landscape character in this extremely elevated location. It is also relevant that the turbines will be contained well

below the skyline and will not affect the key characteristic of long, open views from here, which are focussed on the eye-catching, sometimes dramatic landscape that lies beyond.

7.10.92 Elsewhere, the great majority of the unit will have no change due to lack of visibility and influence. Where there is some limited theoretical visibility elsewhere, the magnitude of change will be a maximum of **low** due to very limited visibility and influence of the Proposed Development.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.93 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) will vary. The effect on the great majority of the unit will be **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum low magnitude of change and the high-medium sensitivity of the receptor. There will, however, be a localised major-moderate or moderate and **significant** effect on some areas at the southern end of the receptor, covering the west and south-west-facing slopes of Little Wyvis, the west-facing slopes of Cnoc nan Each Mor, the south-facing slopes of An Cabar, and the south-west-facing slopes that enclose the southern side of Coire na Feola. This is due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium sensitivity of the receptor and the maximum high-medium to medium magnitude of change on it. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case the effect on areas with a moderate effect is assessed as significant due to various combinations of the proximity of the landscape to the turbines; the direct effects that are found in a very localised area at the site entrance; and the orientation of landform towards the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effects

7.10.94 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above, with the most relevant being Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Lochluichart Extension II, Kirkan, Novar and Extension and Fairburn. Other current and predicted baseline sites have no or very limited and/or distant theoretical visibility from the receptor and will not contribute to significant cumulative effects. There is theoretical visibility of the application site at Abhainn Dubh from the eastern part of the receptor from a minimum of just under 2 km away.

7.10.95 There are three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.10.96 The cumulative magnitude of change in the current baseline scenario will vary across this receptor. The most influential sites lie to the west (the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster) while the more distant and less influential sites are to the south-west (Fairburn) and north-east (Novar) while the Proposed Development lies to the south-west. Novar has theoretical visibility from a very small area at the eastern end of the unit.

7.10.97 The location of these sites around the receptor and the nature of landform of the receptor ensure that the great majority of the unit will be influenced by a maximum of one or two wind farms, while other sites are not visible, and therefore not influential, as they are screened by landform. This ensures that the cumulative magnitude of change arising on the majority of the receptor as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development will be a maximum of **low** due to the small number of influential wind farms, with the Proposed Development being seen by itself, or in conjunction with either the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster or Novar and Extension. Fairburn is most often visible in conjunction with the Proposed Development but has a limited influence due to its distance and is often seen behind the Proposed Development.

7.10.98 There are, however, several very specific locations where the Proposed Development might be seen in conjunction with the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster, Novar and Extension and

Fairburn. These locations are limited to several high points, including Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6, from where views are available in all directions. Here, the Proposed Development will add closer proximity wind farm influence to the south-western setting of the receptor, currently affected only by the more distant visibility of Fairburn, so that closer wind farm influence is extended around the view.

7.10.99 At these elevated locations, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline scenario will be **medium-low**. The magnitude of change is tempered to this level by the lack of any direct effects on the characteristics of the LCT; the location of the most influential wind farms (Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension and the Proposed Development) to the west and south-west, where they will affect only one aspect of the view; the appearance of the Proposed Development in the same aspect of the view as Fairburn; the very small part of the unit that will be affected by this type of cumulative influence; and the very intermittent and/or distant theoretical visibility of windfarms, particularly Fairburn and Novar and Extension.

7.10.100 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain a maximum of **low** over the majority of the receptor and **medium-low** at the specific high points described above. Both of these sites have a strong association with the operational cluster and, while they will increase the proximity and level of external influence of wind energy development, they will not extend wind farm influence to another aspect of the setting to the receptor. This ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes consented sites will not notably increase from its effect in the current baseline scenario.

7.10.101 When the application site at Abhainn Dubh is also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change will increase slightly but will remain a maximum of **low** or **medium-low**. Abhainn Dubh has very intermittent theoretical visibility from this receptor (it has very limited theoretical visibility at Viewpoint 4 and is not visible from either Viewpoint 5 or 6) and has very little intervisibility with the Proposed Development.

7.10.102 The cumulative effect on the majority of this receptor in the current and predicted baseline scenarios and the application stage scenario will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high-medium sensitivity of the receptor.

7.10.103 However, at the localised and very intermittent parts of the receptor where there is baseline influence of the Corriemoillie/ Lochluichart cluster, Novar and Extension and Fairburn, to which the Proposed Development will be added, the cumulative effect in all scenarios will be moderate and **significant** due to the combination of a medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the high-medium sensitivity of the receptor. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the addition of the Proposed Development, with its increased proximity and levels of theoretical visibility and influence, to the wind farms that have an external baseline influence on landscape character.

Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330): Strath Sgitheach unit

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.104 The Strath Sgitheach unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) lies to the east of the Proposed Development and the ZTV shows intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 1.7 km away. There are no viewpoints within this receptor. The Strath Sgitheach unit has been distinguished from the much wider area of the LCT on the basis of its landform and the resultant levels of visibility and influence of the Proposed Development, with distance from the Proposed Development also taken into consideration. The key characteristics of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) are described previously in relation to the Corriemoillie Forest/Strath Rannoch unit. The key difference between these two units is the lack of baseline wind farm influence within or close to the Strath Sgitheach unit, although there is extensive coniferous forestry cover. As a result, it does display some of the key characteristic of "*remote interior areas of vast scale*", but "*wildness characteristics"* are limited by the forestry cover.

7.10.105 There are no operational or consented wind farms in this receptor and the closest operational site is Novar and Extension, which lies to the north-east of the unit and has intermittent

theoretical visibility from the eastern part of the unit, a minimum of approximately 4.5 km away. Further away - a minimum of approximately 15 km - to the north-east and with very limited theoretical visibility from the eastern extremity of the unit are Coire na Cloiche and the consented Strathrory Redesign. Fairburn, a minimum of approximately 10 km to the south-west, is the only other operational site within reasonable proximity that has theoretical visibility from the receptor, and this too is limited and intermittent. The operational and consented cluster at Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extensions has no visibility. The north-eastern sites – Novar and Extension, Coire na Cloiche and Strathrory Redesign – have very little intervisibility with the Proposed Development.

7.10.106 The Strath Sgitheach unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) has a medium value, arising from the quality, integrity and sense of place that is found in the landscape. This is most notable in the few unforested areas, where the vast, remote and sometimes desolate character of the landscape is apparent. However, extensive areas of the landscape have been affected by forestry that reduces integrity, intactness and distinctiveness, and this tempers the value of the landscape. It is also relevant that the unit is not covered by any scenic designation and does not have specific recreational value. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the more remote and undeveloped parts of the unit. Susceptibility is tempered by the massive, simple landform of the unit and by the lack of wildness characteristics in the extensive forested areas.

7.10.107 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Strath Sgitheach unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.108 The Proposed Development lies outwith this receptor and effects will therefore arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects.

7.10.109 The ZTV shows intermittent and often limited theoretical visibility of the turbines from the LCT, ranging from approximately 1.7 km up to 10.5 km away. The area that lies closest to the site, at the western extremity of the unit, has limited theoretical visibility and is heavily forested. The highest theoretical visibility (e.g. visibility of up to seven to nine turbines) is gained from areas where there are west or south-west-facing slopes that are orientated more towards the Proposed Development, including those of Cnoc na Gearraisich, Druim a Chuilein and Cioch Mhor.

7.10.110 The magnitude of change on the area that lies in closest proximity to the turbines – between around 1.7 km and 5 km – will be a maximum of **medium**, arising from the following factors:

- the external influence of the Proposed Development will result in an alteration to the landscape setting of the receptor, arising from visibility at reasonably close proximity of new, unfamiliar features that provide an apparent influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures; and
- in some areas, the landform is orientated broadly towards the Proposed Development, and this will increase its external influence.

7.10.111 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum medium level in this closest area are as follows.

- there will be no physical effects on the landscape, and all effects will arise from visibility and perception of the Proposed Development;
- this ensures that important characteristics, including those related to topography, landform, land cover, and settlement patterns will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- theoretical visibility of the turbines from this part of the receptor is limited, restricted to small numbers of turbines and often small parts of turbines;
- as noted in the NatureScot reference to "*large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes*", forestry is an important feature of this landscape,

ensuring that actual visibility, and influence, of the Proposed Development will be further reduced from the already limited theoretical visibility;

- the forestry also ensures that this area lacks "*wildness characteristics*" with which the Proposed Development would have the greatest contrast; and
- while some areas of landform are orientated towards the Proposed Development, other areas slope southwards and here the Proposed Development will have a peripheral influence.

7.10.112 This medium magnitude of change will extend to a maximum of approximately 5 km from the turbines. Beyond this, where there is visibility of the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change will reduce to a **medium-low** level due to varying combinations of the limited parts of turbines that are theoretically visible, continuing forest cover, landform orientation, and distance – at over 5 km away, the turbines will not be a defining external influence on the strong innate landscape character of these areas.

7.10.113 Over the great majority of the unit, the magnitude of change will be a maximum of **low** due to a combination of very limited theoretical visibility of the turbines and, in some areas, the distance of the turbines, resulting in very limited influence of the Proposed Development on landscape character.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.114 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Strath Sgitheach unit of Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) will vary. The effect on the great majority of the unit will be **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor. However, there will be a localised moderate and **significant** effect at the western extremity of the receptor, on the area that lies closes to the Proposed Development due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the medium magnitude of change on it. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the proximity of the landscape to the turbines, the contrast of the turbines with the landscape character of the receptor and, in some places, the orientation of landform towards the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effect

7.10.115 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above; these are Novar and Extension and, to a lesser extent, Coire na Cloiche, Strathrory Redesign and Fairburn. Other current and predicted baseline sites, including Fairburn, have no or very limited visibility from the receptor. The application stage site at Abhainn Dubh lies partly within the eastern end of this receptor and has theoretical visibility from the eastern part of the unit.

7.10.116 There are three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Novar and Extension, Coire na Cloiche, and Fairburn);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Strathrory Redesign); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.10.117 In the current baseline scenario, the maximum cumulative magnitude of change on this receptor will be **low**, which will arise on those few areas that gain clear visibility, and therefore influence, of both Novar and Extension and the Proposed Development. Coire na Cloiche may also be visible, but this will not affect the level of change due to its limited and distant theoretical visibility. In this scenario, the Proposed Development will introduce a further wind farm influence on the receptor, providing external influence from the western setting to the unit, while the operational wind farm(s) are to the north-east. The magnitude of change is tempered to a low level by the lack of direct effects on the landscape characteristics; the small number of cumulative wind farms; the very limited intervisibility of the wind farms; the small

part of the unit that will be affected; and the overall orientation of the landform in this receptor to the south-east, away from both the Proposed Development and Novar and Extension.

7.10.118 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented site at Strathrory Redesign is also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain a maximum of low. This site will have limited and distant influence on the receptor and will be seen in the same aspect of the setting as Novar and Extension. This ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes consented sites will not notably increase from its effect in the current baseline scenario.

7.10.119 When the application stage site at Abhainn Dubh is also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change will increase to **medium-low** level. Abhainn Dubh would introduce a wind farm into the eastern end of the receptor, with both direct and indirect influence on the landscape characteristics, and this would increase the cumulative situation to which the Proposed Development is being added. The magnitude of change is tempered to medium-low level by the very limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development and Abhainn Dubh (as well as the other north-eastern sites) and the appearance of Abhainn Dubh in the same aspect of the receptor as Novar, so that wind farm influence would not be extended further around its setting.

7.10.120 The cumulative effect on this receptor will be minor (current and predicted baseline scenarios) and moderate-minor (with application stage sites) and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum low or medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341): Kinellan unit

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.121 The Kinellan unit of Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341) lies to the south-east of the Proposed Development and the ZTV shows intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 4.1 km away. Viewpoint 8 is within this receptor.

7.10.122 The Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341) is found in broad bands along the mid to upper reaches of convex slopes, between the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) and the lowlands of Easter Ross. This LCT marks a transition between lowlands and uplands and has upland characteristics towards the higher elevations.

7.10.123 The key characteristics of Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341) are described as follows by NatureScot.

- “Gentle to moderately steep convex slopes, occasional minor straths and glens with sinuous burns and rivers, and occasional high level, flatter undulating moorlands.
- Rocky, steeper slopes occur in the southern part of the type.
- Mix of agriculture and farming, varying from an equal balance to marginally more agriculture.
- A patchwork of semi-improved and improved pasture, arable fields, conifer forestry blocks, woodlands, shelterbelts, trees and hedges.
- The topography and geometric pattern of enclosure are emphasised by walls, hedges and hedgerow trees.
- Variable field sizes, many are large and open and dominate the landscape; others are smaller and create diverse patterns and textures.
- The contrasting upland character of higher ground emphasised by stone walls, rough grassland and less tree cover.
- The scale of woodlands is in keeping with the geometry of fields and narrow roads.
- Conifer forests vary in size, the larger ones superimposed on the field pattern.

- The edge of forestry blocks creates enclosed spaces around fields and buildings, and forms a dark background to enclosed features.
- Tree cover creates enclosed or intermittent distant views and helps to screen structures such as pylons and masts,
- Far reaching views to the south and east from high ground or open areas, often framed and enhanced by foreground trees."

7.10.124 Other relevant comment includes the following:

> *"The density and height of conifer forests screens many man-made structures and often restricts distant views, or provides intermittent glimpses. This tends to focus attention towards details within the landscape, with views directed to fields or buildings within the spaces created by forests."*

7.10.125 There are no operational or consented wind farms in this receptor and the closest operational site is Fairburn which lies a minimum of approximately 5.5 km to the south-west of the unit. This site has fairly consistent theoretical visibility and intermittent theoretical intervisibility with the Proposed Development (as seen at Viewpoint 8). There is very intermittent theoretical visibility of Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension and Lochluichart Extension II but this has very little influence on landscape character at a minimum of approximately 14 km away. The forestry that characterises this unit further screens the external influence of wind farms.

7.10.126 The Kinellan unit of Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341) has a medium value, arising from the integrity to the key characteristics that is apparent in the landscape, and the recreational value of this unit, which includes a number of core paths in the popular and accessible recreational area around Loch Kinellan. However, the unit is not covered by any scenic designation and this is not a particularly distinctive or strong landscape type. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the relatively complex and small-scale landscape patterns found in some parts of the unit.

7.10.127 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Kinellan unit of Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.128 The Proposed Development lies outwith this receptor and effects will therefore arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects. The ZTV shows that theoretical visibility falls into two broad areas in this unit: firstly, the north-western part of the unit, which is closest to the Proposed Development - between around 4.1 km and 5.3 km away - where there is fairly consistent theoretical visibility, and secondly, the southern part of the receptor where there is very intermittent theoretical visibility from between around 5.8 km and 6.4 km away.

7.10.129 The magnitude of change on the north-western area will be a maximum of **medium**, arising from the following factors:

- the external influence of the Proposed Development will result in an alteration to the landscape setting of the receptor, arising from visibility at reasonably close proximity of new, unfamiliar features that provide an apparent influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures;
- the relatively small scale and complex landform and landscape patterns of this unit can lead to scale comparison with the turbines; and
- in some areas, the landform is orientated broadly towards the Proposed Development, and this will increase its external influence.

7.10.130 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum medium level in this closest area are as follows.

- there will be no physical effects on the landscape, and all effects will arise from visibility and perception of the Proposed Development;

- this ensures that important key characteristics, including those related to topography, landform, land cover, and settlement patterns will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- the woodland cover that characterises this landscape will limit the actual visibility of the Proposed Development, as noted in the key characteristic "*tree cover creates enclosed or intermittent distant views and helps to screen structures such as pylons and masts*" and the description "*the density and height of conifer forests screens many man-made structures and often restricts distant views, or provides intermittent glimpses…this tends to focus attention towards details within the landscape, with views directed to fields or buildings within the spaces created by forests*";
- the key characteristic "*Far reaching views to the south and east from high ground or open areas, often framed and enhanced by foreground trees*" emphasises that the principal long views are gained to the south and east rather than to the north-west, towards the Proposed Development; and
- the landform orientation is varied and there is no overall trend for specific orientation towards the site.

7.10.131 In the southern part of the unit, the maximum magnitude of change will reduce to a **medium-low** level due to the very intermittent nature of visibility, screening by woodland, the distance of the Proposed Development from this area, and the orientation of much of the landform away from the Proposed Development.

7.10.132 Parts of the unit will have no change due to lack of visibility of the Proposed Development.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.133 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Kinellan unit of Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341) will vary. The effect on the southern part of the unit will be **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor. However, there will be a localised moderate and **significant** effect on the north-western part of the receptor due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the medium magnitude of change on it. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the proximity of the landscape to the turbines and the contrast of the turbines with the landscape of the receptor.

Cumulative Effect

7.10.134 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above; these are principally Fairburn and, to a lesser extent, Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, and Lochluichart Extension II. The application stage site at Abhainn Dubh also has very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 9 km away. Abhainn Dubh has very little intervisibility with the Proposed Development, and where they are theoretically seen simultaneously, vegetation often provides a screen (e.g. Viewpoint 8).

7.10.135 The maximum cumulative magnitude of change on this receptor in any scenario will be **low** due to the limited and relatively distant theoretical visibility of cumulative wind farms and/or the Proposed Development, which ensures that they will not lead to a significant cumulative effect.

7.10.136 The cumulative effect on this receptor will be minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Strath - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 340)

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.137 Strath - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 340) lies to the west and south-west of the Proposed Development and the ZTV shows sometimes intermittent/limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 2 km away. Viewpoints 1, 2, 27 and 28 are within this receptor. Units of Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) are linear or curved and enclosed landscapes and, being settled and relatively intensively farmed, contrast with the surrounding

moorlands and hills. This unit of Strath – Ross and Cromarty (LCT 340) runs between Loch Achanalt in the west and the south end of Loch Garve in the east.

7.10.138 The key characteristics of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) are described as follows by NatureScot.

- "Sinuous or curved channels with steep sides channelling through upland and mountainous landscapes.
- Wide flat strath floor at the coast or terminating water body, where the presence of water dominates.
- Narrowing channel inland, with a rising strath floor, terminating at a narrow glen or mountain pass.
- Meandering central river, becoming broad and braided at the lower end, terminating in wetlands and pebbly beaches.
- Abrupt change in topography from strath to slope emphasised by change from regular field patterns to forest, woodland and moorland.
- Riparian woodland and patches of native woodlands on the strath floor and lower slopes.
- Limited settlement, usually located at inland bridging points at the entrance to straths.
- Rural estate landscapes including broad, green, regular fields of pasture, large estate houses and associated features such as farm buildings, stone walls and policy woodlands.
- Occasional small linear crofting townships and small holdings on slopes adjoining the road access.
- Through-road along the strath length located on the edge of the strath floor.
- Historic land use evidence in abandoned 19th and early 20th Century settlements.
- Restricted views in upper reaches, channelled along the strath, contrasting with openness of the wide strath at the lower end, the latter enhanced by reflection of light on the sea or terminal loch.
- Intriguing views along curved straths which are enhanced on unimproved roads which closely follow the curving landform of the strath sides."

7.10.139 Other relevant comments include the following.

> *"These straths contain through roads which usually follow the edges of the strath floor at the break of slope, highlighting its linear form. Many of these straths have become major pan-highland transport routes, and the traditional through roads, which typically fitted the detailed landform, have been engineered into long, curving main roads. These tend to appear as service corridors when also associated with elements such as road signs, parking areas and power lines, which run parallel to the road for easy access.*
>
> *"The character varies along the length of straths, from relatively enclosed, sheltered pastures to more open broad green fields, wetlands, broad river braids and natural shorelines. The open strath floor is the central visual focus, with views directed along and between opposite slopes. Visibility is limited where the strath curves through the landscape, resulting in a gradual change of scenery and a sense of intrigue. This is enhanced on un-improved roads which more closely follow the line of slopes.*
>
> *The sense of enclosure within the strath is partially influenced by landcover. An open water body provides the least enclosure of space, whilst vertical elements such as trees and buildings create further enclosure and their vertical edges emphasise the flatness of the strath ground. Blocks of woodland physically and visually break up the open character by subdividing the central space and reducing the extent of views along the strath. The sheltered, enclosed, farmed and settled character of these straths, and the presence of human activity, results in a landscape which is distinct from the surrounding uninhabited upland landscapes. At the coast or terminal water bodies, the strath landscape opens out, providing a sudden*

change in the degree of enclosure. The open skies, longer views and reflection of light from water contrasts strongly with the confines of the interior of longer straths."

7.10.140 These characteristics are generally relevant to this area of Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), although this unit is relatively unusual in that it doesn't terminate at the sea or a single large waterbody. Stretches of the A832 and A835 run through the Strath; in places, these roads are largely unimproved in terms of routing and do closely follow the landform of the Strath. The NatureScot description of visibility within the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) is very similar to that gained from these roads as they pass through the Strath, with constantly changing levels of visibility and enclosure. The Kyle of Lochalsh railway line and a high voltage overhead line also run through the Strath.

7.10.141 There are no operational or consented wind farms in this receptor. There is theoretical visibility of operational and consented sites at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Lochluichart Extension II, Kirkan, and Fairburn, but this is very limited and intermittent, with extensive further screening provided by vegetation, as demonstrated at Viewpoints 1, 2, 27 and 28.

7.10.142 Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) has a medium value, arising from the integrity of the landscape, which retains many of its key characteristics, and the sense of place that arises particularly from the contrast between the Strath and its upland setting. However, it is not covered by any scenic designation, does not have specific recreational value, and has been affected in places by the presence of well-used main roads, an overhead line and, in the vicinity of Garve, a higher level of settlement than is usually seen. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the relatively small-scale and complex landscape patterns of the Strath. There is also some association between the strath and the Carn Fearna unit of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), within which the site lies, as the Rounded Rocky Hills provides the skyline and enclosure to the eastern side of the southern Strath. However, as noted by NatureScot, *"the open strath floor is the central visual focus, with views directed along and between opposite slopes"* and the skyline landform is not of key importance here.

7.10.143 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.144 The Proposed Development lies outwith this receptor and effects will therefore arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects.

7.10.145 The ZTV shows sometimes intermittent/limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 2 km away up to 14 km away. The eastern part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), between Gorstan and the southern end of Loch Garve, lies closest to the site, approximately 2 km to 3.5 km away, and runs broadly parallel to the Proposed Development. This area generally has very limited and intermittent theoretical visibility of the turbines, with some areas on the eastern side of the Strath gaining no visibility. Viewpoint 1 illustrates an outlook from this part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) where there is a clear view but limited visibility of the turbines, while Viewpoint 2 shows a relatively rare open outlook with high visibility of the turbines.

7.10.146 The magnitude of change on this eastern part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) will be a maximum of **medium**. This will arise only on the western edge of this area where theoretical visibility is higher and landform is orientated towards the Proposed Development. This will arise from the following factors:

- the external influence of the Proposed Development will result in an alteration to the landscape setting of the receptor, arising from visibility at close proximity of new, unfamiliar features that provide an apparent influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures;
- the turbines will be seen on the skyline that encloses the eastern side of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), which can emphasise the influence of the Proposed Development; and

- the landform of the western edge of this part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) is orientated towards the Proposed Development, increasing its influence.

7.10.147 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum medium level on the western edge of the eastern part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) are as follows:

- there will be no physical effects on the landscape, and all effects will arise from visibility and perception of the Proposed Development;
- this ensures that important characteristics, including those related to topography, landform, land cover, and settlement patterns will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the skyline and will not affect the key views as noted by NatureScot; "*the open strath floor is the central visual focus, with views directed along and between opposite slopes"*; and
- theoretical visibility of the turbines from the western edge of the eastern part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) is limited, and the extensive woodland cover found in this LCT provides further screening as noted in the NatureScot description; "*blocks of woodland physically and visually break up the open character by subdividing the central space and reducing the extent of views along the strath".*

7.10.148 Elsewhere in the eastern part of the strath, away from the western edge, the magnitude of change will be a maximum of **medium-low** due to the very limited theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development and the orientation of landform away from or without any particular orientation towards the Proposed Development.

7.10.149 In the western part of the strath, between Gorstan and Loch Achanalt, the ZTV shows more consistent theoretical visibility, and this can be seen at Viewpoints 27 and 28. However, these are relatively unusual open views, as woodland screening continues to reduce visibility and influence of the Proposed Development from this area. The maximum magnitude of change on this part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) will be **medium**, on areas that lie between around 3.5 km and 5.5 km away. This level of change will arise where there is a high level of visibility of the Proposed Development on the skyline that forms the eastern end of this part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340). However, the magnitude of change on the great majority of this area will be a maximum of **medium-low** or **low** due to very limited visibility and influence of the Proposed Development as a result of vegetation screening.

7.10.150 At around 5.5 km away, west of Torriegorrie, the strath becomes very narrow and there is an extensive area of woodland that screens almost all visibility, ensuring that the influence of the Proposed Development will drop notably. To the west of here, between approximately 6.2 km and 14 km away at the western end of the strath, the magnitude of change will reduce from a maximum **medium-low** to **negligible** level as a result of distance and the reduced influence of the Proposed Development on landscape character.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.151 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) will vary. The effect on the majority of the unit will be **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor. However, there will be a very intermittent moderate and **significant** effect on the eastern part of the receptor and the area between Gorstan and west of Torriegorrie due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium sensitivity of the receptor and the medium magnitude of change on it. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the proximity of the landscape to the turbines, the contrast of the turbines with the landscape character of the receptor and, in some places, the orientation of landform towards the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effects

7.10.152 As described above, visibility and influence of operational and consented wind farms is very limited and the addition of the Proposed Development to these sites will have a maximum **low** magnitude of change. There is no theoretical visibility of any relevant application stage sites.

The cumulative effect on this receptor will be minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335)

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.153 Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335) lies to the south of the Proposed Development and the ZTV shows sometimes intermittent/limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 1 km away. Viewpoints 3, 7 and 24 are within this receptor. This LCT is relatively limited in extent and is generally found further to the west.

7.10.154 The relevant key characteristics of the LCT are described as follows by NatureScot.

- "Low lying, mainly rocky moorlands, with sinuous glens and narrow gorges.
- Mainly complex, deeply undulating landform with rocky knolls, lochans and small sinuous burns.
- Glens and occasional gorges with steep rocky sides, uneven, descending central floor and central burn or river with water falls.
- A high proportion of native tree cover consisting of relatively large patches of broadleaf trees, Caledonian pine woods, regenerating trees and new planting, interspersed with moorland and grassland.
- Large conifer forests in the east mask the underlying landforms in the east.
- Low levels of settlement consisting of occasional estate buildings and cottages fitted into the landscape.
- Sinuous roads avoid high ground and follow natural features such as rivers, loch shores, and curving glens.
- Infrequent and low-key road side facilities absorbed by landform and tree cover.
- Historic relics of former periods of settlement, including numerous indications of prehistoric settlement.
- Enclosed views focussing attention on foreground detail, occasionally opening to views of glens, lochs and mountains.
- A back drop of mountains and lochs often glimpsed through tree cover."

7.10.155 Additional relevant comments include the following.

> *"In the east, large scale coniferous forests blanket the underlying irregular landform of rocky outcrops and boulders…Most of these glens act as passes between mountains and across rocky moorlands. They usually contain sinuous transport routes which weave between rocky high points, follow the line of rivers, or hug the shore lines of inland water bodies.*
>
> *Most views from within this landscape are enclosed by rocky outcrops and tree cover giving an overall intimate character, the eye often focusing on details such as exposed rock strata, water movement, and the jumbled arrangement of vegetation amongst moss and lichen covered boulders. Nearby mountains and lochs are a constant backdrop and usually glimpsed through tree cover. Views occasionally open out over water bodies and down wider glens. The experience is ever changing when moving through the landscape on winding roads. The constant change in road direction and lack of long-distance views often make it difficult to orientate oneself."*

7.10.156 These characteristics generally apply to this unit of Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335). This is the easternmost unit of the LCT and the reference to "*large conifer forests in the east mask the underlying landforms in the east"* is relevant to this area, with swathes of forestry covering parts of the unit, although felling has taken place recently. Viewpoint 7 lies in this area and illustrates the extensive forestry cover.

7.10.157 The A835 and Kyle of Lochalsh railway run through this unit, and views from these routes are strongly characterised by the type of visibility that is noted in the description; "*Enclosed views*

focussing attention on foreground detail, occasionally opening to views of glens, lochs and mountains" and *"A back drop of mountains and lochs often glimpsed through tree cover".*

7.10.158 There are no operational or consented wind farms in this receptor and the closest operational site is Fairburn which lies a minimum of just over 3 km to the south of the unit. This site has intermittent theoretical visibility and intermittent theoretical intervisibility with the Proposed Development (as seen at Viewpoint 3). There is also very intermittent theoretical visibility of Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, found primarily in the vicinity of Viewpoints 3 and 4. However, this has a minor influence on landscape character due to its very limited extent and at a minimum of approximately 8 km away. The woodland that characterises this unit further screens the external influence of these wind farms, as seen at Viewpoints 3, 7 and 24.

7.10.159 This unit of Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335) has a medium value, arising from the quality, integrity and sense of place that is found in the landscape, and the contrast with the surrounding LCTs, as this area displays quite different characteristics to the various upland and lowland LCTs that abut it. There is also some recreational value, with several core paths within the unit. However, extensive areas of the landscape have been affected by forestry that "*masks the underlying landforms*", as noted by NatureScot, reducing integrity, intactness and distinctiveness, and this tempers the value of the landscape. It is also relevant that the unit is not covered by any scenic designation. The susceptibility of the receptor is medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the relatively complex, textured and small-scale landform and landscape patterns of the unit. Susceptibility is tempered by the more limited contrast with the forested areas and the lack of wildness characteristics with which the Proposed Development would have the greatest contrast.

7.10.160 The combination of a medium susceptibility and medium value of the landscape results in a **medium** sensitivity for the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335).

Magnitude of Change

7.10.161 The Proposed Development lies outwith this receptor and effects will therefore arise from changes to the way that the landscape character is perceived as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development rather than as direct physical effects.

7.10.162 The ZTV shows intermittent and often limited theoretical visibility of the turbines from the LCT, ranging from approximately 1 km up to 7.8 km away. The area that lies closest to the site, the northern part of the unit, has very limited and intermittent theoretical visibility as the landform falls steeply southwards, away from the Proposed Development, into the valleys of the Rogie Burn and Peffery Burn, and forest cover further reduces visibility. The maximum magnitude of change on this area will be **medium-low** due to the very limited influence of the Proposed Development as a result of these factors.

7.10.163 To the south of the Rogie Burn and Peffery Burn, a minimum of approximately 2.4 km away from the Proposed Development, the landform rises again, with some slopes orientated towards the turbines, and theoretical visibility rises as a result. Intermittent and generally high theoretical visibility (e.g. visibility of up to seven to nine turbines) then continues up to a maximum of approximately 5.5 km away, with large areas of no visibility where landform is orientated away from the Proposed Development. While forestry provides a screen to much of this visibility, as seen at Viewpoint 7, elsewhere there are open views towards the Proposed Development and here the influence of the Proposed Development will be increased, as seen at Viewpoints 3 and 24. Where there is this type of actual visibility and influence of the Proposed Development, the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium**, for the following reasons:

- the external influence of the Proposed Development will result in an alteration to the landscape setting of the receptor, arising from visibility at reasonably close proximity of new, unfamiliar features that provide an apparent influence and introduce uncharacteristic elements in terms of movement, materials, colour, and structures;
- when there is visibility, the Proposed Development will be seen in relation to the "*backdrop of mountains and lochs often glimpsed through tree cover"* and will affect this key characteristic; and

- in some areas, the landform is orientated towards the Proposed Development, and this will increase its external influence.

7.10.164 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a maximum medium level in this area are as follows:

- there will be no physical effects on the landscape, and all effects will arise from visibility and perception of the Proposed Development;
- this ensures that important characteristics, including those related to topography, landform, land cover, and settlement patterns will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development;
- theoretical visibility of the turbines from this part of the receptor is intermittent, with extensive areas unaffected due to landform screening;
- as noted in the NatureScot reference to "*large conifer forests*", forestry is an important feature of this landscape, ensuring that actual visibility, and influence, of the Proposed Development will be further reduced from the theoretical visibility; and
- views in this LCT are insular and contained, as noted in the NatureScot key characteristic "*enclosed views focussing attention on foreground detail, occasionally opening to views of glens, lochs and mountains*", and this will reduce the influence of the Proposed Development on landscape character.

7.10.165 Beyond a maximum of around 5.5 km away, theoretical visibility becomes very intermittent with further screening by forestry, and the maximum magnitude of change will reduce to a **medium-low** or **low** level due to increased distance, very limited visibility, and the resultant reduction in influence of the Proposed Development. Large parts of the unit, especially the south-western areas, have no visibility of the Proposed Development and will have no change.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.166 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335) will vary. The effect on the majority of the unit, including the area that is closest to the Proposed Development, will be **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor. However, there will be a very intermittent moderate and **significant** effect between around 2.4 km and 5.5 km away, arising only where there is actual visibility and influence of the Proposed Development; extensive parts of this area will have no or very limited influence due to landform or forestry screening, and here the effect will be **not significant**.

7.10.167 A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the contrast of the turbines with the landscape character of the receptor and, in some places, the orientation of landform towards the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effect

7.10.168 Operational and consented wind farms that are relevant to this receptor are described above; these are principally Fairburn and, to a lesser extent, Corriemoillie, Kirkan, Lochluichart and Extension, and Lochluichart Extension II. The application stage site at Abhainn Dubh also has very intermittent and limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of approximately 9 km away.

7.10.169 The maximum cumulative magnitude of change on this receptor in any scenario will be **medium-low** due to the limited and relatively distant theoretical and actual visibility of cumulative wind farms. This level of change will arise only at very specific locations where both the Proposed Development and Fairburn and/or sites in the Corriemoillie cluster are clearly visible. The magnitude of change is tempered to this level by the small number of wind farms that have theoretical visibility from this receptor; the very limited extent of influence of the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart group as well as Abhainn Dubh and the distance of these sites from the receptor; and the woodland cover that screens much of the actual visibility of wind farms, thus reducing their influence on landscape character.

7.10.170 The cumulative effect on this receptor will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the maximum medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the receptor.

Ben Wyvis SLA

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.10.171 The eastern part of the Proposed Development site, including three turbines and associated infrastructure, lies within the Ben Wyvis SLA, as designated by THC. A detailed citation for this SLA is provided in 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' (THC in partnership with SNH, 2011), and this describes the SLQ for which the SLA is valued. Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6 lie within the SLA. Viewpoints that illustrate the view towards the SLA as seen from the south and north-west are also important in relation to the SLQ, including Viewpoints 14, 21 and 22 on the Black Isle; Viewpoints 17, 18, 19 and 20, within and south of Inverness; and Viewpoints 25 and 28, on the A835/A832 to the north-west and west.

7.10.172 The introduction to the citation provides the following description of the location of the SLA:

> *"This area covers the rounded summits and foothills of Ben Wyvis from the southern shores of Loch Glass in the north-east to Little Wyvis in the south-west. The SLA does not include the lower slopes of Ben Wyvis which have long been dominated by forestry geared almost exclusively to intensive timber production. However, it is acknowledged that restructuring of these forests to improve their amenity could bring potential for some enlargement of this SLA in the future."*

7.10.173 The following overview of the SLA is also provided:

> *"Ben Wyvis is a substantial hill massif with an area above 900m covering several square kilometres, a broad, relatively level summit ridge more than 7 kms long, and several coiries which hold snow until the spring. It is somewhat isolated from the main mountain areas to the west and north, so its bulk and profile make it a dominant landmark in the inner Moray Firth area, visible from many surrounding locations. Views from its summit are both extensive and varied. Unusually for a Munro, the nearby views include substantial areas of arable land, an industrial port (Invergordon) and often also marine drilling rigs (which visit the Cromarty Firth for repair and decommissioning).*
>
> *Ben Wyvis is an important part of the wider landscape setting for settlements in the inner Moray Firth, not least Inverness. Here some of the most iconic views downriver from the city centre feature Wyvis as a backdrop and over the year the changing colours of the hill act as a visual marker of the changing seasons for local residents."*

7.10.174 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the SLA are described as follows in the citation.

- *"Ben Wyvis stands in an isolated position, forming a dominant 'whaleback'-shaped landmark in the landscape, especially when viewed from the south. The broad ridge and gently ascending upper slopes surmount the very steep middle slopes of Ben Wyvis. The nature of these slopes means that the summit of the mountain is concealed from view from locations at or near its base.*
- *From the west, Ben Wyvis appears as a flat-topped mountain with unbroken uniform grassy slopes falling steeply to dense forest plantations. From the east, its character is defined by a series of high, deep, craggy corries extending into the upper slopes and containing lochans and fast flowing rocky burns.*
- *The flat open summit is carpeted in yellow-green woolly hair moss, forming one of the largest continuous expanses in the country and producing a distinctive character to the summit plateau. On the lower slopes, uniform blankets of heather, grassland and heath emphasise the simple, rounded profile of the mountain.*
- *Existing plantations appear incongruous in the surrounding landscape, especially when seen from the mountain top, due to their contrast of colour, shape, line and texture. Collectively, these seem to almost encircle the mountain."*

7.10.175 At the time of the production of the citation for the Ben Wyvis SLA in 2011, there was very little wind energy development in the surrounding area, and wind farms are not specifically

mentioned. There is now extensive wind farm development in this area, with several sites clearly visible in the view from the summit, including most notably Corriemoillie and Lochluichart, to which the consented Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II will be added. Fairburn is also visible.

7.10.176 The Ben Wyvis SLA has a medium-high value, arising from the local SLA designation, the quality, integrity and sense of place that is found in much of the landscape, and the recreational value afforded by the well-known and well-used route up Ben Wyvis. The Ben Wyvis massif is also a well-known, renowned landscape, and this adds to the value. A high level of value is, however, precluded by the local level designation of the landscape. The susceptibility of the SLA is high-medium, due largely to the contrast that the turbines will introduce as an external influence on the remote and undeveloped character of the SLA. The physical relationship of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), within which the Proposed Development lies, with the SLA also contributes to susceptibility, as this LCT is partly within the SLA and provides a peripheral upland landscape at the western extremity of the SLA. Susceptibility is tempered by the massive, simple landform of the unit and by the external baseline wind farm influence, which ensures that the Proposed Development will not be entirely uncharacteristic as part of the landscape setting.

7.10.177 The combination of a high-medium susceptibility and high-medium value of the landscape results in a **high-medium** sensitivity for the Ben Wyvis SLA.

Effects on the SLQs of the SLA

7.10.178 The assessment of effects on the SLA is carried out in relation to the effects that the Proposed Development will have on the SLQs of the designated area, as described in 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' (THC in partnership with SNH, 2011). The Ben Wyvis SLA has one overarching SLQ – "*Dominant Landmark and Uninterrupted Panoramas*" – with five sub-sections, each of which is considered individually. Table 7.8 lists the SLQ and its sub-sections and describes the effect that the Proposed Development will have on each of them.

Table 7.8 – Special Landscape Qualities of Ben Wyvis SLA

Special Landscape Quality	Magnitude of Change
Dominant Landmark and Uninterrupted Panoramas	
Standing well above a surrounding range of much lower foothills, Ben Wyvis has a commanding presence with its broad and fairly level summit ridge stretching more than 7kms from Garbat to Loch Glass. It is a dominant landmark feature from many locations, most notably from the south and northwest, including Inverness and the Black Isle. Little Wyvis also appears prominent at a local level	**Medium-low** The Proposed Development will be seen in the context of the "*much lower foothills*" of Ben Wyvis, as seen at Viewpoints 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 25 rather than the landform of the massif itself. The "*broad and fairly level summit ridge"* will not be affected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will, however, be seen in relation to the locally prominent Little Wyvis in some views (e.g. Viewpoint 28) and this leads to the medium-low magnitude of change.
The summit of Ben Wyvis provides some of the most extensive panoramas in Scotland. These include the wild and dramatic mountain profiles of Wester Ross and Sutherland to the north and west, the indented coastline and settled, fertile lowlands of Easter Ross and the Black Isle to the east, and the distant summits of the Cairngorms and Ben Nevis to the south.	**Medium-low** Viewpoint 6 illustrates the medium-low magnitude of change and significant effect of the Proposed Development on the view from the summit of Ben Wyvis (Glas Leathad Mor). The Proposed Development lies to the south-west of the summit of Ben Wyvis and, as seen at Viewpoint 6, will not affect the "*wild and dramatic mountain profiles of Wester Ross and Sutherland to the north and west, the indented coastline and settled, fertile lowlands of Easter Ross and the Black Isle to the east and the distant summits of the Cairngorms…to the south.*" The turbines could be seen in the same aspect of the view as Ben Nevis, but as they are contained well below the skyline in the view from Ben Wyvis, the skyline profile of Ben Nevis will not be affected. Ben Nevis lies just over 100 km away from Ben Wyvis and will only be visible in very clear conditions. This viewpoint also shows the widely varied and contrasting landscapes that are seen from this summit, as described in the citation 'overview' of the SLA, which notes that "*Views from its summit are both extensive and varied. Unusually for a Munro, the nearby views include substantial areas of arable land, an industrial port (Invergordon) and often also marine drilling rigs (which visit the Cromarty Firth for repair and decommissioning)".* In this setting, the minor influence of the Proposed Development will have less impact than in a view where the landscape is simpler and more uniform and shows fewer elements of development.

Special Landscape Quality	Magnitude of Change
	Wind farm development was considerably less apparent when the SLA citation was produced, and wind farms are now also a readily apparent feature of the views from the summit, ensuring that the Proposed Development will not introduce a new characteristic into the outlook. The effect of the Proposed Development on this already widely varied panoramic view, which includes many aspects of development, will be limited. These factors restrict the magnitude of change on this sub-section of the SLQ to a medium-low level.
Views of the top and the overall profile of the mountain are limited from the immediate surroundings, due to its massive scale and convex upper slopes. The form of the mountain is most clearly appreciated when viewed from a distance, for example from Inverness and the Black Isle.	**Medium-low** The Proposed Development will not affect the nature of views gained towards "*the top and the overall profile of the mountain…from the immediate surroundings".* With regard to the appreciation of the form of the mountain, Viewpoints 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 25 show the location of the Proposed Development peripheral to the "*form of the mountain*" in views from Inverness, the Black Isle and also from the north-west. These views show that the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif. The key skyline of Ben Wyvis, including An Cabar, Bealah Mor, Glas Leathad Mor and Glas Leathad Beag will not be directly affected by the Proposed Development.
Ben Wyvis is a popular Munro due in part to its proximity to Inverness but also because it is a relatively straightforward walk with a broad, easy ridge from which the panoramic views can be appreciated. It is also popular for cross-country skiing.	**Medium-low** The Proposed Development will not affect the proximity of Ben Wyvis to Inverness or the straightforward nature of the walk to the summit. The Proposed Development has very limited/no theoretical visibility from the great majority of the "*broad, easy ridge"* and will have a very limited effect on these panoramic views. It will, however, have a significant effect on views from An Cabar (Viewpoint 5) and Glas Leathad Mor (Viewpoint 6), which are at either end of the ridge.
With the exception of Wyvis Lodge, the odd shieling hut, and the very occasional boundary wall and rough track there is virtually no visible evidence of human occupation in the SLA.	**Medium-low** While evidence of human occupation was very limited at the time of the production of the citation, this has now increased with several well-made tracks (e.g. vehicular track to the summit of Little Wyvis, high quality pedestrian track to the summit of Ben Wyvis, as well as several others elsewhere). There are also hydro schemes with associated infrastructure and access tracks at Allt Gleann Sgathaich in the south-east of the SLA and Abhainn Beinn nan Eun/Allt Bealach Culaidh in the north of the SLA. Afforestation and deforestation has also affected some areas within the fringes of the SLA. The part of the Proposed Development that lies within the SLA will introduce further elements of human occupation into the SLA, including three turbines and associated infrastructure. The effect of this is tempered by the very localised and peripheral part of the SLA that will be directly affected.

Significance of the Effect

7.10.179 This assessment indicates that the Proposed Development will have some effect on the one SLQ of the Ben Wyvis SLA. This SLQ – "*Dominant Landmark and Uninterrupted Panoramas*" – has five aspects, each of which is included in the assessment above. The magnitude of change on all of these aspects is assessed as medium-low.

7.10.180 The combination of this magnitude of change and the high-medium sensitivity of the SLA will lead to a localised and intermittent moderate effect on the southernmost part of the SLQ, covering the part of the site itself that is within the SLA and the area of the SLA that will be most affected by visibility and influence of the Proposed Development. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant. In this case, the effect on the SLQ, and on the SLA, is considered to be **significant** due to the location of the Proposed Development partially within the SLA, which leads to direct effects; the level of visibility and influence of the turbines on the closer part of the SLA; the orientation of some landform in the SLA towards the Proposed Development; and the significant effect of the Proposed Development on the

outlook from viewpoints that lie within the SLA, including Viewpoint 6 (Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)), which is the subject of one of the sub-sections of the SLQ.

Cumulative Effects

7.10.181 There is potential for cumulative effects to arise on the aspects of the SLQ that relate to views gained from within the SLA, specifically, "*The summit of Ben Wyvis provides some of the most extensive panoramas in Scotland*" and "*…it is a relatively straightforward walk with a broad, easy ridge from which the panoramic views can be appreciated*". Viewpoints 5 (An Cabar) and 6 (Glas Leathad Mor) lie within the SLA, at each end of the "*broad, easy ridge*", and are both assessed to have significant cumulative visual effects in all scenarios. Viewpoint 4 (Little Wyvis) also lies within the SLA and is assessed to have significant cumulative effects. These two aspects of the SLQ are therefore likely to have localised and very intermittent **significant** cumulative effects.

7.10.182 Cumulative effects on the other aspects of the SLQ will be **not significant**, either because cumulative effects are not relevant to them, or because the viewpoints that illustrate them (as noted in the table above) have been assessed as having not significant cumulative effects on views.

Hours of Darkness Effects

7.10.183 The assessment of visible aviation lighting is largely a visual effect because the lighting will not be activated during daylight hours when the SLQ of the SLA is clearly apparent and will not generally affect the SLQ unless the hours of darkness environment is specifically referred to in the SLA citation. None of the aspects of the SLQ make reference to dark skies or the night-time environment.

7.10.184 However, the SLQ does refer to views from and towards the SLA, and it is relevant to consider the hours of darkness effects on the viewpoints that illustrate the appearance of the Proposed Development in relation to the SLA. These effects are assessed in full in Section 7.12 of this chapter and summarised below.

Viewpoints Within the SLA

7.10.185 Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6 lie within the SLA and are most relevant to the second and fourth aspects of the SLQ, which are concerned with panoramic views from the SLA. The hours of darkness effects on these viewpoints are as follows:

- Viewpoint 4 (Little Wyvis): significant effect in the 200 cd scenario, not significant effect when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration;
- Viewpoint 5 (An Cabar): significant effect in the 200 cd scenario, not significant effect when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration; and
- Viewpoint 6 (Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)): not significant effect in either scenario.

Viewpoints Outwith the SLA

7.10.186 Viewpoints that illustrate the view towards the SLA are also important, particularly in relation to the first and third aspects of the SLQ. These include Viewpoints 14, 21 and 22 on the Black Isle; Viewpoints 17, 18, 19 and 20, within and south of Inverness; Viewpoint 25, on the A835 to the north-west; and Viewpoint 28, on the A832 to the west.

- Viewpoint 14 (Culbokie): not significant effect in either scenario;
- Viewpoint 21 (A9, Black Isle): not significant effect in either scenario;
- Viewpoint 22 (A835/B9169 Crossroads): not significant effect in either scenario;
- Viewpoint 17 (Inverness Castle): not significant effect in either scenario;
- Viewpoint 18 (Milton of Leys Primary School): not significant effect in either scenario;
- Viewpoint 19 (Culloden battlefield): not significant effect in either scenario;

- Viewpoint 20 (Simpsons Garden Centre): not significant effect in either scenario;
- Viewpoint 25 (A835, Loch Glascarnoch): not significant effect in either scenario; and
- Viewpoint 28 (A832 near Torriegorrie): significant effect in the 200 cd scenario, not significant effect when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration.

7.10.187 This indicates that in the 200 cd scenario, significant effects are likely to arise on two viewpoints within the SLA (Viewpoints 4 and 5) and one viewpoint from where there are views towards Little Wyvis (Viewpoint 28). All effects are not significant when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration.

7.10.188 The second and fourth aspects of the SLQ therefore have some effect from visible aviation lighting, but this is limited to localised areas and will affect locations that are unlikely to be well-frequented during hours of darkness. Importantly, the effect at Viewpoint 6 (Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)), which is specifically mentioned in the SLQ, will be not significant in either scenario. The first and third aspects of the SLQ have a very limited effect from visible aviation lighting, with a significant effect being restricted to one of the relevant viewpoints (Viewpoint 28) in the 200 cd scenario only. While Little Wyvis is prominent at Viewpoint 28, the SLA is not seen with its distinctive 'whaleback' profile in this view due to the angle of the view, looking at the SLA from the south-west.

7.10.189 Overall, the effects of visible aviation lighting on the SLA will be limited, with very localised significant effects in the 200 cd scenario on three of the relevant viewpoints. These effects are considered to be not significant in relation to the SLQ of the SLA due to the limited and localised nature of the effects, and because none of the aspects of the SLQ make reference to dark skies or the night-time environment.

Effect on the Integrity of the SLA

7.10.190 It is relevant to conclude as to the effect of the Proposed Development in relation to NPF 4 (Policy 4), which states:

> *"Development proposals that affect a site designated as a local nature conservation site or landscape area in the LDP will only be supported where:*
>
> *i. Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified ; or*
>
> *ii. Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance."*

7.10.191 In these terms, it is considered that the Proposed Development will "have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified".

7.10.192 This effect will, however, be intermittent and localised, restricted to the southernmost part of the SLA, where the influence of the Proposed Development has a maximum moderate level. It will arise during daylight hours only, and the effect during hours of darkness will be not significant.

7.11 Assessment of Effects on Wild Land

Introduction

7.11.1 A part of the Proposed Development lies within the south-western tip of WLA 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis, as shown on Figures 7.5a and 7.5b. The NatureScot 'Description of Wild Land Areas' (2017) for WLA 29 gives the following overview of the WLA.

> *"This WLA is one of the most extensive nationally, extending 905 km2 across the north west of Ross-shire and south Sutherland, one of a cluster of seven in the north west of Scotland. It comprises a long oval shaped area extending between Ullapool in the north-west to the mountain of Ben Wyvis in the southeast. Main roads flank it to the west and south, the latter to nearby Inverness and population centres of Easter Ross, and separating it from the similarly extensive Fisherfield – Letterewe – Fannichs WLA (28) to the south west.*

From the north and east, cnocan and open peatland hills extend into a complex composition of high and steep mountains within the central section, and then into simpler rounded hills and plateaux in the south. These landforms mainly comprise hard metamorphic Moine schists, which were later eroded during glaciation and then fluvial activity, including the carving of a series of deep penetrating glens.

The area is used mainly for deer stalking, fishing and hydro-electric generation and is largely uninhabited, although there are some isolated estate buildings and stock grazing within some of the glens, as well as forestry activity within a number of large conifer plantations outside the edge. The WLA is enjoyed by many people who view it from outside its edge, for example along the A835 in the south and west, the A837 in the north, and across the Black Isle. Where seen from outside the area, the outward slopes form a fairly simple visual backdrop, but the interior mountains and plateaux are less easy to see due to screening by the intervening landform.

Within the WLA itself, seven Munros and five Corbetts attract hillwalkers, with Ben Wyvis being particularly popular. Some people also penetrate far into the interior via a number of tracks and paths to enjoy activities such as mountain biking, stalking, walking or fishing.

The landscape and scenic qualities of the WLA are recognised by the inclusion of its central part within the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie Special Landscape Area (SLA) and its southern end within the Ben Wyvis SLA. The descriptions for these areas note '…a powerful sense of isolation and wildness amidst physically challenging terrain…' and a '…series of quiet, uninhabited glens … where solitude and isolation are key characteristics'.

The WLA lies adjacent to other WLAs and, where intervening human elements are screened, it appears to extend uninterrupted into these. This relationship with adjacent mountain and peatland areas is particularly close with the Fisherfield – Letterewe - Fannichs WLA (28) to the west and the Inverpolly –Glencanisp WLA (32) to the north-west. In contrast, extensive conifer plantations and settlement forms an arc around from the north to the east and south, creating a more defined edge in these directions. There are also some distant views to the open sea to the north west."

7.11.2 Viewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 32 are within the WLA and these illustrate the appearance of the Proposed Development as seen from the WLA as well as the appearance of the landscape within and around the WLA. A set of additional wireline views for viewpoints within WLAs has also been included (Technical Appendix 7.3) at the request of NatureScot. These show views from the path west of Loch Bealach Culaidh (Figure A7.3.1 in Technical Appendix 7.3) and Beinn a'Chaisteil (Figure A7.3.2 in Technical Appendix 7.3) within WLA 29, as well as the view from Beinn nan Ramh (Figure A7.3.3) which is within WLA 28 Fisherfield - Letterewe – Fannichs, to the west of WLA 29.

Approach to the Assessment

7.11.3 This assessment follows guidance (NatureScot, 2020/2023), which sets out the suggested approach to the assessment of effects on wild land. As noted in paragraph 4 of the guidance, the assessment methodology broadly follows that of GLVIA3, and is based around the following five stages:

- Step 1 - Define the study area and scope of the assessment.
- Step 2 – Verify the WLA baseline.
- Step 3 – Assess the sensitivity of the qualities.
- Step 4 – Assess the magnitude of the effects.
- Step 5 – Judge the significance of effects.

7.11.4 Paragraph 13 of the guidance notes that 'the assessment approach…should be: concise and proportionate, focused on likely significant effects on the qualities.'

7.11.5 In this assessment, WLAs are considered as landscape character receptors rather than visual receptors. This is because the WLA is a landscape resource in itself and effects are assessed in terms of the effect that the Proposed Development will have on the WLQs of the WLA, as per NatureScot guidance, rather than in terms of the effects on views gained by people who may be within the WLA.

Physical Attributes and Perceptual Responses

7.11.6 The wild land assessment requires consideration of the changes to WLQs that will arise as a result of the Proposed Development. These changes are assessed in relation to 'physical attributes' and 'perceptual responses', which are outlined in paragraph 11 of NatureScot technical guidance (2020/2023) and listed below:

Physical Attributes

- a high degree of perceived naturalness;
- a lack of modern human artefacts or structures;
- little evidence of contemporary land uses;
- landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and
- remoteness and/or inaccessibility.

Perceptual Responses

- a sense of sanctuary or solitude;
- risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety;
- perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and
- fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.

The Status of WLAs

7.11.7 The status of WLAs is clearly set out in paragraph 8 of NatureScot guidance (2020/2023), which states "*WLAs have not been identified on scenic grounds and are not a statutory designation*."

7.11.8 There is also an acceptance (paragraph 9) that WLAs are not 'wilderness' and that human influences can and do form part of the baseline character of WLAs:

> *"…Whilst the WLA map identifies areas where wildness is most strongly expressed, these are not 'wilderness', empty of any human activities or influence. They reflect Scotland's long history of past occupation and current use and management, albeit that evidence of such is often light and limited in extent."*

7.11.9 The need for a WLA assessment is discussed in Policy 4 of NPF4, which notes that:

> *"All such proposals* [within WLAs] *must be accompanied by a wild land impact assessment which sets out how design, siting, or other mitigation measures have been and will be used to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of the wild land, as well as any management and monitoring arrangements where appropriate. Buffer zones around wild land will not be applied, and effects of development outwith wild land areas will not be a significant consideration."*

7.11.10 Paragraph 5 of the NatureScot guidance also discusses the need for a WLA assessment:

> *"This guidance should only be applied to proposals whose nature, siting, scale or design are likely to result in a significant effect on the qualities of a WLA. Given this, assessments are more likely for proposals within a WLA, and are less likely for proposals outwith the WLA."*

7.11.11 It is important to note that, according to NatureScot guidance, effects on WLAs can only be experienced within WLAs and not from the area surrounding them. Paragraph 3 of the guidance notes that "*This guidance sets out a methodology and general principles for assessing the impact of development and other proposals on WLAs, as they are experienced from within the WLA, not from outwith*."

Methodology for Assessing Effects on Wild Land Areas

7.11.12 As noted in NatureScot technical guidance (2020/2023), the wild land assessment methodology broadly follows that of GLVIA3 and is based around the following five stages:

- Step 1 - Define the study area and scope of the assessment.
- Step 2 – Verify the WLA baseline.

- Step 3 – Assess the sensitivity of the qualities.
- Step 4 – Assess the magnitude of the effects.
- Step 5 – Judge the significance of effects.

7.11.13 The following sections assess the effects of the Proposed Development on WLA 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis in relation to these five steps.

Step 1: Define the study area and Scope of the Assessment

7.11.14 NatureScot guidance summarises this step as follows: 'Identify a study area appropriate to the scale of the proposal and extent of likely significant effects on the WLA.'

7.11.15 Paragraph 16 of the guidance notes that:

> *"The rationale for the selection of the study area and scope of the assessment should be clearly stated and consider the following.*
>
> *(1) The extent of visibility and recognised routes/movement through the WLA. The scale of the proposal may not equate to the extent of effects (for example, a large proposal where visibility is limited to part of the WLA, a more focused study area may be appropriate).*
>
> *(2) The wild land qualities likely to be significantly affected. The focus of the assessment should be on the qualities likely to be affected rather than where the proposal is located.*
>
> *(3) The potential for cumulative effects."*

7.11.16 The identification of the study area for the wild land impact assessment is discussed below in relation to these three considerations.

(1) Extent of visibility and recognised routes/movement through the WLA.

7.11.17 Figures 7.12a (45 km radius) and 7.12b (20 km radius) show the WLAs in relation to the blade tip ZTV. These show localised and intermittent theoretical visibility from two main areas of the WLA: the south-westernmost area, including the site itself and west and south-west-facing slopes and high points of An Cabar and Ben Wyvis; and, further away, the area to the north of Loch Glascarnoch, including Inchbae Forest, Strathvaich Forest and the south-facing slopes of Beinn Dearg. There are other smaller areas of theoretical visibility, including the southern slopes of Carn Mor and Seana Bhraig, from where the most distant theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is gained (over 27 km away).

7.11.18 In relation to the '*recognised routes/movement through the WLA'*, the WLA description for WLA 29 states:

> *"The area is used mainly for deer stalking, fishing and hydro-electric generation and is largely uninhabited, although there are some isolated estate buildings and stock grazing within some of the glens, as well as forestry activity within a number of large conifer plantations outside the edge...*
>
> *Within the WLA itself, seven Munros and five Corbetts attract hillwalkers, with Ben Wyvis being particularly popular. Some people also penetrate far into the interior via a number of tracks and paths to enjoy activities such as mountain biking, stalking, walking or fishing."*

7.11.19 The seven Munros in the WLA are Am Faochagach (Viewpoint 32), Beinn Dearg, Ben Wyvis (Glas Leathad Mor) (Viewpoint 6), Cona' Mheall, Eididh nan Clach Geala, Meall nan Ceapraichean and Seana Bhraigh. Of these, the view from one of the two Munros that are included as viewpoints - Ben Wyvis (Glas Leathad Mor) – is assessed as having a significant effect as a result of the Proposed Development, while the other – Am Faochagach – is assessed as not significant. Beinn Dearg, Cona' Mheall, Meall nan Ceapraichean and Seana Bhraigh do gain theoretical visibility but the effects on views will almost certainly be not significant due largely to limited visibility and distance from the Proposed Development, and the resultant very limited influence on the panoramic views. The summit of Eididh nan Clach Geala does not gain theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. As visibility largely affects high points, the routes up these Munros (including Ben Wyvis) generally also have very limited and/or distant theoretical visibility.

7.11.20 The five Corbetts are Beinn a' Chaisteil, Beinn Enaiglair, Carn Ban, Carn Chuinneag, and Little Wyvis (Viewpoint 4). Of these, the Proposed Development is assessed to have a significant effect on views from Little Wyvis. Beinn a' Chaisteil (see Figure A7.3.2 in Technical Appendix 7.3), Beinn Enaiglair and Carn Ban gain theoretical visibility but the effects on views will almost certainly be not significant due largely to limited visibility and distance from the Proposed Development, and the resultant very limited influence on the panoramic views. There is no theoretical visibility from Carn Chuinneag.

7.11.21 Recognised recreational access into the WLA is gained by the Scottish National Trail/Cape Wrath Way, which crosses the northern part of the WLA, following relatively low ground past Loch an Daimh, along Glen Douchary, and then crossing high ground between Beinn Bhreac and Carn Mor before dropping down to the A835 at Inverlael. This route will not gain any visibility of the Proposed Development as it passes through the WLA. The core paths within the WLA run through the incised glens and will gain no visibility of the Proposed Development.

7.11.22 Much of the WLA is extremely challenging in terms of access, and routes – other than the well-defined path up Ben Wyvis - tend to either be in the incised glens or indistinct paths that lead up mountains within the WLA. The remote, upland nature of the WLA, by definition, makes for difficult walking conditions which are often boggy or extremely rugged underfoot. The citation for this WLA notes that "*Away from the more popular Munro and Corbett peaks, there are few visitors and thus a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude*".

7.11.23 This indicates that of the notable, recognised routes and locations that people may visit within the WLA, the great majority will either gain no visibility of the Proposed Development or will gain limited and distant theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, leading to a not significant effect. Little Wyvis, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis) are exceptions to this, with views assessed as having significant effects.

(2) Wild Land Qualities

7.11.24 The second point noted in NatureScot guidance as being relevant in the "rationale for the selection of the study area and scope of the assessment" is consideration of the "wild land qualities likely to be significantly affected". These are described below along with a judgement as to whether or not they are required to be assessed in more detail.

7.11.25 WLQ1 – "A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas"

7.11.26 The site lies outwith the geographical areas covered by this WLQ but in the LCT that lies adjacent to Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the "*high rounded hills and plateaux*", and will also be seen in elevated panoramas that are available from within the WLA. It has been agreed with NatureScot that this WLQ is relevant to the assessment.

7.11.27 WLQ2 – "Long and deep penetrating glens with steep, arresting side slopes that limit views, some containing access routes and clearly influenced by estate management"

7.11.28 The ZTV (see Figures 7.12a and 7.12b) indicates that there is no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the "*Long and deep penetrating glens*", and it has been agreed with NatureScot that this WLQ is not relevant to the assessment.

7.11.29 WLQ3 – "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas"

7.11.30 Theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the "*very large interior*" of the WLA is very limited, as shown on the ZTVs due to its location on the periphery of the WLA. However, the Proposed Development might affect the relationship of the WLA with "*neighbouring wild land areas*", and it has been agreed with NatureScot that this WLQ will be included in the assessment.

7.11.31 WLQ4 – "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude"

7.11.32 The Proposed Development lies within the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) which covers part of the landscape that is referred to in this WLQ, and it has been agreed with NatureScot that this WLQ will be included in the assessment.

(3) The potential for cumulative effects

7.11.33 The third point noted in NatureScot guidance as being relevant in the rationale for the selection of the study area and scope of the assessment is consideration of the "*The potential for cumulative effects*". There are a number of cumulative wind farms around the southern and eastern edges of this WLA.

(4) Identification of the WLA study area

7.11.34 The considerations described above indicate that the direct effects, theoretical visibility and influence of the Proposed Development will be concentrated in the southernmost part of the WLA, with considerably lower visibility from the interior, central and northern mountainous areas where the majority of recognised recreational summits and routes are located (with the exception of Little Wyvis, Ben Wyvis and An Cabar, which are all in the southern part). However, it is considered appropriate for the wild land assessment study area to cover the whole of the WLA. This is because the WLQs that have potential to be affected are relevant to the whole of the WLA or parts of the WLA that are not directly affected by the Proposed Development, and in order that these are properly considered in the assessment, the whole WLA has been included.

Step 2: Establish the Baseline

7.11.35 NatureScot guidance summarises this step as follows in Table 1:

> *"Confirm the wild land qualities (set out in the WLA description) relevant to the study area, describing any major changes that have occurred since the description was prepared and the nature of their contribution to the WLA."*

7.11.36 The baseline study is informed by the WLA description, site visits by the assessment team, and Viewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 32, which illustrate the outlook towards the Proposed Development from within the WLA. It is important to note that while these viewpoints provide a useful illustration of views that can be gained from within the WLA, the assessment of effects on viewpoints and WLAs is carried out separately and according to specific methodologies. The viewpoints have been referenced simply to provide an illustration of views from within the WLA.

7.11.37 This step involves a review of the strength of attributes and responses and their contribution to the identified WLQs of the area. These are verified against the WLA description, noting that the strength to which the WLQs are expressed will vary in different parts of the WLA. In this case, it has been ascertained in Step 1 that the Proposed Development has potential to significantly affect three of the WLQs (WLQs 1, 3 and 4) and this baseline section therefore focusses on these WLQs.

Table 7.9 - Physical Attributes and Perceptual Responses within WLA 29

Physical Attribute/ Perceptual Response	Strength of Physical Attribute/Perceptual Response and Contribution to Wild Land Quality (as described in WLA description)	Comment/Subsequent Change to Baseline
Physical Attribute		
High degree of perceived naturalness *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"Within WLAs vegetation cover is primarily composed of natural or semi-natural habitats… Catchment systems and other geomorphological processes are largely unmodified")*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1** *"The crags, cliffs, corries, lochans and waterfalls within these hills* [the "*rugged, angular and rocky hills"*] *seem jumbled together in a chaotic way which, combined with a predominance of exposed rock and geological features, give the landscape an 'elemental' quality that contributes to the perception of naturalness."* **WLQ3** – no reference **WLQ4** *"The variable landform at a local level also contains rivers and waterfalls and harbours some native woodland, which all contribute to the sense of naturalness."*	This physical attribute remains intact in relation to WLQ1 and WLQ4 as noted in their descriptions and is generally expressed to a high level in the WLA. There are, however, local modifications to natural watercourses at hydro schemes at Allt Gleann Sgathaich just to the east of Carn Gorm and Abhainn Beinn nan Eun/Allt Bealach Culaidh, north of Ben Wyvis, where this attribute is expressed to a medium level. While no reference is made to this physical attribute in relation to WLQ3, it is considered that it is expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which WLQ3 relates.
NB These two attributes have been described together as they are closely	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1**	In relation to all WLQs, the level of human artefacts and contemporary land use **within** the WLA has increased since the

Physical Attribute/ Perceptual Response	Strength of Physical Attribute/Perceptual Response and Contribution to Wild Land Quality (as described in WLA description)	Comment/Subsequent Change to Baseline
aligned and have a high level of crossover in the WLA description. ***The lack of modern human artefacts or structures*** *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as "*There is no or very limited evidence of contemporary buildings, structures or engineering works within WLAs although their presence outwith may be discerned. Older artefacts…and small scale features…may be evident*") ***Little evidence of contemporary land uses*** *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as "*Within WLAs no or very limited evidence of more intensive land use, but their presence outwith may be discerned. Extensive grazing and management for field sports may be evident (for example, muirburn, grazing pressure and use of ATVs)".*	*"The convex landform makes it difficult to see the hill and plateau tops from below; but, equally, adjacent glens or low-lying areas are mostly hidden from the tops. This results in the screening of human artefacts and contemporary land use within adjacent low-lying areas, reducing the effects of these and increasing the sense of remoteness."* *"The rounded hill and plateaux tops are mostly covered by a short mat of vegetation and/or exposed rock which emphasises the underlying shape of the landform and promotes open movement. As a result, there are few worn paths (except on Ben Wyvis) as evidence of human activity and thus a greater sense of solitude."* **WLQ3** *In contrast, from the WLA margins (including the outer 'lobes' of the area in the south east), extensive areas of human elements and contemporary land use can be seen around the outside edge of the WLA in all directions except to the north west, including main roads, hydro-electric development and conifer plantations. These elements indicate the edge of the area, but their effects on wild land qualities within the WLA itself are limited where they appear concentrated within neighbouring low-lying strath floors.* *Conversely, elements that extend up onto elevated slopes or tops are more prominent and can appear to encroach more directly upon the experience of the WLA where intervening development within the straths is screened. This may be the case even if the elements themselves lie outside the WLA; for example wind farms, masts, conifer plantations and fences. If cumulative effects occur, these may also appear more encroaching, especially if they seem to collectively encircle part of the wild land area."* **WLQ4** *"These do not possess the massive form, vertical imposition or focal qualities of the mountains, but they are awe-inspiring in their openness and simplicity at a broad level, as well as their perceived 'emptiness', sanctuary and solitude within the interior due to few human artefacts or visitors."* *"It is also difficult to perceive distance within most of the interior, where there is an absence of human artefacts to provide scale indicators."*	WLA description was written. In the southern part of the WLA and thus of relevance to the Proposed Development, the hydro scheme at Allt Gleann Sgathaich with associated infrastructure and access tracks has been constructed just to the east of Carn Gorm. The hydro scheme at Abhainn Beinn nan Eun/Allt Bealach Culaidh, north of Ben Wyvis, has also been constructed along with its associated infrastructure. Improvements to the path network on Ben Wyvis and elsewhere have also been made. **Outwith** the WLA, operational and consented wind farm influence has increased with the construction of Coire na Cloiche and Lochluichart Extension and the consenting of Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II, and Meall Buidhe. In relation to WLQ1, it is not always the case that "*adjacent glens or low-lying areas are mostly hidden from the tops. This results in the screening of human artefacts and contemporary land use within adjacent low-lying areas, reducing the effects of these and increasing the sense of remoteness*." Viewpoints 5 and 6 are located in the "*high rounded hills*" of the Ben Wyvis massif, and "*human artefacts and contemporary land use within adjacent low-lying areas"* are clearly visible in these views, as seen in the Viewpoint photographs. Viewpoint 4 is located on the edge of the WLA and displays a high level of influence from development and contemporary land uses. In relation to WLQ1 and WLQ4, these attributes are expressed to a medium-low degree in the southern part of the WLA, where the Proposed Development is located. Here, the external influence of wind farms, masts and extensive other types of development and land use has a considerable effect on the WLA (e.g. as seen at Viewpoint 4). Elsewhere on the fringes of the WLA, especially around the southern and eastern edges, these attributes are generally expressed to a medium level, with some influence (internal and external) of development, including wind farms, hydro schemes, tracks, contemporary land uses, transmission lines, forestry and roads. High points of the WLA also have medium expression of these attributes, with external influence of wind farms and contemporary land uses apparent (e.g. as seen at Viewpoints 5, 6 and 32). In relation to WLQ3, relevant to the interior of the WLA where there is less external influence of human development, there are areas where these attributes are expressed to a high level. There are, however, areas where they expressed to a medium level, as noted in the description, due to the external influence of "*elements* [e.g. wind farms, masts, conifer plantations

Physical Attribute/ Perceptual Response	Strength of Physical Attribute/Perceptual Response and Contribution to Wild Land Quality (as described in WLA description)	Comment/Subsequent Change to Baseline
		and fences] *that extend up onto elevated slopes or tops are more prominent and can appear to encroach more directly upon the experience of the WLA where intervening development within the straths is screened".*
Landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"Within WLAs, land that has extensive rough terrain or extensive boglands, which is difficult to traverse.")*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1** *"All the hills are high, open, and physically challenging to ascend or traverse, with a resulting perception of risk and exposure."* *"The simple form and massive scale of the rounded hills and plateaux appears awe-inspiring. Their convex slopes can be very steep and physically challenging to ascend but, once climbed, offer wide open gentle slopes and plateau tops that offer a feeling of being 'on top of the world', with panoramic views in all directions."* **WLQ3** – no reference **WLQ4** *"The irregular landform at a local level also means these areas are physically challenging to access. Within the cnocan, this is mainly because of the very rugged and convoluted slopes with rock outcrops; whilst it is peat hags and bogs that prove more difficult to traverse upon the simpler peatland."*	In relation to WLQ1, the landform and terrain within the WLA has not altered. However, the "*convex slopes"* are not all *physically challenging to ascend"*; for example, the slopes of An Cabar and Ben Wyvis are accessed by well-made tracks and are not particularly physically challenging to access, as noted in the Ben Wyvis SLA citation. In relation to WLQ4, the landform and terrain within the WLA has not altered and the physical challenge of traversing larger areas of the "*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes*" to which this WLQ relates remains intact. This physical attribute is expressed to a high level in relation to WLQ1 and WLQ4 across the majority of the WLA, there are, however, some areas where it is reduced to a medium level in relation to WLQ1 due to the provision of tracks and paths. While no reference is made to this physical attribute in relation to WLQ3, it is considered that it is generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which WLQ3 relates.
Remoteness and/or inaccessibility *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"Within WLAs, land that is distant from public motorised access (the nearest public road, ferry landing or railway station), taking account of the distance, barriers to travel (for example, lochs, rivers and cliffs), and ease of travel on foot / bicycle.")*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1** "*The large size of the WLA and the need for lengthy access to reach some parts of the interior, also mean that many of the hills are very remote."* **WLQ3** This WLQ is defined as **"***A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness…".* "*The interior of this WLA is very large and, from its elevated ground, there are open views across a series of landform horizons that seem to continue far into the distance, influencing its perceived extent as well as the sense of remoteness*." **WLQ4** *"The irregular landform at a local level also means these areas are physically challenging to access. Within the cnocan, this is mainly because of the very rugged and convoluted slopes with rock outcrops; whilst it is peat hags and bogs that prove more difficult to traverse upon the simpler peatland."*	In relation to all WLQs, remoteness and inaccessibility within the WLA has been altered to some degree. The path/track network has been improved in some places, including on Ben Wyvis and in the vicinity of the hydro developments, and this has eased access into the WLA. The identification of core paths that run deep into the WLA reduces remoteness and inaccessibility and the vehicular track to the summit of Little Wyvis increases access to the edge of the WLA. In relation to WLQ3, this attribute is generally expressed to a high level in the interior to which it relates although there are localised medium areas where the interior is accessible by paths and tracks. In relation to WLQ1 and WLQ4 this attribute is expressed to a medium-low degree in the southern part of the WLA, across the site, Little Wyvis and the Ben Wyvis massif. Here, the provision of paths and tracks improves accessibility and reduces remoteness. Elsewhere in the WLA, in relation to WLQ1 and WLQ4, this attribute is generally expressed to a medium to high level, with some tracks penetrating the hills and cnocan/peatland areas.
Perceptual Response		
A sense of sanctuary or solitude *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"The perception*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1**	Improved access and facilities (e.g. parking) for walking up Ben Wyvis have reduced the sense of isolation and distance from disturbance in this area.

Physical Attribute/ Perceptual Response	Strength of Physical Attribute/Perceptual Response and Contribution to Wild Land Quality (as described in WLA description)	Comment/Subsequent Change to Baseline
of separation from the 'modern world', isolation or distance from disturbance, that engenders feelings of respite or tranquillity, that enables a focus on the natural / semi-natural setting.")	*"Away from the more popular Munro and Corbett peaks, there are few visitors and thus a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude."* *"The rounded hill and plateaux tops are mostly covered by a short mat of vegetation and/or exposed rock which emphasises the underlying shape of the landform and promotes open movement. As a result, there are few worn paths (except on Ben Wyvis) as evidence of human activity and thus a greater sense of solitude."* **WLQ3** This WLQ is defined as **"***A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary…".* **WLQ4** *"These do not possess the massive form, vertical imposition or focal qualities of the mountains, but they are awe-inspiring in their openness and simplicity at a broad level, as well as their perceived 'emptiness', sanctuary and solitude within the interior due to few human artefacts or visitors."*	Improved tracks elsewhere, as described above, have also reduced the sense of isolation and distance from disturbance. In relation to WLQ1, this attribute is expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA. Here, the provision of well-used paths and tracks and the external influence of wind farms, masts and extensive other types of development and land use has reduced the "*sense of sanctuary or solitude*" and "*The perception of separation from the 'modern world', isolation or distance from disturbance*". In relation to WLQ4, this response is more apparent in the larger areas of "*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes*" and in the smaller, peripheral areas of rocky hills found in the southern WLA, such as the area within which the site lies, the response is expressed to a medium-low level due to the lack of "*openness and simplicity at a broad level, as well as their perceived 'emptiness', sanctuary and solitude within the interior due to few human artefacts or visitors".* Elsewhere on the fringes of the WLA this attribute is generally expressed to a medium level in relation to both WLQ1 and WLQ4, with some influence (internal and external) of development, including wind farms, hydro schemes, tracks, contemporary land uses, transmission lines, forestry and roads, all of which reduce the "*sense of sanctuary or solitude*" and "*The perception of separation from the 'modern world', isolation or distance from disturbance*". In relation to WLQ3, this attribute is generally expressed to a high level in the interior to which it relates although there are localised medium areas where increased accessibility has reduced the "*sense of sanctuary or solitude*" and "*The perception of separation from the 'modern world', isolation or distance from disturbance*".
Risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"The perception of hazard that arises from being self-reliant in remote settings of large scale, whose rugged natural character and isolation from assistance (if required) engenders respect.")*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1** "*All the hills are high, open, and physically challenging to ascend or traverse, with a resulting perception of risk and exposure*." "*The simplicity of the rounded hills and plateaux often make it difficult to distinguish between individual tops and hard to orientate and estimate scale, increasing the sense of risk*." **WLQ3** – no reference **WLQ4** "*Throughout, the sense of remoteness and risk is amplified by the consistent land cover which makes it more difficult to navigate, apart from where landmark mountains can be seen rising up above the distant horizon*."	Improved access and facilities (e.g. parking) for walking up Ben Wyvis have reduced the risk or sense of awe or anxiety and perception of hazard in this area. Improved tracks elsewhere, as described above, have also reduced the risk or sense of awe or anxiety and perception of hazard. In relation to WLQ1, this attribute is expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA, around the Ben Wyvis massif. Here, the provision of well-made paths and the number of visitors has reduced the sense of "*being self-reliant in remote settings of large scale, whose rugged natural character and isolation from assistance engenders respect*". This ensures that it is not the case that "*All the hills are high, open, and physically challenging to ascend or traverse, with a*

Physical Attribute/ Perceptual Response	Strength of Physical Attribute/Perceptual Response and Contribution to Wild Land Quality (as described in WLA description)	Comment/Subsequent Change to Baseline
		resulting perception of risk and exposure". In relation to WLQ4, this attribute is expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA due to the relatively small areas for which this WLQ is relevant, which reduces the "*sense of remoteness and risk".* In relation to both WLQ1 and WLQ4, other parts of the WLA are relatively easily accessed by tracks (including core paths), and this response is expressed to a medium degree. In the more remote and less accessible areas, primarily the mountainous parts, this attribute is expressed to a high level. While no reference is made to this perceptual response in relation to WLQ3, it is considered that it is generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which WLQ3 relates.
Perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"An aesthetic reaction to the natural/semi-natural setting, often associated with the 'classic' high, steep and jagged mountains juxtaposed with deep lochs or seas, but can also be prompted by other superlative compositions such as the large scale simplicity of rounded massif, or the seemingly infinite expanse of open peatland or seas.")*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1** "*Views of a series of retreating rolling horizons also appear awe-inspiring in their vast scale, openness and 'wide skies'*." "*Nonetheless, there are some cliffs and corries carved into the hill sides that aid navigation locally as well as appearing arresting as distinct features*." **WLQ3** – no reference **WLQ4** "*These do not possess the massive form, vertical imposition or focal qualities of the mountains, but they are awe-inspiring in their openness and simplicity at a broad level…"*	This perceptual response remains intact in relation to WLQs 1 and 4 as noted in their descriptions and is generally expressed to a high level in the WLA. It should be noted, however, that in relation to WLQ4, this response is apparent in the larger areas of "*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes*". In smaller areas of rocky hills, such as the area within which the site lies, the response is expressed to a medium level due to the restriction of long views into the WLA by foreshortening landform and the resultant lack of "*openness*". While no reference is made to this perceptual response in relation to WLQ3, it is considered that it is generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which WLQ3 relates.
Fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places *(*defined in NatureScot guidance as *"The satisfaction and sense of accomplishment that arises from the physical effort required to traverse these settings, tackling their scale, topography, ground and weather conditions.")*	Referred to in the WLA description as follows: **WLQ1** "*Their convex slopes can be very steep and physically challenging to ascend but, once climbed, offer wide open gentle slopes and plateau tops that offer a feeling of being 'on top of the world', with panoramic views in all directions."* **WLQ3** – no reference **WLQ4** – no reference	In relation to WLQ1 and WLQ4 this response is expressed to a medium-low degree in the southern part of the WLA, across the site and the Ben Wyvis massif. Here, the provision of paths and tracks has reduced the "*physical challenge required to penetrate into these places*", thus also reducing the "*fulfilment*". Elsewhere in the WLA, this attribute is generally expressed to a medium to high level, with some tracks reducing the "*fulfilment from physical challenge required to penetrate into these places*". While no reference is made to this perceptual response in relation to WLQ3, it is considered that it is generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which WLQ3 relates.

Step 3 – Assess the Sensitivity of the WLA Qualities

7.11.38 Sensitivity is assessed by combining the value of the WLA and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development. NatureScot guidance summarises this step as follows in Table 1.

> *"Through detailed field assessment within the study area, assess the sensitivity of the wild land qualities scoped in (including their physical attributes and perceptual responses), to the type and scale of change proposed".*

7.11.39 The sensitivity of WLQs is determined through a combination of the value of the WLA and the susceptibility of the WLQs to the Proposed Development. It has been ascertained in Step 1 that the Proposed Development has potential to significantly affect three WLQs (WLQ1, WLQ3 and WLQ4) and the assessment of sensitivity therefore focusses on these WLQs.

Value of Wild Land Areas

7.11.40 In applying GLVIA3 to the assessment, and as noted by NatureScot, it is necessary to attribute a value to the WLA as a receptor. The value attributed to nationally important designations, including National Parks (NPs) and NSAs is normally found to be at the upper end of the scale, or high. Wild land is not an environmental designation and does not have statutory protection for its scenic qualities in the way that NPs and NSAs do. It is, however, recognised in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 4 as one of the 'Natural Places' that should be afforded protection.

7.11.41 NatureScot provides further guidance in its publication Spatial Planning for Onshore Wind Turbines – Natural Heritage Considerations, Guidance (June 2015). Annex 1 to this document provides advice on the potential landscape objectives that may be applicable in different landscapes within Scotland in terms of their ability to accommodate wind farms, suggesting that some landscapes should be subject to a higher level of protection than others. Annex 1 places WLAs in the middle category, where some landscape 'accommodation' of wind farms may be considered appropriate, and states the following:

> *"Within local landscape designations and Wild land Areas, the degree of landscape protection will be less than for National Scenic Areas. In these areas, an appropriate objective may be to accommodate wind farms, rather than seek landscape protection"*

7.11.42 WLAs are therefore considered to have a reduced baseline value in landscape terms from that of nationally designated landscapes, unless they are also covered by an NSA or NP designation. WLA 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis does not have any overlap with NSAs or NPs but is covered in part by two SLAs (the central part of the WLA is within the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie SLA and the southern end is within the Ben Wyvis SLA). In this assessment, the Ben Wyvis SLA is accorded a high-medium value. As a result of these considerations, this WLA is attributed with a **high-medium** value.

Susceptibility of Wild Land Areas

7.11.43 The methodology used to assess susceptibility is set out in Appendix 7.1. Susceptibility of landscape receptors relates to the nature of the receptor and how susceptible it is to the potential effects of the Proposed Development, as described in GLVIA3. Susceptibility can vary across the WLA depending on the nature and strength of the WLQs and their physical attributes and perceptual responses. The baseline presence and strength of the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to WLQ1 are discussed in Step 2, above.

Susceptibility and Sensitivity of WLQ1

7.11.44 This WLQ is "a range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas". As described in Step 2, above, the baseline presence and strength of some of the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to WLQ1 will vary across the WLA, as described below:

- **a high degree of perceived naturalness**: generally expressed to a high level throughout the WLA, with a localised medium level in the vicinity of hydro schemes;
- **a lack of modern human artefacts or structures/little evidence of contemporary land uses**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA; a medium level on the fringes of the WLA, especially around the southern and eastern edges; and a high level in the interior of the WLA;
- **landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging**: expressed to a high level throughout the majority of the WLA, with an intermittent medium level found where well-made tracks give access to "*high rounded hills and plateaux"* (e.g. An Cabar and Ben Wyvis);

- **remoteness and/or inaccessibility**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA and a medium to high level elsewhere in the WLA;
- **a sense of sanctuary or solitude**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA and a medium level on its fringes, especially around the southern and eastern edges, and a high level in the interior of the WLA;
- **risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA, a medium level elsewhere where there are well-made tracks, and a high level in the more remote and less accessible areas;
- perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities: generally expressed to a high level throughout the WLA; and
- **fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA, a medium level elsewhere where there are well-made tracks, and a high level in the more remote and less accessible areas.

7.11.45 The generally lower strength of attributes/responses in the southern part of the WLA is due to the presence and influence of human artefacts within and outwith this part of the WLA, including well-made and well-used tracks, hydro infrastructure, wind farms and other contemporary land uses around the southern and eastern edges of the WLA. The reduced influence of these internal and external influences underpins the higher level of attributes/responses that is generally found in the interior and central and northern parts of the WLA.

7.11.46 The Proposed Development will not directly affect WLQ1 as it does not lie within the "*range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges"*, but on the periphery of the WLA, in the lower-lying and relatively unremarkable plateau 'shelf' that lies on the outer fringe of the "*massive, high rounded hills and plateaux"* of the Ben Wyvis massif. This means that on the site area, the Proposed Development will not affect three of the physical attributes of WLQ1 ("*a high degree of perceived naturalness", "landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging", and "remoteness and/or inaccessibility*") as these attributes cannot be affected by external influence but only by physical effects. It can, however, affect the perceptual responses of WLQ1.

7.11.47 The southern part of the WLA, which will be most affected by the Proposed Development, has a medium-low susceptibility to the Proposed Development. This arises from a combination of the lack of susceptibility of three of the five physical attributes; the medium-low strength of the two relevant physical attributes; the medium-low strength of three of the perceptual responses and the generally high strength of the fourth perceptual response. When combined with the high-medium value of the WLA, this leads to a **medium** sensitivity for WLQ1 in the southern part of the WLA.

7.11.48 Elsewhere in the WLA, the susceptibility of WLQ1 will range from medium to high, dependent on the strength of the attributes and responses as described above. In these areas, the combination of the medium or high susceptibility and the high-medium value of the WLA leads to a **high-medium** or **high** sensitivity for WLQ1. The high sensitivity will arise in the remote interior areas that lack formal access and have very limited/no influence of internal or external development while the high-medium sensitivity will arise where there is some limited access and limited internal and/or external influence of development.

Susceptibility and Sensitivity of WLQ3

7.11.49 This WLQ is "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas".

7.11.50 This WLQ is geographically associated with the interior of the WLA rather than the southern part, where the Proposed Development will be located. It is, however, relevant to the assessment as the Proposed Development could affect the relationship and continuity of the interior of this WLA with "*neighbouring wild land areas",* as mentioned in the WLQ.

7.11.51 The NatureScot description of this WLQ refers to three physical attributes ("The lack of modern human artefacts or structures", "Little evidence of contemporary land uses", and "Remoteness and/or inaccessibility") and one perceptual response ("A sense of sanctuary or solitude"). The strength of the remaining two physical attributes and three perceptual responses have been considered by the assessors as noted in Table 7.9. As described in Step 2, above, the baseline presence and strength of some of the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to WLQ3 will vary across the WLA, as described below:

- **a high degree of perceived naturalness**: generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which this WLQ relates;
- **a lack of modern human artefacts or structures/little evidence of contemporary land uses**: expressed to a medium level in parts of the interior where external influences have reduced these attributes, and to a high level elsewhere in the interior;
- **landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging:** generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which this WLQ relates;
- **remoteness and/or inaccessibility**: expressed to a medium level where tracks and paths have reduced this attribute in parts of the interior, and to a high level elsewhere in the interior;
- **a sense of sanctuary or solitude**: expressed to a medium level where improved access has reduced this response in parts of the interior, and to a high level elsewhere in the interior;
- **risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety**: generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which this WLQ relates;
- **perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities**: generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which this WLQ relates; and
- **fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places**: generally expressed to a high level in the interior of the WLA, to which this WLQ relates.

7.11.52 The physical attributes and perceptual responses of this WLQ are generally expressed to a high level as the WLQ relates to the interior of the WLA, which is least affected by the internal and external influences that can reduce the wildness qualities. There are, however, pockets where they are expressed to a medium level due to external influences of development, as noted in the WLQ description, and the increased accessibility afforded by tracks and paths.

7.11.53 The Proposed Development will not directly affect WLQ3 as it does not lie within the "*very large interior*" of the WLA that is the subject of this WLQ. This means that the Proposed Development will not affect three of the physical attributes of WLQ1 ("*a high degree of perceived naturalness", "landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging",* and *"remoteness and/or inaccessibility*") as these attributes cannot be affected by external influence but only by physical effects.

7.11.54 A combination of the lack of susceptibility of three of the five physical attributes and the generally high but in some cases localised medium strength of the relevant physical attributes and perceptual responses results in a high-medium susceptibility to the Proposed Development. When combined with the high-medium value of the WLA, this leads to a **high-medium** sensitivity for WLQ3.

Susceptibility and Sensitivity of WLQ4

7.11.55 This WLQ is "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude".

7.11.56 The Proposed Development lies within the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) and will directly affect the physical attributes of this WLQ. However, the Proposed Development lies within a relatively small and discrete area of rocky hills in comparison to those found across the wider WLA, and this can restrict some of the perceptual responses:

- **a high degree of perceived naturalness**: generally expressed to a high level throughout the WLA, with a localised medium level in the vicinity of hydro schemes;
- **a lack of modern human artefacts or structures/little evidence of contemporary land uses**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA; a medium level on the fringes of the WLA, especially around the southern and eastern edges; and a high level in the interior of the WLA;
- **landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging**: generally expressed to a high level throughout the majority of the WLA;
- **remoteness and/or inaccessibility**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA and a medium to high level elsewhere in the WLA;
- **a sense of sanctuary or solitude**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA and a medium level on its fringes, and a high level in the interior of the WLA;
- **risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA, a medium level elsewhere where there are well-made tracks, and a high level in the more remote and less accessible areas;
- **perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities:** generally expressed to a medium level in the southern part of the WLA and a high level elsewhere in the WLA; and
- **fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places**: generally expressed to a medium-low level in the southern part of the WLA, a medium level elsewhere where there are well-made tracks, and a high level in the more remote and less accessible areas.

7.11.57 The generally lower strength of attributes/responses for WLQ4 in the southernmost part of the WLA is due to several factors. This area of "*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes"* is notably smaller and more restricted in extent than the extensive areas found elsewhere in the WLA, and this in turn restricts the strength of perceptual responses, which are most strongly expressed in the interior of the WLA. The presence and influence of human artefacts within and outwith this part of the WLA, including well-made and well-used tracks, hydro infrastructure, wind farms and other contemporary land uses around the southern and eastern edges of the WLA also reduces the strength of the attributes and responses.

7.11.58 In the southern part of the WLA, which will be most affected by the Proposed Development, a combination of the medium-low strength of three physical attributes and three perceptual responses, the medium strength of one perceptual response and the generally high strength of two physical attributes results in a medium-low susceptibility to the Proposed Development. When combined with the high-medium value of the WLA, this leads to a **medium** sensitivity for WLQ4.

7.11.59 Elsewhere in the WLA, the susceptibility will range from high-medium to high, dependent on the strength of the attributes and responses as described above. In these areas, the combination of the high-medium or high susceptibility and the high-medium value of the WLA leads to a **high-medium** or **high** sensitivity for WLQ4. The high sensitivity will arise in the remote interior areas that lack formal access and have very limited/no influence of internal or external development while the high-medium sensitivity will arise where there is some limited access and limited internal and/or external influence of development.

Step 4: Assess the Magnitude of Effects

7.11.60 NatureScot guidance notes this step as follows in Table 1:

> *"Assess the effects on individual and/or combinations of qualities, drawing out which physical attributes and perceptual responses will be affected, how and to what degree. This should reflect the size or scale of change, its extent and duration."*

7.11.61 Visibility of the Proposed Development varies across the WLA. Figures 7.12a (45 km radius) and 7.12b (20 km radius) show the WLA in relation to the blade tip ZTV. These show localised and intermittent theoretical visibility from two main areas of the WLA: the south-westernmost area, including the site itself and west and south-west-facing slopes and high points of An Cabar and Ben Wyvis; and, further away, the area to the north of Loch Glascarnoch, including Inchbae Forest, Strathvaich Forest and the south-facing slopes of Beinn Dearg. There are other smaller areas of theoretical visibility, including the southern slopes of Carn Mor and Seana Bhraig, from where the most distant theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is gained (over 27 km away).

Magnitude of Change on WLQ1

7.11.62 This WLQ is "A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas".

7.11.63 The maximum magnitude of change on this WLQ will be **medium**, arising in the south-western part of the WLA, where the "*massive, high rounded hills and plateaux*" of the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) form the landscape. This will arise from the following considerations.

- Whilst this WLQ will not be directly affected by the Proposed Development, the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) that covers the "*massive, high rounded hills and plateaux*" lies a minimum of approximately 500 m away from the nearest turbine, and the Proposed Development will have intermittent but immediately or very readily apparent visibility from these closer areas.
- The Proposed Development will affect two physical attributes of this WLQ – "*a lack of modern human artefacts or structures"* and *"little evidence of contemporary land uses".* These two attributes have a baseline medium-low strength and this will be reduced to a low level by the influence of the Proposed Development as it will add a further external influence of human artefacts and contemporary land use.
- The Proposed Development will affect all of the perceptual responses of this WLQ. Three of these - "a sense of sanctuary or solitude", "risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety", and "fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places" – have a medium-low baseline strength in this southern part of the WLA, and this will be reduced to a low level by the Proposed Development through the introduction of further human influence and increased ease of access due to the turbine access tracks.
- The fourth perceptual response – "*perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities*" is generally expressed to a high level throughout the WLA, and this will be reduced to a medium level by the Proposed Development as it can affect the perceived scale and openness of views; and
- The Proposed Development will be seen in elevated panoramas that characterise this WLQ in the south-western part of the WLA (as seen at Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6).

7.11.64 The factors that moderate the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows.

- There will be no direct physical effects on this WLQ as the Proposed Development lies outwith the area with which it is geographically associated.
- Theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is intermittent and restricted to specific parts of this area of the WLA, ensuring that effects are not consistently experienced.
- The two physical attributes that will be affected by the Proposed Development – "*a lack of modern human artefacts or structures"* and *"little evidence of contemporary land uses"* – have already been notably affected by internal and external development, including wind farms, and are not strongly expressed in relation to this WLQ in the south-western part of the WLA. The presence of

existing turbines in neighbouring landscapes means that the proposed turbines will not introduce elements that are uncharacteristic to this WLQ in this part of the WLA.

- Similarly, three of the perceptual responses have already been notably affected by internal and external development and are not strongly expressed in relation to this WLQ in the south-western part of the WLA due to internal and external development and the relatively straightforward access that can be gained to this part of the WLA.
- Notably, the baseline "*sense of sanctuary or solitude*" in the south-western area is limited as this area incorporates what is probably the most-visited hill in the WLA – Ben Wyvis – and is accessed by well-made and well-used paths. This is acknowledged in the WLQ description, which notes that "*Away from the more popular Munro and Corbett peaks, there are few visitors and thus a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude"* and "…*there are few worn paths (except on Ben Wyvis) as evidence of human activity and thus a greater sense of solitude*".
- The WLQ description states that "The convex landform makes it difficult to see the hill and plateau tops from below; but, equally, adjacent glens or low-lying areas are mostly hidden from the tops. This results in the screening of human artefacts and contemporary land use within adjacent low-lying areas, reducing the effects of these and increasing the sense of remoteness". This is not the case with the majority of views from this part of the WLA, where "human artefacts and contemporary land use" are clearly apparent (as seen at Viewpoints 4, 5, and 6).
- The description also notes that "*Views of a series of retreating rolling horizons also appear awe-inspiring in their vast scale, openness and 'wide skies'*". The Proposed Development will not affect long views into the WLA, as it lies on the periphery, and in views out of the WLA, it will be seen in association with baseline human development, including wind farms and so will not introduce a new element to views. Moreover, in the majority of views from the hills, the Proposed Development will be seen below the skyline and will therefore not affect the "*rolling horizons*".
- Due to its location on the periphery of the WLA, the Proposed Development will not affect views towards the "rugged, angular and rocky hills that…are massive in scale too, but tend to have steeper peaks that appear very imposing from below, contributing to a sense of awe".

7.11.65 The medium magnitude of change on WLQ1 will be localised in the south-western part of the WLA, up to a maximum of approximately 5 km away. Beyond this area the magnitude of change will diminish to a **medium-low** and then **low** level as the influence of the Proposed Development on the physical attributes and perceptual responses decreases with reduced visibility and distance.

7.11.66 It should be noted that as the influence of the Proposed Development reduces, the magnitude of change will not reduce on a continuum as its influence on the parts of the WLA where the attributes and responses have a higher baseline strength might be relatively greater. However, this will be balanced by the reduction in influence of the Proposed Development as distance increases and the level of visibility reduces, and the magnitude of change on WLQ1 will diminish across the central, northern and eastern parts of the WLA.

Magnitude of Change on WLQ3

7.11.67 This WLQ is "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas".

7.11.68 The maximum magnitude of change on this WLQ will be **low**, arising from the following considerations.

- Whilst this WLQ will not be directly affected by the Proposed Development, there is very intermittent theoretical visibility of the turbines from some high points and south-facing slopes in the interior of the WLA (e.g. Viewpoint 32).

- The Proposed Development has potential to affect two physical attributes of this WLQ – "*a lack of modern human artefacts or structures"* and *"little evidence of contemporary land uses".* These two attributes have a baseline medium or high strength and where the Proposed Development is clearly visible, this could be reduced by the influence of the Proposed Development as it would add an external influence of human artefacts and contemporary land use.
- The perceptual responses of this WLQ have a high or intermittently high baseline strength, and there is potential for the Proposed Development to affect all of these.

7.11.69 The factors that moderate the magnitude of change to a maximum low level are as follows.

- There will be no direct physical effects on this WLQ and theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development is very intermittent and restricted to high points and elevated slopes, gained from a minimum of approximately 15 km away.
- The parts of the interior that will gain visibility of the Proposed Development are generally already affected by visibility of Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension wind farms and will be affected to a greater degree by Kirkan (as seen at Viewpoint 32), ensuring that the Proposed Development will not introduce a new external influence on the WLQ.
- In views from the interior, the Proposed Development will be seen in the same southern direction as these operational and consented wind farms and will not introduce wind energy influence to a completely new aspect of the setting to the interior. This is relevant in relation to the WLQ description which notes that "*If cumulative effects occur, these may also appear more encroaching, especially if they seem to collectively encircle part of the wild land area*". Due to its location in the same southern aspect of the interior, the Proposed Development will not create a perception of encirclement, and its location further away from the interior than operational and consented wind farms ensures that it will not "*appear more encroaching*".
- The relationship of this WLA with neighbouring WLAs is an important aspect of the WLQ, with the description stating "The interior of this WLA is very large and, from its elevated ground, there are open views across a series of landform horizons that seem to continue far into the distance, influencing its perceived extent as well as the sense of remoteness. This is influenced by views extending into neighbouring hill areas, where intervening human elements just outside the WLA cannot be seen, including to the Fisherfield – Letterewe – Fannichs WLA (28) to the west, the Inverpolly – Glencanisp WLA (30) to the north west and the Reay – Cassley WLA (32) to the north east." The location of the Proposed Development at the south-western tip of the WLA and the pattern of theoretical visibility from within the interior ensures that it will not be seen in the line of sight towards the neighbouring WLAs that are mentioned. There are several small areas of theoretical visibility at high points in the interior from where the Proposed Development could theoretically be seen in the context of views towards the north-easternmost extremity of another WLA - WLA 24 Central Highlands - but this theoretical visibility is extremely limited and distant, and would not notably affect continuity of WLAs. Moreover, the extensive area that lies between these two WLAs is likely to ensure that other elements of human development will be clearly apparent.
- The description of this WLA notes that "…from the WLA margins (including the outer 'lobes' of the area in the south east), extensive areas of human elements and contemporary land use can be seen around the outside edge of the WLA in all directions except to the north west, including main roads, hydro-electric development and conifer plantations". This acknowledges the extent of baseline development around the WLA, other than to the north.

- The WLQ description notes that "…elements that extend up onto elevated slopes or tops are more prominent and can appear to encroach more directly upon the experience of the WLA where intervening development within the straths is screened. This may be the case even if the elements themselves lie outside the WLA; for example wind farms..." Conversely, in its enclosed, peripheral location on the lower edge of the WLA, the Proposed Development will not be seen in the context of "elevated slopes or tops", but below the skyline and often in the context of a more distant, developed, strath landscape where it is not prominent and will not "appear to encroach more directly upon the experience of the WLA".

7.11.70 The maximum low magnitude of change on WLQ3 will diminish to a **negligible** level on the more distant parts of the interior as the influence of the Proposed Development reduces further.

Magnitude of Change on WLQ4

7.11.71 This WLQ is "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude".

7.11.72 The maximum magnitude of change on this WLQ will be **medium**, arising in the south-westernmost tip of the WLA, which is covered by a small area of the "*Rocky hills*" (Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331)) that in part characterise this WLQ. The medium magnitude of change will cover the site area and a very small area of the WLA that lies to the east and north-east of the site, where there is theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. The area of medium magnitude of change is within the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), and will extend up to a maximum of just over 1 km from the Proposed Development. Beyond this, the landscape of the WLA transitions to Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), and WLQ4 gives way to the "*massive, high rounded hills and plateaux"* of WLQ1. The maximum medium magnitude of change will arise from the following considerations.

- The Proposed Development will have a direct effect on the five physical attributes of this area. The baseline strength of these in the south-western tip of the WLA is either medium-low ("*a lack of modern human artefacts or structures", "little evidence of contemporary land uses"* and *"remoteness and/or inaccessibility*") or high ("*a high degree of perceived naturalness"* and *"landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging*"). The Proposed Development will reduce the strength of the attributes with a high baseline level to a medium-low level, as the site infrastructure will alter some of the "*vegetation cover*" of the site area from its "*natural or semi-natural habitats*" and will reduce the physical challenge currently involved in accessing the landscape. The attributes that are currently expressed to a medium-low level will be further reduced by the Proposed Development due to the direct introduction of human structures and contemporary land uses, and an increase in accessibility through the building of new tracks.
- The Proposed Development will also affect the perceptual responses of this WLQ. Three of these - "a sense of sanctuary or solitude", "risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety", and "fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places" – have a medium-low baseline strength in this southernmost part of the WLA, and this will be reduced to a low level by the Proposed Development through the introduction of further human influence and increased ease of access due to the turbine access tracks.
- The fourth perceptual response – "*perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities*" is generally expressed to a medium level in this area, and this will be reduced to a medium-low level by the Proposed Development as it can have some effect on the "*openness and simplicity*" of this WLQ.

7.11.73 The factors that moderate the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows.

- The physical attributes and perceptual responses of this WLQ are expressed most strongly in the expansive, open and undeveloped interior areas of the WLA where external influences are very limited. In contrast, this is a small, discrete and peripheral area of the "*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes"* landscape that is associated with this WLQ, and lacks the readily apparent "*openness and simplicity*" that is found in the other considerably more extensive areas associated with this WLQ. The small size and the peripheral location of this area on the tip of the WLA, where it is sandwiched between other landscape types, means that the perceptual responses are not expressed to the high degree that is found in other areas associated with this WLQ, especially the interior.
- For example, the WLQ description notes that "There are extensive areas of rocky hills, cnocan and peatland across parts of this WLA. These do not possess the massive form, vertical imposition or focal qualities of the mountains, but they are awe-inspiring in their openness and simplicity at a broad level, as well as their perceived 'emptiness', sanctuary and solitude within the interior due to few human artefacts or visitors." This area is small rather than extensive, is not within the "interior", and is strongly influenced by external human artefacts, including wind farms, forestry and masts, all of which reduce the "perceived 'emptiness', sanctuary and solitude".
- The description goes on to state that "It is also difficult to perceive distance within most of the interior, where there is an absence of human artefacts to provide scale indicators. This means that these areas often appear more extensive than their actual dimensions". Again, this area is not within the "interior" and is strongly influenced by external human artefacts that provide scale indicators.
- While the Proposed Development will affect the perceptual response "*perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities*", this effect will be limited as this area does not display the "*openness and simplicity*" that elicits this perceptual response in relation to this WLQ and is found elsewhere in the WLA.

7.11.74 The medium magnitude of change on WLQ4 will be localised in the south-western tip of the WLA, within the part of the WLA that is covered by the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331). Other areas that are associated with this WLQ are considerably further away and will have a **low** magnitude of change due to the reduced influence of the Proposed Development and its perceived effect rather than direct effect.

7.11.75 It should be noted that as the influence of the Proposed Development reduces, the magnitude of change will not reduce on a continuum as its influence on the parts of the WLA where the attributes and responses have a higher baseline strength might be relatively greater. However, this will be balanced by the reduction in influence of the Proposed Development and its lack of direct physical effects on the WLA as distance increases and the level of visibility reduces, and the magnitude of change will diminish across the WLA in relation to WLQ4.

Step 5: Judgement of the Significance of Effects

7.11.76 NatureScot guidance summaries this step as follows in Table 1:

> *"Conclude on the overall significance (taking into account any mitigation), in terms of the study area and where relevant the wider WLA."*

7.11.77 NatureScot guidance (paragraph 29) notes that "where effects are identified that result in a material change in the experience of any of the wild land qualities, this is considered to be significant".

7.11.78 NatureScot guidance (2020/2023) (paragraph 33) states that:

> *"In judging significance, the following factors should be considered.*
>
> 1. *The sensitivity and magnitude of change on the qualities of the WLA.*
> 2. *The contribution of areas affected to the wider WLA.*

3. *The nature and extent of any likely cumulative effects.*

4. *Whether the impacts are adverse or beneficial, and their longevity."*

7.11.79 The significance of the effects are assessed through a combination of the sensitivity of each WLQ and the magnitude of change that will arise as a result of the Proposed Development. The significance of the effects on the three relevant WLQs is discussed below.

WLQ1 "A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas"

7.11.80 Step 3 has ascertained that WLQ1 has a medium sensitivity in the southern part of the WLA and a high-medium or high sensitivity elsewhere in the WLA, and Step 4 has assessed a medium magnitude of change on WLQ1 in the south-western part of the WLA, up to a maximum of approximately 5 km away. Beyond this area the magnitude of change will diminish to a medium-low and then low level.

7.11.81 In the south-western part of the WLA, the factors considered in the medium sensitivity and medium magnitude of change will lead to a moderate and **significant** effect on WLQ1 up to a maximum of approximately 5 km away from the Proposed Development, where there is visibility of the Proposed Development. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is considered to be significant due to the visibility at close proximity of the Proposed Development from the periphery of the "*high rounded hills*" that are associated with this WLQ, and the effect that this visibility will have on the relevant physical attributes and perceptual responses of the WLQ in this area. This effect will be long-term and reversible. Whilst the localised effect will be significant, the Proposed Development will not have any direct effects on this WLQ.

7.11.82 Beyond this closer south-western area, the reduced magnitude of change ensures that the effect will be **not significant** despite the increased sensitivity of WLQ1.

WLQ3 "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas"

7.11.83 Steps 3 and 4 have ascertained that WLQ3 has a high-medium sensitivity and a maximum low magnitude of change, and the combination of these considerations will lead to a moderate-minor and **not significant** effect on WLQ3. This effect will be long-term and reversible.

WLQ4 "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude"

7.11.84 Step 3 has ascertained that WLQ4 has a medium sensitivity in the southern part of the WLA and a high-medium or high sensitivity elsewhere in the WLA, and Step 4 has assessed a maximum medium magnitude of change on WLQ4 in the south-westernmost tip of the WLA. Beyond this area the magnitude of change will be low.

7.11.85 In the south-western part of the WLA, the factors considered in the medium sensitivity and medium magnitude of change will lead to a moderate and **not significant** effect on WLQ4. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is considered to be not significant due to the relatively unremarkable nature of the site in relation to the wider WLA and its small size and peripheral location on the tip of the WLA, where it is sandwiched between other landscape types, ensuring that physical attributes and perceptual responses are not expressed to the high degree that is found in other, more extensive, areas associated with this WLQ. This area is also influenced by external features of development, including wind farms, roads, forestry and masts, and is accessible by well-made tracks, ensuring that a number of the baseline physical attributes and perceptual responses are expressed to a relatively low level. This effect will be long-term and reversible.

7.11.86 Beyond this closer south-western tip of the WLA, the reduced magnitude of change ensures that the effect will be not significant despite the increased sensitivity of WLQ4.

Cumulative Effects on WLA 29

7.11.87 WLQ1 is "A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas". While the "massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges" will not be directly affected by cumulative wind farms, there is potential for the "elevated panoramas" to gain visibility of

cumulative wind farms. The assessment of Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6, which represent these panoramas, has found that the cumulative effects on these views will be significant in all scenarios, and the cumulative effect on some of the panoramas that are mentioned in this WLQ will also be significant. This significant cumulative effect will, however, be very intermittent, restricted to the very limited locations where the Proposed Development will be clearly visible in conjunction with a number of cumulative sites. At many other locations, such as Viewpoint 32 where the cumulative effect is assessed as not significant in all scenarios, the cumulative effect on this WLQ will be not significant.

7.11.88 WLQ3 is "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas". The description of this WLQ refers to cumulative effects (emphasis added): "Conversely, elements that extend up onto elevated slopes or tops are more prominent and can appear to encroach more directly upon the experience of the WLA where intervening development within the straths is screened. This may be the case even if the elements themselves lie outside the WLA; for example wind farms, masts, conifer plantations and fences. If cumulative effects occur, these may also appear more encroaching, especially if they seem to collectively encircle part of the wild land area."

7.11.89 Viewpoint 32 lies within the area associated with this WLQ and is assessed as having a not significant cumulative effect. It is also relevant that the Proposed Development has very intermittent and distant theoretical visibility from the interior of the WLA, with a low magnitude of change on this WLQ. Moreover, where it is seen, it will almost always be viewed in a relatively low-lying position, against a backdrop of landform, and will not "*extend up onto elevated slopes or tops*". It will therefore not be *"more prominent" or "appear to encroach more directly upon the experience of the WLA",* and this also reduces its cumulative impact.

7.11.90 WLQ4 is "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude". The description of this WLQ does not refer to cumulative wind farm development. The Proposed Development will primarily affect WLQ4 in the south-westernmost tip of the WLA, covered by Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), where a maximum medium magnitude of change on WLQ4 is assessed. Beyond this area the maximum magnitude of change on WLQ4 will be low. As there are no viewpoints in this area, it is relevant to refer to the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which is assessed to have a not significant cumulative effect.

7.11.91 These factors ensure that there will be a very intermittent **significant** cumulative effect on WLQ1 and a **not significant** cumulative effect on WLQ3 and WLQ4.

Hours of Darkness Effects on WLA 29

7.11.92 The assessment of visible aviation lighting is largely a visual effect because the lighting will not be activated during daylight hours when the WLQs of the WLA are clearly apparent and will not generally affect the WLQs unless they specifically refer to the hours of darkness environment. None of the WLQs of WLA 29 make reference to dark skies or the night-time environment.

7.11.93 However, it is relevant to consider the hours of darkness effects on the viewpoints that lie within the WLA as these illustrate the appearance of the Proposed Development in relation to the WLA. These effects are assessed in full in Section 7.12 of this chapter and summarised below.

7.11.94 Viewpoints 4, 5, 6 and 32 lie within the WLA. The hours of darkness effects on these viewpoints are as follows:

- Viewpoint 4 (Little Wyvis): significant effect in the 200 cd scenario, not significant effect when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration;
- Viewpoint 5 (An Cabar): significant effect in the 200 cd scenario, not significant effect when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration;
- Viewpoint 6 (Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)): not significant effect in either scenario; and

- Viewpoint 32 (Am Faochagach): not significant effect in either scenario.

7.11.95 This indicates that in the 200 cd scenario, significant effects are likely to arise on two viewpoints within the WLA (Viewpoints 4 and 5). All effects are not significant when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration. Overall, the effects of visible aviation lighting on views from the WLA will be limited, with very localised significant effects in the 200 cd scenario on two of the relevant viewpoints. Both of these viewpoints gain baseline visibility of lighting at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms as well as lighting from settlement and other development around the WLA, and the Proposed Development will therefore not introduce a new influence of lighting on the views. These effects are considered to be not significant in relation to WLQ1, WLQ2 and WLQ4 of the WLA due to the limited and localised nature of the effects, and because none of the WLQs make reference to dark skies or the night-time environment.

Mitigation of Effects on WLA 29

7.11.96 The assessment of effects on wild land indicates that the Proposed Development is likely to result in a localised significant effect on WLQ1 where it is expressed in the "*high rounded hills and plateaux*" in the south-western part of the WLA. This significant effect will arise as a result of visibility of the Proposed Development, as it will not have direct physical effects on the WLQ.

7.11.97 Elsewhere, the level of influence of the Proposed Development, the baseline nature of the WLA, and the attributes and responses of the WLQs ensure that the effect of the Proposed Development will be not significant. This includes the interior area, where the physical attributes and perceptual responses are most strongly expressed.

7.11.98 Notably, the Proposed Development will be located in a part of the WLA that is affected by baseline development. and it will also be perceived in the context of development that lies outwith the WLA (e.g. roads, houses, forestry, hydro infrastructure, and wind farms). This ensures that the greatest effects of the Proposed Development will generally arise on those parts of the WLA that display a lower baseline strength of physical attributes and perceptual responses. Conversely, effects on the area where WLQs (and their attributes and responses) are expressed to a greater degree – broadly speaking, the interior and northern areas - will undergo a considerably more limited effect or no effect from the Proposed Development.

7.11.99 The Proposed Development will, therefore, affect those parts of the WLA where WLQs are not expressed to their optimum and where other external influences have resulted in a diminution of their strength. There is very limited theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from areas where the WLQs are more strongly expressed, and where it is visible, it is likely to be seen in the context of other wind farm development, which ensures that it will not introduce an entirely new influence on attributes and responses.

7.11.100 Whilst removing all visibility from the WLA is not possible, the Proposed Development has been specifically designed to minimise significant effects on the qualities of the WLA and mitigate its effect on the WLA.

7.11.101 The mitigation that has been considered in the layout iteration of the Proposed Development in relation to the WLA is described in full in the DS.

7.12 Assessment of Effects on Views

Introduction

7.12.1 Effects on views are the changes to views that result from the introduction of the Proposed Development. The assessment of effects on views includes the 33 viewpoints which represent visibility of the Proposed Development, and effects on principal visual receptors such as settlements and routes. Cumulative effects and the hours of darkness effects of visible aviation lighting are considered in the assessment.

7.12.2 The assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development itself (e.g. not the cumulative assessment) is carried out in relation to the baseline view, which includes consideration of operational and under construction wind farms (the 'current baseline') and, where relevant, consented wind farms (the 'predicted baseline'). The cumulative assessment then considers various scenarios of operational, under construction, consented and application stage wind farms.

7.12.3 Viewpoint locations are shown in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV on Figures 7.7a to 7.7d and with the hub height ZTV on Figures 7.8a to 7.8d. Separate sets of visualisations have been prepared to meet the requirements of NatureScot and THC and are included in Volume 3b and 3c respectively.

Infrastructure

7.12.4 In line with NatureScot guidance (SNH, 2017), long-term infrastructure (e.g. tracks, hardstandings and the substation compound) is photomontaged into viewpoints where "*these elements are likely to result in permanent significant impacts (for the duration of the consent), either individually and/or collectively*". Short-term infrastructure such as construction compounds and borrow pits is not shown in the photomontages as this will be temporary and short term.

Hours of Darkness Assessment

7.12.5 Visible aviation lighting will be required on the nacelles of four turbines in the Proposed Development; T1, T4, T7 and T9. Intermediate tower lights will not be required. In accordance with guidance (NatureScot, 2024), photomontages that illustrate the theoretical visibility of 200 cd light fittings have been included for five viewpoints that have been agreed with NatureScot and THC.

7.12.6 The five viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced are:

- Viewpoint 1: Garve.
- Viewpoint 2: Gorstan.
- Viewpoint 22: A835/B9169 Crossroads.
- Viewpoint 24: A835, south end of Loch Garve.
- Viewpoint 25: A835, Loch Glascarnoch.

7.12.7 While the hours of darkness assessment focusses on the effect that the Proposed Development will have on these viewpoints, broad conclusions are also drawn as to likely hours of darkness effects at other viewpoints. In accordance with guidance (NatureScot, 2024), the assessment focusses on those viewpoints where there is potential for effects from lighting to be significant. The hours of darkness assessment focusses on a 20 km radius study area, in accordance with guidance (NatureScot, 2024).

7.12.8 The hours of darkness assessment on viewpoints makes reference to a Baseline Light Pollution map (Figure 7.9a), a lighting ZTV (e.g. a hub height ZTV that shows theoretical visibility of the hubs of the turbines that will be fitted with visible lights) (Figure 7.9b), and a Lighting Intensity ZTV (Figure 7.9c). The lighting intensity ZTV shows the reduction in lighting intensity that may be achieved through vertical directional intensity mitigation, as described above. The hypothetical intensities shown on Figure 7.9c are based on bands of average intensity based upon the specific light (CEL-WT-MIC) that is referenced in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1).

7.12.9 The assessment of hours of darkness effects on relevant viewpoints therefore examines two different scenarios: **200 cd** and **reduced intensity 200 cd**, which takes vertical directional intensity mitigation into account, as described above and listed in Table 8 of the WPAC report (Technical Appendix 15.1).

7.12.10 The presence of visible aviation lighting is annotated on the 53.5º NatureScot wirelines for each viewpoint. A summary of the number of visible aviation lights that can theoretically be seen at each viewpoint is shown in Table 7.10 below.

Table 7.10 – Theoretical Visibility of Visible Aviation Lighting at Viewpoints

Viewpoint Number and Name	Theoretical Visibility of Nacelle Lighting				
	T1	T4	T7	T9	Notes
1. Garve	✓				
2. Gorstan	✓		✓		
3. Tarvie		✓	✓	✓	
4. Little Wyvis		✓	✓	✓	
5. An Cabar		✓	✓	✓	
6. Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)		✓		✓	
7. View Rock	✓	✓	✓	✓	All currently screened by woodland/forestry

Viewpoint Number and Name	Theoretical Visibility of Nacelle Lighting				
	T1	T4	T7	T9	Notes
8. Loch Kinellan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9. A834, Jamestown	✓				Currently filtered by woodland
10. Marybank	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11. Knockfarrel		✓	✓	✓	
12. Peffery Way at Fodderty Cemetery		✓		✓	
13. Tesco Dingwall				✓	
14. Culbokie		✓		✓	
15. A862, west of Inverness	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16. Great Glen Way near Ladycairn	✓	✓	✓	✓	
17. Inverness Castle	✓	✓		✓	All currently screened by forestry
18. Milton of Leys Primary School	✓	✓	✓	✓	
19. Culloden battlefield		✓	✓	✓	
20. Simpsons Garden Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓	
21. A9, Black Isle		✓	✓	✓	
22. A835/B9169 Crossroads	✓	✓	✓	✓	
23. A835, Contin	✓	✓	✓	✓	
24. A835, south end of Loch Garve		✓		✓	
25. A835, Loch Glascarnoch	✓	✓			
26. A832, Strath Bran	✓	✓	✓	✓	T1 currently filtered by vegetation
27. A832, Lochluichart	✓	✓	✓	✓	
28. A832 near Torriegorrie	✓	✓	✓		
29. Sgùrr a' Mhuilinn	✓	✓	✓	✓	
30. Beinn a' Bha'ach Ard	✓	✓	✓	✓	
31. An Coileachan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
32. Am Faochagach	✓	✓	✓	✓	
33. Cnoc Fyrish monument		✓		✓	

7.12.11 The following sections include the assessment of effects on the viewpoints followed by the relevant principal visual receptors.

Viewpoint 1: Garve

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.12 This representative viewpoint is located close to a bus stop in the centre of the settlement of Garve, adjacent to the A835 (NC500) and close to the Kyle of Lochalsh railway line and railway station. The viewpoint is included to represent the outlook gained by people walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop and people travelling on the A835 and the railway line.

7.12.13 The viewpoint is not intended to represent the outlook gained by residents of Garve from inside their houses. This is because houses are unlikely to gain this specific view but will tend to have a higher level of screening of the Proposed Development by landform and vegetation. The effects of the Proposed Development on views gained from the principal visual receptors of the settlement of Garve, the A835 and the railway line are assessed separately subsequently in this chapter.

7.12.14 This viewpoint lies within the enclosed valley landform of Strath Garve (classified as Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340)), through which the Black Water runs. The houses within the settlement are a focal point in the foreground of the view, beyond which the slopes of Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) and Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) LCTs rise steeply to form a contrasting upland skyline and eastern backdrop to the village. The masts on Meall Ruighe an Fhirich can be seen on the skyline – with this landform itself being prominent in the view - while to the left is the distinctive landform of Little Wyvis. Coniferous forestry can be seen on the lower slopes of the ridge.

7.12.15 To the west of the viewpoint, the railway line can be seen running adjacent to the A835, beyond which the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) rises very steeply to enclose the western side of the strath.

7.12.16 No operational or under construction wind farms are visible from this viewpoint. There is very limited theoretical visibility - one hub and one blade tip - of the consented Kirkan Wind Farm seen from approximately 5.8 km away but this will have a limited effect due to the limited nature of visibility, its location in a peripheral part of the view, and some screening by vegetation.

7.12.17 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value; this stretch of the A835 is part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route, which is valued for its scenic outlooks, and while the viewpoint is not within a scenic designation, part of the view – including Little Wyvis but not Meall Ruighe an Fhirich - is covered by the Ben Wyvis SLA. However, the value of the view is moderated by the lack of formal recognition of this location as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and facilities such as parking, signs and interpretative boards are not provided for the enjoyment of the view.

7.12.18 The susceptibility to change of viewers varies dependent on the receptor. People travelling on the A835 have a high susceptibility due to the identification of this stretch of the road as part of the NC500 tourist route. People walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop also have a high susceptibility as they are likely to be residents of the local area, and Garve is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by residents of the area. People travelling on the railway have a medium susceptibility as there is no formal recognition attached to this route.

7.12.19 For people travelling on the A835 or walking through Garve and waiting at the bus stop, the sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium**, due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of the viewers. For people travelling on the railway, the sensitivity is **medium** due to a combination of the medium value and the medium susceptibility of these viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.20 Four of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be theoretically visible east-north-east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 2.86 km away, with two hubs visible and the other two turbines seen as blade tips only. These will theoretically extend across around 28º of the view, although T8, on the right-hand side of the view, is seen as a blade tip extremity only and is unlikely to be consistently readily apparent. Infrastructure will be screened by landform, buildings and vegetation other than several sections of access track. Cranes will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will vary dependent on the receptor group; for people travelling on the A835, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low**, while for people walking through Garve, waiting at the bus stop or travelling on the train, the magnitude of change will be **medium**.

7.12.21 The **medium** magnitude of change for people walking through Garve, waiting at the bus stop or travelling on the train arises for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be readily apparent at relatively close proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on a prominent skyline, including the distinctive landform of Little Wyvis, that encloses the eastern side of the strath within which Garve lies, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- scale comparisons can arise between the turbines and the small-scale urban context that is seen in the foreground of the view;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the most open aspect of the view gained from this location due to screening by vegetation and landform in other aspects of the view, and this can draw the eye of the viewer;
- T7 will be seen as a blade tip only and will have an appearance of ‘blade-tipping’ on the skyline; this is also likely to apply to T1 as while its hub is theoretically visible, it is unlikely to be readily apparent;
- people walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop are likely to be static or moving relatively slowly and looking around, which increases the opportunity to see the Proposed Development; and
- the train travels slowly through Garve, stopping at the station, and the outlook gained is perpendicular to the direction of travel, towards the Proposed

Development, which again increases the opportunity to see the Proposed Development.

7.12.22 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows:

- the limited visibility of the turbines will reduce the impact of the Proposed Development on the view, and the screening of towers by landform will minimise the vertical impact of the turbines on the skyline;
- the more visible turbines (T1 and T6) will affect a very limited part of the view - approximately 8º - and are seen in a dip in the landform, which will also reduce their perceived vertical impact;
- the majority of views towards the Proposed Development from Garve are screened or filtered to some degree by vegetation and buildings, and this type of open and clear view of the turbines will be found in few locations, ensuring that the view will not be gained consistently;
- the location of the turbine bases behind the skyline ensures visual separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, avoiding a sense of encroachment of the turbines down into the settled strath, towards Garve and the A835;
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons;
- the Proposed Development will not be seen directly in front of the landform feature of Little Wyvis; and
- for people travelling on the train, this is a moving view, albeit slowly, and is of brief duration as the train passes through Garve.

7.12.23 The reduction to a **medium-low** magnitude of change for people travelling on the A835 is due to the following factors:

- the Proposed Development will be seen perpendicular to the main direction of travel, which is north-south, rather than in the direct line of view; and
- the screening and filtering of many views from the A835 in Garve and the moving nature of these viewers ensures that the outlook will be briefly glimpsed and of short duration.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.24 For people walking through Garve, waiting at the bus stop or travelling on the train, the effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium (for people walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop) or medium (for people travelling on the train) sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in both of these cases this moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the location of the Proposed Development on the skyline in the most open aspect of the view and the proximity of the clearly visible turbines (T1 and T6) to the viewpoint.

7.12.25 For people travelling on the A835, the effect will be moderate and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. This moderate effect is considered to be not significant due to the factors that lead to the reduced – medium-low - magnitude of change for this receptor group; that is, the moving nature of the viewers, the very short duration of the view, and the location of the Proposed Development perpendicular to the direction of travel.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.26 As described above, there is no theoretical visibility of operational or under construction wind farms and some minor visibility of the consented Kirkan Wind Farm, which is discounted from the cumulative assessment due to the very limited influence it will have. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm

sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.27 An hours of darkness photomontage has been produced for this viewpoint, and it has been visited at night-time. The hours of darkness baseline view is characterised by street lighting within the built-up area, lights of vehicles on the A835, lighting at the railway station, domestic lighting at houses, and, when in use, the flashing red lights at the nearby level crossing. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows a notable area of lighting in Garve. At dusk and dawn, the skyline that rises to the east of the viewpoint provides a strong, enclosing landscape feature, as it does during the day. Other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.28 The hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers. People travelling on the A835 or on the railway will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including, internally, dashboards and internal lights and externally, street lighting in Garve, lights on other vehicles and domestic lighting in the settlement. People walking in Garve or waiting at the bus stop will also have a low susceptibility due to the street lighting, car lights and domestic lighting in Garve. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low** for all users.

7.12.29 Lighting on one turbine (T1) will be visible from a minimum of 3.60 km away at this viewpoint. The position of the light on the well-defined and elevated skyline - which is a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other apparent lighting will increase its effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise. The magnitude of change is moderated by the visibility of one single light; the distance of the light from the viewpoint; the location of the light just above the skyline rather than in a more elevated position above the skyline; and the presence of baseline lighting in the view, albeit of a different type, so that the turbine light will not introduce lighting into a completely dark environment.

7.12.30 Other factors will affect the magnitude of change for different receptors. People walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop will be static or moving slowly and therefore have a greater opportunity to notice the lighting. Street lighting at the viewpoint will, however, reduce the contrast and prominence of the Proposed Development light. People travelling on the train will also be moving slowly but will be in a brightly-lit environment on the train, so that external lighting will have a limited additional influence. People travelling on the A835 will be moving more quickly, will have some lighting within their vehicles as well as from street lighting and vehicles in front of and behind them, and will see the light in perpendicular views.

7.12.31 In the scenario of 200 cd, the magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for people walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop and **negligible** for people on the train and people travelling on the A835. When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd light will be perceived as 8 cd. This reduction in the intensity of light will lead to a **negligible** magnitude of change for all receptors.

7.12.32 The effect of turbine lighting at this viewpoint will be **not significant** for all receptors in all scenarios, due to a combination of the maximum low magnitude of change and the medium-low hours of darkness sensitivity. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required at this viewpoint due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites.

Viewpoint 2: Gorstan

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.33 This representative viewpoint is within the hamlet of Gorstan, which lies just over 1 km to the north of Garve. Gorstan lies between the A832 and the A835 and consists of a small group of residential properties that are set around a minor road, accessed off the A832. The viewpoint is included to represent the outlook gained by residents of these properties.

7.12.34 Gorstan lies within the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), which is seen in the foreground and middle ground of the view. Unlike the downstream section of Strath LCT (LCT 340) at Garve, this part of the LCT does not contain a notable watercourse, as the Black

Water turns sharply to the north-east just south of Gorstan. As a result, the landform is less tightly enclosed and is orientated to the south-east, across the course of the Black Water, giving an open aspect towards the Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) and Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) LCTs. These LCTs provide an upland backdrop to the Strath, with Ben Wyvis, An Cabar, Little Wyvis, Beinn a' Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich (with its masts) all apparent. While Ben Wyvis, An Cabar and Little Wyvis appear as individual peaks, the landform of Beinn a' Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich forms a relatively uniform ridge with forested lower slopes.

7.12.35 Several blade tip of the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms and four blades of the consented Kirkan Wind Farm are theoretically visible at approximately 5.3 km, 6.5 km and 4.5 km away respectively. This visibility is, however, screened by buildings and vegetation in the foreground of the view, and there are therefore no relevant baseline wind farms seen from this viewpoint.

7.12.36 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value; it has no formal recognition in mapping or other documentation, the viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation, and facilities such as parking, signs and interpretative boards are not provided for the enjoyment of the view. However, there is value in the scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA, which covers Ben Wyvis, An Cabar and Little Wyvis, but not the ridge of Beinn a' Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich. Residential viewers are likely to be the only receptor group at this viewpoint, and their susceptibility to change is high.

7.12.37 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high**, as the high susceptibility of the residential viewers outweighs the medium-low value of the view.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.38 Seven of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be visible to the east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 3.42 km away, with four hubs visible and the other three turbines seen as blades only (one of which is a blade tip extremity). These will theoretically extend across around 24º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than short sections of access tracks (including new and upgraded sections). Cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **high-medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at relatively close proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on a prominent skyline that encloses the eastern side of the strath within which Gorstan lies, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the most open aspect of the view gained from this location due to screening by buildings, vegetation and landform in other aspects of the view, and this can draw the eye of the viewer;
- the masts on Meall Ruighe an Fhirich are visible in this view, and the introduction of turbine blades on the same skyline can lead to eye-catching juxtaposition of static and moving elements; and
- T3 and T8 will be seen as blades only and will have an appearance of 'blade-tipping' on the skyline, which can be eye-catching;

7.12.39 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level are as follows:

- the screening of lower towers by landform will minimise the vertical impact of the turbines on the skyline;
- the location of the turbine bases behind the skyline ensures visual separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, avoiding a sense of encroachment of the turbines down into the settled strath, towards Gorstan;

- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen appears as a simple, large-scale landform with uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons and reduces the perceived scale of the turbines;
- the appearance of the Proposed Development on a single landform also beneficially aids cohesion between the turbines, ensuring that the Proposed Development has a simple image;
- the turbines will not be seen directly in front of the focal point of Little Wyvis, ensuring that it remains a prominent feature in the view;
- the enclosure of the ridge by the higher landform of Little Wyvis will reduce the perceived scale of the turbines and reduce their vertical impact; and
- while the juxtaposition of the turbine blades and the masts can be eye-catching, the masts do provide a precedent for vertical development on the skyline.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.40 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.41 As described above, there is no actual visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms at this viewpoint due to a combination of very limited theoretical visibility and screening by buildings and vegetation. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.42 An hours of darkness photomontage has been produced for this viewpoint, and it has been visited at night-time. The baseline view is generally dark, with no street lighting, characterised only by domestic lighting at houses both in the foreground and the middle ground of the view. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution in Gorstan. At dusk and dawn, the skyline that rises to the east of the viewpoint provides a strong, enclosing landscape feature, as it does during the day. Other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.43 The sensitivity of this viewpoint remains **high**, as assessed for daylight hours. This is because the residents who will gain this view during hours of darkness remain highly susceptible due to the lack of street lighting around the viewpoint, and the limited baseline lighting that is apparent in the view.

7.12.44 Lighting on two turbines (T1 and T7) will be visible from a minimum of 3.56 km away at this viewpoint. The position of the lights on the elevated skyline - which is a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise when blades pass in front of the lights, and the static nature of residential receptors. The magnitude of change is moderated by the visibility of two lights; the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 20º); the distance of the lights from the viewpoint; and the location of the lights just above the skyline rather than in a more elevated position above the skyline; and the presence of baseline lighting in the view, albeit limited and of a different type, so that the turbine light will not introduce lighting into a completely dark environment. It is also relevant that views from within properties are likely to be restricted by the use of curtains or blinds, particularly in winter.

7.12.45 In the scenario of 200 cd, the magnitude of change will be **medium**, with the lighting having a readily apparent effect on the view. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is also taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 8 cd. This reduction in the intensity of light will lead to a **low** magnitude of change.

7.12.46 The effect of turbine lighting at this viewpoint will vary dependent on the light intensity. In the 200 cd scenario, the effect will be major-moderate and **significant** due to the factors considered in the medium magnitude of change and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is also taken into consideration, the effect will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors considered in the low magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required at this viewpoint due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites.

Viewpoint 3: Tarvie

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.47 This representative viewpoint is in the dispersed residential area of Tarvie. Tarvie is in an elevated position to the south of the A835 at the eastern end of Loch Garve and is accessed by a minor dead-end road that leads from the A835 to houses and to Tarvie Lochs fishery. This viewpoint is included to represent views gained by local residents and people travelling on the minor road, including to/from the fishery. People fishing at Tarvie Lochs are unlikely to gain the clear and open view towards the Proposed Development that is seen at the viewpoint due to screening by landform and vegetation and are therefore not included as receptors in the viewpoint assessment.

7.12.48 Tarvie lies within Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335). The landform of this LCT rises steeply to the south of Loch Garve and the A835 and then levels off into an enclosed plateau of undulating topography interspersed with small upland lochs, including the three that are part of the fishery. The properties in Tarvie are loosely grouped around several minor roads in this elevated area. The elevation of the landscape and the minor, steep access road give Tarvie a sense of separation from the A835 corridor. There is, however, a domestic character to the area - particularly to the south of the viewpoint - despite the seclusion, arising from the scattered houses and associated outbuildings, fencing, driveways, telegraph poles and other local infrastructure. The relatively complex and small-scale landscape around the lochs adds to the sense of an enclosed and localised landscape, again largely to the south of the viewpoint.

7.12.49 To the north of the viewpoint, in the direction of the site, landform drops steeply down into the wooded valley of the Black Water (through which the A835 runs) before rising again into the uplands of the Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) and Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) LCTs. The closer skyline includes the landforms of Meall Ruighe an Fhirich (with its masts) and, to its right, Carn Fearna, while Little Wyvis and An Cabar are clearly seen on the more distant skyline. The top of Ben Wyvis is just visible but is not prominent.

7.12.50 Fairburn Wind Farm is visible on the skyline to the south, 5.5 km away, seen in the setting of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) that forms a large-scale and simple backdrop to Tarvie. The group of operational and consented sites at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and extensions, and Kirkan is theoretically visible from between 9.9 km and 13.2 km away, but these sites are almost completely screened by foreground vegetation and have a very limited influence on the view.

7.12.51 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value; it has no formal recognition in mapping or other documentation, the viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation, and facilities such as parking, signs and interpretative boards are not provided for the enjoyment of the view. However, there is value in the scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA, which covers Ben Wyvis, An Cabar and Little Wyvis, but not the closer ridge of Carn Fearna and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich.

7.12.52 The susceptibility to change of viewers varies dependent on the receptor. Residents of Tarvie have a high susceptibility to change, while people travelling on the minor road have a medium-low susceptibility as there is no formal scenic recognition attached to this route.

7.12.53 For residents of Tarvie, the sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** as the high susceptibility of the residential viewers outweighs the medium-low value of the view. For people travelling on the minor road, the sensitivity is **medium-low** due to a combination of the medium-low value and the medium-low susceptibility of these viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.54 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the north of this viewpoint from a minimum of 3.35 km away, with seven turbines seen as hubs and the other two turbines seen as blades only. These will theoretically extend across around 26º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than short sections of access tracks and hardstandings. Cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **high-medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at relatively close proximity in an elevated aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the prominent, elevated landform that forms the northern aspect of the view, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in one of the two open aspects - the north and south - of the view gained from this location, and this can draw the eye of the viewer;
- while the site itself lies on and behind the simple, uniform ridgeline that lies to the east of the landform of Carn Fearna, this ridge, and the turbines, are backclothed by the landform of Little Wyvis and An Cabar, and the appearance of the turbines on this more complex skyline can be eye-catching;
- the turbines will be seen in relation to Little Wyvis and An Cabar, which are notable features on the skyline;
- T6 will be seen as a blade only and will have an appearance of ‘blade-tipping’ on the skyline, which can be eye-catching; and
- for northbound users of the minor road, the Proposed Development will be seen in the direction of travel.

7.12.55 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level are as follows:

- the screening of lower towers and backclothing of turbines by landform reduces their vertical impact as they will not be seen at full height on the skyline;
- the location of the turbines within the enclosed plateau and behind the containing ridgeline ensures that they appear set back, with a clear visual separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, thus avoiding a sense of encroachment towards Tarvie;
- the large-scale landform and simple landscape patterns of the setting to the Proposed Development will reduce the perceived scale of the turbines; and
- the turbines have a balanced appearance that relates to the landform in which they are seen.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.56 For residents of Tarvie, the effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. For people travelling on the minor road, the effect will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the medium-low sensitivity of the viewpoint.

7.12.57 A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the location of the Proposed Development in the direction of travel for northbound users of the minor road and its level of visibility at relatively close proximity.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.58 As described above, there is visibility of the operational Fairburn Wind Farm at this viewpoint, but other baseline wind farms have a very limited effect due to screening by vegetation. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites, and there is therefore one relevant cumulative scenario; the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of the operational site at Fairburn.

7.12.59 In this current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to Fairburn will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development (which itself will have a significant effect) to the view, and the location of the Proposed Development to the north while Fairburn is to the south, so that development will be apparent in opposite directions from the viewpoint. The two wind farms will also affect the open aspects of the view, as views to the east and west are enclosed by vegetation. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the very small number of clearly visible wind farms (the Proposed Development and Fairburn); the limited extent of the view occupied by Fairburn (approximately 23º) and the Proposed Development (approximately 26º), which ensures that the majority of the view remains unaffected by wind energy development; the smaller turbine size at Fairburn, which reduces its influence on the view; the similarity in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) setting of both wind farms; and the visual and perceptual separation of both of the wind farms from the viewpoint by areas of lower ground.

7.12.60 For residential viewers, the cumulative effect at this viewpoint in the current baseline scenario will be moderate and **significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the location of the two wind farms on each side of the viewpoint, their appearance in the open parts of the view, and the level of visibility of both sites.

7.12.61 For people travelling on the minor road, the effect in the current baseline scenario will be minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium-low sensitivity of the viewpoint.

7.12.62 There are no other relevant cumulative scenarios at this viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.63 A full assessment of hours of darkness effects has not been carried out for this viewpoint as while it has been visited at night-time, a photomontage has not been produced. However, overall conclusions regarding hours of darkness effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.64 The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is generally dark, with no street lighting, characterised only by domestic lighting at houses. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution in Tarvie. At dusk and dawn, the skyline of the Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) and Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) LCTs is likely to provide a strong landscape feature to the north of the viewpoint, as it does during the day while other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.65 For residential viewers, the sensitivity of this viewpoint remains **high**, as assessed for daylight hours. This is because the residents who will gain this view during hours of darkness remain susceptible due to the lack of street lighting around the viewpoint, and the limited baseline lighting that is apparent in the view. People travelling on the minor road will have a low susceptibility due to light sources associated with their vehicles, including dashboards, internal lights and headlights. Combined with the medium-low value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low** for people travelling on the minor road.

7.12.66 Lighting on three turbines (T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 3.35 km away at this viewpoint. The position of the lights on the elevated skyline - which is a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise and the static nature of residential receptors. The magnitude of change is moderated by the visibility of only three lights; the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 20º); the

distance of the lights from the viewpoint; and the location of the lights above the skyline rather than in a very elevated position above the skyline; and the presence of some baseline lighting at the viewpoint, albeit limited and of a different type, so that the turbine light will not introduce lighting into a completely dark environment. It is also relevant that views from within properties are likely to be restricted by the use of curtains or blinds, particularly in winter.

7.12.67 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that for residents, the 200 cd scenario is likely to be **significant** while for road users the 200 cd scenario will be **not significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 8 cd. This reduction in the intensity of light will lead to a **not significant** effect for all viewers.

7.12.68 A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint (Corriemoillie and Lochluichart have visible aviation lighting but are screened by woodland at this viewpoint).

Viewpoint 4: Little Wyvis

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.69 This specific viewpoint is located on Little Wyvis (763 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)), a Corbett that lies at the south-western end of the Ben Wyvis massif and the view will be gained by walkers. The viewpoint has been offset slightly southwards from the summit in order to gain a more open view towards the Proposed Development, avoiding an extensive area of foreground landform. Little Wyvis is not on the popular walking route to Ben Wyvis and would therefore only be accessed as a specific hill walk. It is likely that Little Wyvis will be visited by a relatively small number of walkers when compared to Ben Wyvis. There is no signposting of the route up Little Wyvis, although there are 4x4 tracks for the majority of the way. Parking is available at the start of the walk.

7.12.70 This viewpoint lies within the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) that covers the Ben Wyvis massif. The view is a panoramic outlook that ranges from the rugged mountains in the west and north-west to the settled lowlands in the south and south-east. The most eye-catching and scenic aspect of the view is to the west and north-west where there is a dramatic skyline of rugged peaks, with Loch Luichart and Loch Glascarnoch adding to the scenic composition. In contrast, the view to the south and south-east overlooks the lower Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) (where the site lies) and the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330). Beyond this are the lowlands where farmland is the principal land use and small settlements and roads can be seen. The view to the north-east is dominated by the Ben Wyvis ridge, with the high points of An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor seen rising above the foreground summit of Little Wyvis.

7.12.71 This view shows a useful outlook across the site and its context in the wider landform of the Ben Wyvis massif. The ‘shelf’ landform of the enclosed plateau of the site is clearly apparent, as is the partial containment of the site by the ridge that separates it from the strath below (including Loch Garve, which is visible).

7.12.72 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint as shown on the cumulative wirelines (Figures 7.19b, c and e), including Auchmore 1 and 2, Bhlaraidh Extension, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, and Lochluichart and Extensions. Of these, the group at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart currently has the highest level of visibility at a minimum of 8.3 km away to the west, and this will be added to by the consented Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Kirkan, which is a minimum of 6.6 km away from the viewpoint. Fairburn is visible 11.5 km away to the south and behind Fairburn, much further away (42.5 km) is the consented Bhlaraidh Extension. Other operational and consented wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.73 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value. It is not marked on mapping as a scenic viewpoint and is not on a specific signposted path route but does lie within and overlook the Ben Wyvis SLA as well as overlooking other more distant SLAs. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers

engaging in outdoor recreation who are likely to have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.74 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its medium value results in a **high-medium** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.75 Parts of all of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the south of this viewpoint from a minimum of 980 m away. The hubs of eight of the turbines will be visible while the ninth turbine (T1) will be seen as a blade only. These will theoretically extend across around 54º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of the substation, access tracks and hardstandings, and part of a borrow pit search area. Cranes and other activity will be visible during the contraction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **high** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be immediately apparent at close proximity to the viewpoint, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting of the site;
- the turbines will be seen against a variety of landscape character backdrops, which can be eye-catching;
- visibility of construction operations and, during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, the long-term infrastructure, will add to the changes to the view.

7.12.76 There are factors that mitigate the effect of the Proposed Development to some extent, although these are not sufficient to reduce the level of magnitude of change:

- the location of the viewpoint above the site, with backclothing by landform, reduces the prominence of the turbines and minimises their vertical impact;
- the turbines will affect approximately 54º of the view, which is a moderate part of the full outlook gained from this location, and will not be seen in the most scenic aspect of the view, which is to the west and north-west;
- the view towards the focal points of Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar will not be affected by the Proposed Development;
- the site is clearly defined by the enclosed landform of the plateau ‘shelf’ and characterised by simple, uniform landscape patterns, ensuring that the Proposed Development has a contained, cohesive appearance and does not appear to be ‘straggling’ across landform or encroaching into different character types.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.77 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.78 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is visibility of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension at this viewpoint. In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Bhlaraidh Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation. Auchmore 1 and 2 are discounted from the assessment due to their very limited influence on the view, as is Bhlaraidh Extension due to its limited and very distant theoretical visibility.

7.12.79 Application stage wind farms at Chrathaich and Loch Liath have very distant theoretical visibility behind Fairburn, and several blade tips of Abhainn Dubh are theoretically visible from a minimum of 10.5 km away.

7.12.80 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension);

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh, Chrathaich and Loch Liath).

7.12.81 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension will have a **medium** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to the view, at closer proximity than the operational sites and with a higher level of visibility. This is particularly relevant in relation to Fairburn, which is seen in the same part of the view as the Proposed Development but is further away and with smaller turbines, reducing its integration with the Proposed Development. The significant effect of the Proposed Development itself also contributes to the cumulative magnitude of change. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium level by the small number of clearly visible wind farms (the Proposed Development, Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, which appear as a single site); the location of the Proposed Development in the same part of the view as Fairburn, which ensures that wind farm influence is not extended to an otherwise unaffected part of the view; the location of all the operational wind farms in the same aspect of the view (south and west), which ensures that the majority of the view will remain unaffected by wind farm influence; and the location of the Proposed Development and other wind farms below the skyline, so that the long, open views to the horizon will remain unaffected.

7.12.82 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **medium**. This is because these two consented sites have a strong association with operational wind farms and the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to this scenario will not notably differ from that in the current baseline scenario. This ensures that the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will still be applicable.

7.12.83 When application stage sites are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium**. Abhainn Dubh has very limited theoretical visibility from this viewpoint while Chrathaich and Loch Liath are theoretically visible at almost the edge of their own study areas, ensuring that none of these sites would have a notable influence on the view. This in turn means that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes these sites will not notably increase from the current or predicted baseline scenarios.

7.12.84 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate and **significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium cumulative magnitude of change and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the increased proximity and level of visibility of the Proposed Development in relation to the operational wind farms and the resultant increase in the level of development around the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.85 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. However, overall conclusions regarding effects can be drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.86 The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is likely to be generally dark, although the more settled backdrop to the south-eastern part of the Proposed Development is likely to have intermittent low-level lighting at houses. More extensive lighting is likely to be visible to the east and south-east, where settlements and roads are visible, and at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms, a minimum of 8.3 km away. Lighting at the consented Kirkan Wind Farm will also be visible in the predicted baseline. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution at this viewpoint. The dramatic mountainous skyline to the west

and north-west as well as the Ben Wyvis massif to the north-east are likely to provide strong features of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.87 The susceptibility of viewers at this viewpoint during the hours of darkness will reduce to a medium level. This location is unlikely to be well-frequented during hours of darkness and people are unlikely to visit for star-gazing due to the probable baseline visibility of lights in some aspects of the view. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium**.

7.12.88 Lights on three turbines (T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 2.02 km away at this viewpoint and are likely to be seen with a flashing appearance against a generally dark backdrop. The magnitude of change is moderated by the appearance of the lights well below the horizon, backclothed by landform, ensuring that the long open views towards the skyline, which is likely to be a key feature of views at dawn and dusk, will be unaffected. In their relatively low-lying position, the lights will be seen in broadly the same horizontal context of baseline lighting in other aspects of the view.

7.12.89 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that the effect of the 200 cd lights will be **significant.** When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 13 cd. With this reduction in the intensity of light, the effect will become **not significant.**

7.12.90 Cumulative effects may arise between the Proposed Development and lighting on the operational turbines at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart: these are likely to be **not significant** due to the relatively distant lighting at the cumulative wind farms and the visibility of only two lit wind farms. In the predicted baseline Kirkan Wind Farm is also considered (theoretical visibility of six turbine lights), and the level of lighting will be increased. The cumulative effect will, however, remain **not significant** as Kirkan will be seen in conjunction with Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and will not introduce a further lit wind farm to the view. There are no relevant application stage sites seen in this view.

Viewpoint 5: An Cabar

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.91 This specific viewpoint is located at the summit of An Cabar (946 m AOD), which is the most southerly summit of the Ben Wyvis ridge, and a Corbett. An Cabar lies on the most popular route to the high point of Ben Wyvis (Glas Leathad Mor) and this view will therefore be gained by the majority of walkers en route to Ben Wyvis. It is marked by a cairn and has elevated, panoramic views.

7.12.92 The most scenic aspect of the view is to the north and west. To the north-east is the Ben Wyvis ridge, leading to Glas Leathad Mor (although this is obscured by the cairn in the viewpoint photograph), within the setting of the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329). To the west, the view extends to the Sgurr Mor ridge and the dramatic, craggy and mountainous skyline of the western Highlands. To the south-west, the notable landform of Little Wyvis appears as part of an undulating ridgeline of open heather moorland that partly conceals the upland plateau of the site. To the south and east the landform falls away from Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), through Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) to the farmed lowlands, where roads and settlements are apparent.

7.12.93 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint as shown on the cumulative wirelines (Figures 7.20b, c, d and e), including Auchmore 1 and 2, Bhlaraidh Extension, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, Lochluichart and Extensions and Meall Buidhe. Of these, the group at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart currently has the highest level of visibility at a minimum of 9.9 km away to the west, and this will be added to by the consented Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Kirkan, which is a minimum of 8 km away from the viewpoint. Fairburn is visible 14.1 km away to the south and, behind Fairburn, much further away (44.8 km) is the consented Bhlaraidh Extension. Meall Buidhe is screened by the cairn in this view but is likely to be visible from elsewhere on the summit of An Cabar. Other

operational and consented wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.94 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value. It is not marked on mapping or otherwise recognised as a scenic viewpoint but does lie within and overlook the Ben Wyvis SLA as well as overlooking other more distant SLAs. It is also within WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers engaging in outdoor recreation who are likely to have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.95 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its high-medium value results in a **high** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.96 Eight turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the south-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 3.97 km away. The hubs of six of the turbines will be visible while the remaining two turbines will be seen as blades only. These will theoretically extend across around 25º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than short sections of access tracks and hardstandings. Cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **high-medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at relatively close proximity to the viewpoint, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland setting in which it is seen;
- the backclothing of turbines by landform will emphasise their movement and contrasting colour;
- T2 and T6 will be seen as blades only and will have an appearance of ‘blade-tipping’, which can be eye-catching; and
- unlike the view from Little Wyvis, the landform around the site is not seen clearly in this view, and the containment of the site on the enclosed plateau is therefore less apparent.

7.12.97 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level are as follows:

- the location of the viewpoint above the site, with backclothing by landform, reduces the prominence of the turbines and minimises their vertical impact;
- the turbines will affect approximately 25º of the view, which is a small part of the full outlook gained from this location, and will not be seen in the most scenic aspect of the view, which is to the west and north-west;
- the large-scale landform and simple landscape patterns of the setting to the Proposed Development reduce the perceived scale of the turbines and prevent eye-catching scale comparisons; and
- the view towards the focal point of Glas Leathad Mor (which is obscured in the viewpoint photograph by the summit cairn but is clearly visible from nearby) will not be affected by the Proposed Development.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.98 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.99 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility at this viewpoint of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension. In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Bhlaraidh Extension, Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Meall Buidhe. Auchmore 1 and 2 are discounted from the assessment due to their very limited influence on the view, as is Bhlaraidh Extension due to its limited and very distant theoretical visibility.

7.12.100 Application stage wind farms at Chrathaich and Loch Liath have very distant theoretical visibility behind Fairburn, and a very small part of Strath Oykel is theoretically visible from a minimum of 31.7 km away. Strath Oykel is discounted from the assessment due to its very limited and distant theoretical visibility.

7.12.101 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Meall Buidhe); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Chrathaich and Loch Liath).

7.12.102 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to the view, at closer proximity than the operational sites and with a higher level of visibility. The significant effect of the Proposed Development itself also contributes to the cumulative magnitude of change. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the small number of clearly visible wind farms (the Proposed Development, Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, which appear as a single site); the location of the Proposed Development between Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, which ensures that wind farm influence is not extended to an otherwise unaffected part of the view; the location of all the operational wind farms within approximately 90º of the panoramic view, which ensures that the great majority of the view will remain unaffected by wind farm influence; and the location of the Proposed Development and other wind farms below the skyline, so that the long, open views to the horizon will remain unaffected.

7.12.103 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Meall Buidhe are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **medium-low**. This is because Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation have a strong association with operational wind farms, and Meall Buidhe has limited and distant theoretical visibility, which combine to ensure that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to this scenario will not notably differ from that in the current baseline scenario. As a result, the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will remain applicable.

7.12.104 When application stage sites are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium-low**. Chrathaich and Loch Liath are theoretically visible at the outer edge of their own study areas, ensuring that these sites would not have an apparent influence on the view. This in turn means that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes these sites will not notably increase from the current or predicted baseline scenarios.

7.12.105 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate and **significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the increased proximity and level of visibility of the Proposed Development in relation to the operational wind farms and the resultant increase in the level of development around the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.106 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. However, overall conclusions regarding effects can be drawn from the assessment of the five viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.107 The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is likely to be generally dark, although lighting is likely to be visible to the south, east and south-east, where settlements and roads are visible, and at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms, a minimum of 9.9 km away. Lighting at the consented Kirkan Wind Farm will also be visible in the predicted baseline. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution at this viewpoint. The dramatic mountainous skyline to the west and north-west as well as Ben Wyvis to the north-east are likely to provide strong features of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.108 The susceptibility of viewers at this viewpoint during the hours of darkness will reduce to a medium level. This location is unlikely to be well-frequented during hours of darkness and people are unlikely to visit for star-gazing due to the probable baseline visibility of lights in some aspects of the view. Combined with the high-medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium**.

7.12.109 Lights on three turbines (T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 4.37 km away at this viewpoint and are likely to be seen with a flashing appearance against a generally dark backdrop. The magnitude of change is moderated by the appearance of the lights well below the horizon, backclothed by landform, ensuring that the long open views towards the dramatic skyline, which is likely to be a key feature of views at dawn and dusk, will be unaffected.

7.12.110 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that the effect of the 200 cd lights will be **significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 18 cd. With this reduction in the intensity of light, the effect is likely to become **not significant**.

7.12.111 Cumulative effects may arise between the Proposed Development and lighting on the operational turbines at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart: however, these are likely to be **not significant** due to the relatively distant lighting at the cumulative wind farms and the visibility of only two lit wind farms. In the predicted baseline Kirkan Wind Farm is also considered, and the level of lighting will be increased. The cumulative effect will, however, remain **not significant** as Kirkan will be seen in conjunction with Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and will not introduce a further lit wind farm to the view. There are no relevant application stage sites seen in this view.

Viewpoint 6: Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis)

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.112 This specific viewpoint is located on the Munro of Glas Leathad Mor. At 1,046 m AOD this is the highest summit on the Ben Wyvis ridge and is for many people the main achievement of the walk into the Ben Wyvis massif. The view from Glas Leathad Mor is impressive and widely varied, noted in the citation for the Ben Wyvis SLA as "*Views from its summit are both extensive and varied. Unusually for a Munro, the nearby views include substantial areas of arable land, an industrial port (Invergordon) and often also marine drilling rigs (which visit the Cromarty Firth for repair and decommissioning).*"

7.12.113 It is noted in the SLQs of the Ben Wyvis SLA that:

> *"The summit of Ben Wyvis provides some of the most extensive panoramas in Scotland. These include the wild and dramatic mountain profiles of Wester Ross and Sutherland to the north and west, the indented coastline and settled, fertile lowlands of Easter Ross and the Black Isle to the east, and the distant summits of the Cairngorms and Ben Nevis to the south."*

7.12.114 To the west and north-west the view extends towards the Sgurr Mor range and beyond, with the steep, rugged mountains forming dramatic layers. The scale of these hill ranges is accentuated by the intermittent low-lying lochs, including Loch Luichart to the west and Loch Glascarnoch to the north-west. Views north and east are characterised by the broader extents of the Ben Wyvis massif with Tom a Choinnich (953 m AOD) extending the ridge to the north and Ant-Socach (1,006 m AOD) forming a spur to the east.

7.12.115 To the south-east the view extends across and beyond the Cromarty Firth, where the landscape is characterised by contrasting low and settled landscape of farming and forestry. The view to the south-west is dominated by the Ben Wyvis ridge, which curves gently down to An Cabar and largely obscures views of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) that covers the site area. Beyond this, the view opens out more fully to take in the more distant landscape of Strathconon.

7.12.116 A number of operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint as shown on the cumulative wirelines (Figures 7.21b, c, d and e), including Auchmore 1 and 2, Achany Extension, Coire na Cloiche, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, Lairg II, Lochluichart and Extensions, Meall Buidhe, Novar and Extension, and Strathrory Redesign. Of these, the group at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart currently has the highest level of visibility at a minimum of 11.1 km away to the west, and this will be added to by the consented Lochluichart Extension II Variation and Kirkan. Novar and Extension are visible at a minimum of 8.1 km away to the north-east, foreshortened by landform, and will be added to by the more distant but visually integrated Strathrory Redesign. Coire na Cloiche is an isolated site seen to the north-east at 16.7 km away, and Fairburn is visible 16.2 km away south-south-west. Other operational and consented wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.117 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high value. While it is not marked on mapping as a scenic viewpoint, it is a well-known and highly renowned destination for hillwalkers. It lies within and overlooks the Ben Wyvis SLA as well as overlooking other more distant scenic designations and is within WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers engaging in outdoor recreation, many of whom will have reached their destination and will have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.118 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its high value results in a **high** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.119 Five turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the south-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 6.15 km away. The hubs of three turbines are theoretically visible with the other two turbines seen as blades only; however, one of these three hubs (T5) will be screened by local landform in this specific view as shown in the photomontage and the turbines will thus appear as two hubs and three blades. The Proposed Development will theoretically extend across around 9º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform, although cranes might be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **medium-low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be discernible at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is currently unaffected by large-scale development and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland setting in which it is seen;
- the backclothing of turbines by landform will emphasise their movement and contrasting colour; and
- T3, T5 and T8 will be seen as blades only and will have an appearance of ‘blade-tipping’, which can be eye-catching.

7.12.120 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium-low level are as follows:

- the limited visibility of the turbines will reduce the impact of the Proposed Development on the view, and the screening of towers and hubs by landform will minimise the vertical impact of the turbines on the skyline;
- the screening of towers and hubs also ensures visual separation between the viewpoint and the turbines, ensuring that they do not appear to encroach towards the viewpoint or into the landscape around the summit of Glas Leathad Mor;

- in the context of this widely varied view, which displays many different characteristics and features including wind energy development, the limited influence of the Proposed Development will have less impact than in a view where the landscape is simpler and more uniform and shows fewer elements of development;
- the Proposed Development lies to the south-west of the viewpoint and will not affect the “wild and dramatic mountain profiles of Wester Ross and Sutherland to the north and west, the indented coastline and settled, fertile lowlands of Easter Ross and the Black Isle to the east and the distant summits of the Cairngorms…to the south” that are noted in the Ben Wyvis SLA SLQs; the turbines could be seen in the same aspect of the view as Ben Nevis, but as Ben Nevis lies just over 100 km away from Ben Wyvis and the turbines are contained well below the skyline in the view, the skyline profile of Ben Nevis will not be affected on those occasions when it might be visible;
- the location of the viewpoint on elevated landform above the site, with backclothing by landform, reduces the prominence of the turbines and also minimises their vertical impact;
- the elevated viewpoint also ensures that visibility of potentially eye-catching infrastructure will be very limited
- the turbines will affect a very limited part - approximately 9º - of the full panoramic view available, and are not seen in the most dramatic and scenic part of the view, which is to the west and north-west; and
- the large-scale landform of the setting to the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale of the turbines and prevents eye-catching scale comparisons.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.121 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the level of visibility and proximity of the Proposed Development to the viewpoint and the appearance of blade-tipping, with the turbines backclothed by landform.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.122 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2, Coire na Cloiche, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Lochluichart and Extension, and Novar and Extension. Auchmore 1 and 2 are discounted from the assessment due to their very limited influence on the view. In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Achany Extension, Kirkan, Lairg II, Lochluichart Extension II Variation, Meall Buidhe, and Strathrory Redesign.

7.12.123 There is also distant theoretical visibility of application stage wind farms at Acheilidh, Garvary, Loch Liath and Strath Oykel. Strath Oykel is discounted from the assessment due to its very limited and distant theoretical visibility.

7.12.124 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Coire na Cloiche, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Lochluichart and Extension, and Novar and Extension);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Achany Extension, Kirkan, Lairg II, Lochluichart Extension II Variation, Meall Buidhe, and Strathrory Redesign); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites plus application stage sites (the

operational and consented sites listed above plus Acheilidh, Garvary and Loch Liath).

7.12.125 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Coire na Cloiche, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Lochluichart and Extension, and Novar and Extension will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to the view, at closer proximity than the operational sites. The operational sites are seen around the viewpoint to the west, north-east, south-south-west and south-south-east, and the Proposed Development will introduce a more visible wind farm to the south-west, where its appearance, foreshortened by landform, will differ from that of the closest operational wind farms at Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extensions. The significant effect of the Proposed Development itself on the view also contributes to the cumulative magnitude of change.

7.12.126 The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the location of the Proposed Development between Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, which ensures that wind farm influence is not extended to an otherwise unaffected part of the view; the containment of this group of wind farms within less than 90º of the panoramic view; and the location of the Proposed Development and other wind farms below the skyline, so that long, open views to the horizon will remain unaffected. It is also relevant that while the Proposed Development has a different appearance from the wind farms that are seen to either side of it, there is a precedent for foreshortened views of turbines at Novar and Extension, albeit more distant.

7.12.127 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Achany Extension, Kirkan, Lairg II, Lochluichart Extension II Variation, Meall Buidhe, and Strathrory Redesign are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **medium-low**. Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation have a strong association with operational wind farms, as does Strathrory Redesign, which ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes these sites will not notably differ from that in the current baseline scenario. Meall Buidhe and Achany Extension appear together as a distant group that will have a very limited effect on the view, while Lairg II is also very distant. Overall, these considerations ensure that the factors described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will remain applicable.

7.12.128 When application stage sites are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium-low**. Acheilidh, Garvary and Loch Liath are theoretically visible at a considerable distance away (a minimum of 34 km), ensuring that these sites would not have an apparent influence on the view. This in turn means that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes these sites will not notably increase from the current or predicted baseline scenarios.

7.12.129 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate and **significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the difference in the appearance of the Proposed Development in relation to other wind farms and its closer proximity to the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.130 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. However, overall conclusions regarding effects can be drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.131 The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is likely to be generally dark, although lighting is likely to be visible to the south, east and south-east, where settlements and roads are visible, and at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms, a minimum of 11.1 km away. Lighting at the consented Kirkan Wind Farm will also be visible in the predicted baseline. The consented Strathrory Redesign also has theoretical visibility but at just under 20 km away, lighting at this scheme is unlikely to be readily discernible. Any lighting at other consented sites is at too great a distance to contribute to a cumulative effect. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows a small area of light pollution at this viewpoint, which is likely to arise

from the lighting of settlements, roads and other development that is seen to the south and east of this viewpoint. The dramatic mountainous skyline to the west and north-west as well as the eastern part of the Ben Wyvis massif to the north-east are likely to provide strong features of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.132 The susceptibility of viewers at this viewpoint during the hours of darkness will reduce to a medium level. This location might be visited for star-gazing or wild camping but numbers of visitors during hours of darkness are likely to be low. Combined with the high value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium**.

7.12.133 Lights on two turbines (T4 and T9) will be visible just above the foreshortened foreground landform from a minimum of 6.52 km away and are likely to be seen with a flashing appearance against a dark backdrop. The magnitude of change is moderated by baseline light pollution, the appearance of the lights well below the horizon, backclothed by landform, ensuring that the long open views towards the dramatic skyline, which is likely to be a key feature of views at dawn and dusk, will be unaffected. The small number of visible lights on the Proposed Development and the very small part of the panoramic view that they will affect – approximately 2º - also moderate the magnitude of change, as does the distance of the lights from the viewpoint – over 6 km.

7.12.134 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that the effect of the 200 cd scenario will be **not significant.** When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 22 cd. With this reduction in the intensity of light, the effect will be **not significant**.

7.12.135 While cumulative effects may arise between the Proposed Development and lighting on the operational turbines at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart, these are likely to be **not significant** due to the relatively distant lighting at the cumulative wind farms, the limited effect of lighting at the Proposed Development and the visibility of only two lit wind farms. In the predicted baseline Kirkan Wind Farm is also considered, and the level of lighting will be increased. The cumulative effect will, however, remain **not significant** as Kirkan will be seen in conjunction with Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and will not introduce a further lit wind farm to the view. Any lighting at other consented sites (including Strathrory Redesign) and application sites is at too great a distance to contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

Viewpoint 7: View Rock

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.136 This illustrative viewpoint is located at View Rock and is accessed by a core path that is part of the network of paths around Loch Kinellan. As with Viewpoint 6, this is a popular destination for recreational use and parking is provided for recreational users. This viewpoint is within the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335) and the outlook is almost completely obscured by the woodland and forestry that characterise this LCT, ensuring that very few other landscape characteristics are apparent. There is one open aspect of the view, to the west, where Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) forms a rugged and eye-catching upland skyline.

7.12.137 The woodland screening ensures that other than a very small part of Fairburn Wind Farm, seen from a minimum of 6.2 km away, there are no operational, under construction or consented wind farms currently visible from this viewpoint.

7.12.138 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. The sensitivity of this viewpoint is assessed irrespective of the presence of forestry around it, as this will almost certainly be felled in future. This view has a high-medium value; it is marked on OS maps as a viewpoint and is accessed by a core path. It does not, however, lie within a scenic designation, although it will overlook the Ben Wyvis SLA when forestry is felled, and this moderates the value.

7.12.139 The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will be walkers who have a specific focus on the setting to the viewpoint.

7.12.140 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** due to a combination of the high-medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.141 There is currently no visibility of the Proposed Development from this viewpoint due to screening by vegetation, which includes birch woodland as well as coniferous forestry, and the magnitude of change is **negligible**.

7.12.142 While felling of this woodland and forestry would alter the type of view gained from the viewpoint, it is not possible to make an accurate assessment of the effect that the Proposed Development might have on the view in future. This is because it is not possible to predict what other layers of vegetation lie behind the woodland that provides an immediate screen to the view, or the extent of screening that might continue to be provided to the Proposed Development. The foreground of the view towards the Proposed Development is characterised by birch and rowan woodland which is unlikely to be felled as part of commercial forestry operations and is therefore likely to remain in place as a filter to views. Beyond this is an extensive area of forestry that currently provides a dense screen. Forestry is generally felled in sections or coupes which are then replanted in succession, and many areas of forestry are edged or surrounded by self-seeded deciduous woodland that would not be removed as part of the felling operations. These considerations increase the difficulty in predicting levels of visibility as well as providing ongoing screening to the Proposed Development.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.143 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to the negligible magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.144 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be minor and **not significant** due to the negligible magnitude of change that the Proposed Development itself will have on the view.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.145 The lack of visibility of the Proposed Development ensures that an hours of darkness effect will not arise at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 8: Loch Kinellan

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.146 This specific viewpoint is located on the ‘Loch Kinellan circuit’ core path that passes to the north of Loch Kinellan, on the eastern edge of Strathpeffer. There is a network of partly signposted paths around the loch, with parking provided, and this is a popular destination for recreational use. This location has been selected specifically for the partial visibility of Fairburn Wind Farm to the south-west.

7.12.147 This viewpoint is within the Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341) but, due to vegetation around the viewpoint, very few characteristics of this landscape are apparent other than in the immediate foreground. Instead, it is the more distant uplands to the north and south, visible through gaps in vegetation, that characterise the view.

7.12.148 To the north is the Ben Wyvis massif, with Little Wyvis, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor all clearly apparent on the skyline (when trees are in leaf visibility from this specific location will be filtered by vegetation, but the landform will be clearly seen from nearby locations). The dished plateau of landform that the Proposed Development lies within is clearly seen in this view to the left of Little Wyvis, while further to the right is the deeply incised Bealach Mor, marked on the left by the distinctive rounded hill of Tom na Caillich and on the right by An Cabar. The lower slopes of these hills are characterised by the rocky, rugged forestry and woodland of the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335), which lies between Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341) (within which the viewpoint lies) and Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of Ben Wyvis.

7.12.149 To the south, the skyline is formed by the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), including the distinctive landform of Cul Mor, with Cul Beag partially obscured by vegetation.

7.12.150 Part of Fairburn Wind Farm is visible on the skyline to the south-west, a minimum of 7 km away, seen in the setting of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331). The operational Lochluichart and Extension is theoretically visible from a minimum of 16 km away but is screened by foreground vegetation, as are Auchmore 1 and 2.

7.12.151 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value; it is not marked on OS maps or recognised as a specific scenic location but is accessed by a core path with parking provided. A seat is also provided and while this is intended to rotate, at the time of assessment it was fixed facing to the south. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation but overlooks the Ben Wyvis SLA in the view to the north. The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will be walkers who have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape and the long views towards the uplands.

7.12.152 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.153 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 5.37 km away, with all of the hubs visible and some lower towers screened by landform. These will extend across around 12º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than several sections of access tracks and hardstandings, and cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **high-medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the prominent skyline that rises to the north-west of the viewpoint, enclosing the lower ground of the Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341) and Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335) LCTs, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the Proposed Development will appear in a sensitive aspect of the view - in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the peripheral lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in one of the two open aspects of the view from this location (with other aspects screened and filtered by vegetation) and this can draw the eye of the viewer; and
- several of the turbine bases are visible, and this can lead to a perception of encroachment towards the viewpoint.

7.12.154 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level are as follows:

- while the Proposed Development is seen in the same aspect of the view as the Ben Wyvis massif, it will not be seen in direct relation to the sensitive features of Little Wyvis, Bealach Mor, Tom na Caillich, An Cabar or Glas Leathad Mor;
- in its peripheral location, the Proposed Development is associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the Proposed Development will affect a limited part of the view - approximately 12º - ensuring that extensive parts of the outlook remain unaffected;
- the higher landform of the Ben Wyvis massif rising to the right of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines; and

- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.155 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major-moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.156 As described above, there is visibility of the operational Fairburn Wind Farm at this viewpoint, while other baseline wind farms have a negligible effect due to screening by vegetation. There is some limited theoretical visibility of the application stage site at Abhainn Dubh from a minimum of 10.2 km away but this will be screened by vegetation, and there is therefore one relevant cumulative scenario; the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of the operational site at Fairburn.

7.12.157 In this current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to Fairburn will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development (which will itself have a significant effect) to the view, and the location of the Proposed Development to the north-west while Fairburn is to the south-west, so that development will be apparent in different directions from the viewpoint. The two wind farms will also affect both of the open aspects of the view, as views in other directions are enclosed by vegetation. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the very small number of clearly visible wind farms (the Proposed Development and Fairburn); the very limited extent of the view occupied by Fairburn and its limited level of visibility; the smaller turbine size at Fairburn, which reduces its influence on the view; the similarity in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) setting of both wind farms; and the visual and perceptual separation of both of the wind farms from the viewpoint by vegetation and/or areas of lower ground.

7.12.158 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in the current baseline scenario will be moderate and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the small number of visible wind farms (the Proposed Development and Fairburn), the limited visibility of Fairburn, and the similar landscape setting of both of the wind farms.

7.12.159 There are no other relevant cumulative scenarios at this viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.160 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. However, overall conclusions regarding effects can be drawn from the assessment of the five viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.161 The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is likely to be generally dark, although some limited lighting is likely to be visible in the settled area to the south-west. Lochluichart Wind Farm has theoretical visibility but is screened by vegetation. If it was visible, the influence of lighting would be very limited, seen at over a minimum of over 16 km away. There are no relevant predicted baseline sites. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution at this viewpoint. The bold skyline of the Ben Wyvis massif to the north and the dramatic, more complex skyline to the south-west are likely to provide strong features of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.162 The susceptibility of viewers at this viewpoint during the hours of darkness will reduce to a medium level as this location is unlikely to be well-frequented during hours of darkness and people are unlikely to visit for star-gazing due to the probable baseline visibility of lights in some aspects of the view. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium**.

7.12.163 Lights on four turbines (T1, T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 5.58 km away and are likely to be seen on the skyline in two pairs with a gap in between. The position of the lights on the strong skyline - which is likely to be a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise and the gap between the pairs of turbines. The magnitude of change is moderated by the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 10º); the distance of the lights from the viewpoint; and the location of the lights quite closely above the skyline rather than in a very elevated position.

7.12.164 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that the effect in the 200 cd scenario is likely to be **significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 21 cd. In this case, the effect will become **not significant**. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of sufficient visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 9: A834, Jamestown

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.165 This representative viewpoint is located on the A834 on the edge of Jamestown and is included to represent views gained from the northbound A834. The outlook towards the site from properties in Jamestown will be less clear, due to screening and filtering by buildings and vegetation. Moreover, the majority of properties in Jamestown are orientated to the south, as landform falls in this direction, and gain scenic open views across the River Conon towards Cul Mor and Cul Beag.

7.12.166 This viewpoint lies within the Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 345), and the mix of farmland and woodland backed by coniferous forestry that characterises this LCT can be seen in the foreground of the view. The landforms of Little Wyvis and An Cabar rise on the skyline above this LCT, with Ben Wyvis almost completely screened by vegetation.

7.12.167 There is very limited theoretical visibility of the operational sites at Fairburn and Auchmore 1 and 2 at this viewpoint but this is screened by vegetation.

7.12.168 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value; it has no formal recognition in mapping or other documentation, the viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation, and facilities such as parking, signs and interpretative boards are not provided for the enjoyment of the view. However, there is value in the scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA, which covers the distant landforms of An Cabar and Little Wyvis. The susceptibility to change of viewers is medium as this view will be gained by road users on the A834, which has no formal recognition as a scenic route.

7.12.169 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium** due to a combination of the medium-low value and the medium susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.170 Six of the turbines in the Proposed Development are theoretically visible on the skyline to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 6.72 km away. The hubs of two of the turbines are theoretically visible while four are seen as blades only and all towers are screened by landform. However, vegetation on the skyline will screen parts of these blades and actual visibility will be more limited, as shown on the photomontage. Infrastructure will be screened by landform, although cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will have a slightly apparent influence at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the wooded setting in which it is seen;

- the Proposed Development will be seen in the most open aspect of the outlook and in the direction of view gained by people travelling northbound on the A834; and
- the blades will have an appearance of 'blade-tipping' on the skyline, which can be eye-catching.

7.12.171 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- the very limited theoretical and actual visibility of the turbines will considerably reduce the impact of the Proposed Development on the view, and the screening of the towers by landform ensures that the turbines will have no vertical impact on the skyline;
- the Proposed Development will not affect the skyline landform features of Little Wyvis and An Cabar;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in relation to a simple, single landform on the skyline, which increases cohesion and reduces the perceived scale of the turbines; and
- the outlook will be gained by moving viewers.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.172 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.173 As described above, there is no actual visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms at this viewpoint due to a combination of limited theoretical visibility and screening by vegetation. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.174 One of the lit turbines – T4 – has theoretical visibility from this viewpoint at a distance of 7.11 km away. This is, however, filtered by woodland and is unlikely to be discerned by the moving viewers that are represented at this viewpoint. The hours of darkness effect at this viewpoint will be **not significant.**

Viewpoint 10: Marybank

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.175 This representative viewpoint is located at the north-western corner of the Fairburn Memorial Hall in Marybank. Usage of the north side of the building is assumed to be infrequent as access is by a narrow path, and the main arrival space and car park is on the south side of the building. Similar but slightly less clear – due to vegetation screening - views will be gained by people visiting the Hall as well as pedestrians walking around Marybank. This type of view is likely to be available from some houses in Marybank and by people travelling on the nearby A832 (NC500), although these views might be less clear and open due to filtering by vegetation and intervening buildings.

7.12.176 Marybank is situated on the southern slope of the River Conon valley and gains wide open views, covering around 180º, to the north across the River Conon valley. Landform falls gently northwards across the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342) before rising again into the farmed and forested areas slopes around Strathpeffer. The contrasting landscape types can be seen in layers across the view; from the foreground into the middle ground, the relatively level valley landform is characterised by farming with a distinct pattern of large open fields, intermittent steadings and belts and clusters of deciduous trees, especially concentrated along the riverbanks. Where the land rises steeply on the edge of the valley, farming is replaced by forestry and a band of coniferous forestry marks the transition across the higher and more undulating landform.

7.12.177 This view has a notable skyline that includes a number of landform features, including Tor Achilty, Little Wyvis, Tom na Caillich, the deeply incised Bealach Mor, An Cabar, Glas Leathad Mor, Cnoc Mor and Cnoc' a Mhuilinn-Thairbh, with some screening of Glas Leathad Mor by woodland. In this context the Ben Wyvis massif is less prominent than is the case in some views, as here it is seen in the setting of other notable, and closer, landform that proves interest around the open view rather than appearing as the focal point in the view.

7.12.178 There is very limited theoretical visibility of the operational site at Fairburn from this viewpoint but this is screened by vegetation. There is also negligible theoretical visibility of Kirkan, but this is unlikely to have any influence on the view.

7.12.179 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value: this stretch of the A832 is part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route which is valued for its scenic outlooks; the hall is likely to be a gathering point for people, which also gives value; and while the viewpoint is not within a scenic designation, part of the view is covered by the Ben Wyvis SLA. However, the value of the view is moderated by the lack of formal recognition of this location as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and facilities such as signs and interpretative boards are not provided for the enjoyment of the view.

7.12.180 The susceptibility to change is high for all of the receptor groups, including residents who gain a similar view from their houses, people travelling on the NC500 and people visiting the hall, both of which groups are likely to have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape. People walking around Marybank also have a high susceptibility as many of them are likely to live in the local area, and this is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by residents.

7.12.181 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** for residents who gain a similar view from their houses as their high susceptibility outweighs the medium value of the view. For the other receptor groups – hall users, people walking around Marybank, and people travelling on the NC500, the sensitivity is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.182 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 9.37 km away, with all of the hubs visible. These will extend across around 8º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than several short sections of access tracks and hardstandings, and cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view for residents and people walking around Marybank and visiting the hall will be **medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be readily apparent at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will have vertical impact on the skyline and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland and forestry setting in which it is seen;
- the landform at the viewpoint, and on which Marybank is built, slopes down to the north, across the strath, and this orientation draws the eye of the viewer to the skyline that rises beyond, on which the Proposed Development is located;
- the varied backdrop to the turbines – some seen against landform and others on the skyline - can be eye-catching, as is the clustering/gapping of turbines that is seen in this view;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the open aspect of the view, to which the eye of the viewer is drawn; and
- some turbine bases are visible, and this can lead to a perception of encroachment towards the viewpoint.

7.12.183 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows:

- while the Proposed Development is seen in the same aspect of the view as the Ben Wyvis massif, it will not be seen in direct relation to the high points

and sensitive features of Little Wyvis, Bealach Mor, Tom na Caillich, An Cabar or Glas Leathad Mor;

- in this peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- in this view, the Ben Wyvis massif is part of the interesting and varied landform context that is seen around the view, and does not appear as a single feature, but rather as part of a wider skyline, and this further reduces the association of the Proposed Development with the massif;
- the Proposed Development will not affect views towards the landforms that frame each side of the view – Tor Achilty and Cnoc' a Mhuilinn-Thairbh;
- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part - approximately 8º - of the wide, open view ensuring that the great majority of this outlook will remain unaffected;
- the higher landform of the Ben Wyvis massif rising to the right of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines; and
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons.

7.12.184 The magnitude of change for people travelling on the A832 will be reduced to a **medium-low** level due to the moving nature of views and screening and filtering by vegetation.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.185 For residents of Marybank, the effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major-moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

7.12.186 For people using the hall and walking around Marybank, the effect will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the vertical impact of the Proposed Development on the skyline and the orientation of landform to the north, towards the Proposed Development.

7.12.187 For people travelling on the NC500, the effect will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. In this case the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the fairly consistent views towards the Proposed Development that will gained by people travelling on the A832 just to the east and north of Marybank, and the location of the Proposed Development in the broad forward direction of travel.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.188 As described above, there is negligible actual visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms at this viewpoint due to negligible or very limited theoretical visibility and screening by vegetation. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant.**

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.189 This viewpoint has been visited during hours of darkness but hours of darkness visualisations have not been prepared and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. Overall conclusions regarding effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.190 There is lighting in Marybank, including streetlights, lights in the hall car park, lighting at houses, and car lights, and the Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows an area of

light pollution around Marybank, including the viewpoint and the nearby A832. The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is generally dark, although some domestic lighting is visible in the foreground and middle ground. There is no visibility of operational lit wind farms and while there is theoretical visibility of Kirkan, this is negligible. The bold skyline of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) and the Ben Wyvis massif to the north is likely to provide a strong feature of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.191 The hours of darkness susceptibility of viewers will reduce to a low level due to baseline streetlighting and domestic lights in Marybank and, for people on the A832, lighting associated with vehicles, including internal dashboard lights and headlights. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low**.

7.12.192 Lights on four turbines (T1, T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 9.45 km away and will be seen in a regular pattern on the skyline. The position of the lights above the skyline - which is a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other clearly apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise. The magnitude of change is moderated by the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 7º), the distance of the lights from the viewpoint, and the separation of the lit turbines from the key skyline feature of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.193 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that the effect in the 200 cd scenario will be **not significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 23 cd, and the effect will remain **not significant**. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of sufficient visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 11: Knockfarrel

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.194 This specific viewpoint is located at the Pictish Fort at Knockfarrel, which is on elevated ground to the east of Strathpeffer. This area is accessed by a signposted network of paths, some of which provide routes from the surrounding settlements, including Strathpeffer. The viewpoint is accessed by a core path. Knockfarrel can also be reached by car, with a car park reasonably close to the viewpoint. Knockfarrel is a popular attraction for visitors due to the archaeological interest of the site and the scenic qualities of the hill and views gained from it.

7.12.195 This elevated, panoramic and scenic view shows a wide variation in landscape character, ranging from the vast scale and distinctive skyline of the Ben Wyvis massif in the north to the settlement of Strathpeffer and complex, textured settled crofting areas along the southern slopes of Knock Farril and in the valleys of the River Peffery and Peffery Burn (which is a distinctive landform feature in this view). Woodland is a particular feature of the slopes in this area, and the GDL of Castle Leod, as well as the castle itself, can be seen on the wooded edge of the strath to the north of Strathpeffer. To the south is Loch Ussie, surrounded by coniferous forestry of the Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 345), and to the west is the rugged mountainous skyline of the western Highlands. The Cromarty Firth and associated lowlands lies to the east.

7.12.196 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2, 10 km away; Fairburn, a minimum of 10.1 km away; and part of Novar and Extension at a minimum of 12.9 km away. There is also negligible theoretical visibility of Bhlaraidh Extension. Other operational wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.197 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value; it is accessed by a core path (with parking provided), and the location is of archaeological interest as well as being a recreational destination with a renowned view. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation but has a scenic outlook across several SLAs, including the Ben Wyvis SLA. The value is moderated by the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint and its lack of

formal recognition as a viewpoint as shown on mapping. The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will be walkers who have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape and the long views that are available.

7.12.198 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** due to a combination of the high-medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.199 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 7.81 km away. The hubs of eight of the turbines will be visible while the ninth turbine will be seen as a blade only. These will extend across around 11º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than part of a borrow pit search area and several very short sections of access tracks and hardstanding, and cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be readily apparent at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development, and will have vertical impact on the skyline;
- the Proposed Development will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen; and
- the Proposed Development will appear in a sensitive aspect of the view – peripheral to Little Wyvis and in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.200 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows:

- this is a panoramic view that overlooks many eye-catching topographical features, and in this context, the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part of the view - approximately 11º - ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected;
- this view is characterised by a wide range of land uses and influences and the addition of the Proposed Development into this setting will provide one more influence among many, rather than creating the focal point feature that it can introduce to a simpler outlook;
- while the Proposed Development is seen in the same aspect of the view as the Ben Wyvis massif, it will not be seen in relation to the sensitive features of Little Wyvis, An Cabar or Glas Leathad Mor;
- in its peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- while the Proposed Development will be seen in the same aspect of the view as the Castle Leod GDL, it will be associated with the upland backdrop rather than the complex, wooded strath floor, where the Castle is seen;
- the turbines have a balanced and cohesive appearance in this view and relate closely to the landform on which they are seen;
- the higher landform of the Ben Wyvis massif rising to the right of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines; and
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.201 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major-moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.202 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2 and Fairburn, both to the south-west, and Novar and Extension to the north-east. In the predicted baseline scenario is the consented site at Bhlaraidh Extension, which is discounted from the assessment due to negligible visibility.

7.12.203 There is also distant theoretical visibility of application stage wind farms at Abhainn Dubh, 7.6 km to the north-east, and Loch Liath. Loch Liath is discounted from the assessment due to its negligible theoretical visibility.

7.12.204 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Auchmore 1 and 2, Fairburn, and Novar and Extension); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites plus application stage sites (the operational sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.12.205 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Auchmore 1 and 2, Fairburn, and Novar and Extension will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to the view, at closer proximity and with a higher level of visibility than the operational sites. The operational sites are seen around the viewpoint to the north-east and south-west, and the Proposed Development will introduce a more visible wind farm to the north-west, where there is currently no wind farm influence on the view. Its appearance, fully on the skyline, will differ from that of the operational wind farms, which (other than Auchmore 1 and 2) are seen partly backclothed by landform, and the significant effect of the Proposed Development itself also contributes to the cumulative magnitude of change.

7.12.206 The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the small number of visible wind farms (the Proposed Development, Fairburn and Novar and Extension – Auchmore 1 and 2 have a very limited effect on the view); the limited influence of both Fairburn and Novar and Extension, due to the smaller turbines at these wind farms and screening by landform; and the very small part of the full open panoramic view that will be affected by wind energy development, ensuring that the great majority will remain unaffected, including the eye-catching mountainous landscape to the west.

7.12.207 When the application stage site at Abhainn Dubh is also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium-low**. Abhainn Dubh has a strong visual association with Novar and Extension and, while it lies closer to the viewpoint than Novar, will not extend wind farm influence to another aspect of the view. This ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes this site will not notably increase from the current or predicted baseline scenarios.

7.12.208 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the limited number of visible wind farms, the limited influence of the operational sites on the view, the small part of the panoramic view that will be affected by wind energy development, and the association of the application stage site with operational development.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.209 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness, hours of darkness visualisations have not been prepared, and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out.

However, overall conclusions regarding effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.210 While there is no lighting at this viewpoint itself, lighting of the surrounding settled areas is likely to be apparent at the viewpoint, including domestic lighting in the direction of the Proposed Development. There is no visibility of lighting at operational or consented wind farms. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution at the viewpoint. The bold and sometimes dramatically craggy skyline to the north and west is likely to provide a strong feature of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.211 The susceptibility of viewers at this viewpoint during the hours of darkness will reduce to a medium level as this location is unlikely to be well-frequented during hours of darkness and people are unlikely to visit for star-gazing due to the probable baseline visibility of lights in the view. Combined with the high-medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium**.

7.12.212 Lights on three turbines (T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 8.06 km away and will be seen in a regular pattern on the skyline. The position of the lights above the skyline - which is likely to be a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other clearly apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise, in circumstances when the blades pass in front of the lights. The magnitude of change will be moderated by the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 7º), the distance of the lights from the viewpoint, and the separation of the lit turbines from the key skyline feature of the Ben Wyvis massif and the more dramatic western skyline.

7.12.213 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that in the 200 cd scenario the effect will be **not significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 38 cd. In this case, the effect in will remain **not significant**.

7.12.214 A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farms at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 12: Peffery Way at Fodderty Cemetery

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.215 This representative viewpoint is located on the Peffery Way, a relatively new recreational route that is designed to link Dingwall and Strathpeffer at a low level, avoiding the steep slopes that rise on either side of the River Peffery. This part of the route runs past the elevated southern edge of Fodderty Cemetery, which lies to the south of the A834. The viewpoint represents people using the route as well as visitors to the cemetery.

7.12.216 This is an attractive view along and across the valley of the River Peffery. The viewpoint lies within the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342), which covers the valley of the River Peffery between Strathpeffer and Dingwall. To the south, the landform rises steeply up to Knockfarrel, while to the north is the slope up to the Heights of Fodderty. The River Plains and slopes are farmed and settled, with an enclosed agricultural character.

7.12.217 The western end of the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342) is punctuated by the rugged, forested landform of Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335) that rises behind Castle Leod. To the right of this landform, the incised valley of the River Peffery cuts through the landscape, creating a corridor – marked by the distinctive landform of Raven Rock - through which the railway line runs. This valley also creates a gap through which the Proposed Development is seen.

7.12.218 This view is unusual in that no part of the Ben Wyvis massif is visible due to screening by the local landform of the River Peffery valley. Overall, the landscape has a settled and cultivated character with only a limited upland influence arising from the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335) at the western end of the valley.

7.12.219 There are no operational, under construction or consented wind farms visible from this viewpoint.

7.12.220 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising from the location of the viewpoint on the Peffery Way, which implies a value to the views available. The value is moderated by the absence of scenic designations, the lack of formal recognition of this viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and the absence of facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as seating or interpretative boards. The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will either be following the Peffery Way or visiting the cemetery, and both of these receptor groups are likely to have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape and views.

7.12.221 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.222 Seven of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 8.17 km away. The hubs of four of the turbines will be visible while three are seen as blades only. However, woodland on the skyline is likely to screen T2 and this turbine blade is unlikely to be apparent. Theoretically, the Proposed Development will extend across approximately 8º of the view, but in reality this will be reduced by the screening of T2. Infrastructure will be screened by landform other than a short section of access track and hardstanding, which is unlikely to be readily discernible. Cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be readily apparent at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland and forested context in which it is seen;
- the landform of the strath and the River Peffery valley channels views to the north-west, towards the Proposed Development; and
- the turbines seen at full height will have vertical impact on the enclosed skyline.

7.12.223 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows:

- the limited visibility of the turbines will reduce the impact of the Proposed Development on the view, and the screening of the majority of towers by landform reduces their vertical impact on the skyline;
- the turbines have a balanced and cohesive appearance in this view and relate closely to the landform on which they are seen;
- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part - approximately 8º - of the view, ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected;
- the higher landform that rises rising to each side of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale of the turbines; and
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons and without a perception of encroachment down into the strath.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.224 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the channelling of views towards the Proposed Development by landform.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.225 As described above, there is no theoretical visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms at this viewpoint, and there is also no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.226 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness, hours of darkness visualisations have not been prepared, and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. However, overall conclusions regarding effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.227 While there is unlikely to be lighting at this viewpoint itself, lighting of the surrounding settled areas is likely to be apparent at the viewpoint, including domestic lighting in the direction of the Proposed Development and vehicles on the A834. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows some light pollution at the viewpoint. There is no visibility of lighting at operational or consented wind farms. While the landscape around this view is not particularly dramatic, the bold skyline of the Heights of Fodderty rising to the north of the viewpoint is likely to be a strong feature of the landscape at dusk and dawn, with other details of the landscape less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.228 The susceptibility of viewers at this viewpoint during the hours of darkness will reduce to a medium level as this location is unlikely to be well-frequented during hours of darkness and people are unlikely to visit for star-gazing due to the probable baseline visibility of lights in the view. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium**.

7.12.229 Lights on two turbines (T4 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 8.38 km away and will be seen on the skyline. The position of the lights above the skyline where there is no other clearly apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise. The magnitude of change will be moderated by the visibility of only two lights, the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (less than 7º), the distance of the lights from the viewpoint, and the separation of the lit turbines from the key skyline feature of the Heights of Fodderty.

7.12.230 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that in the 200 cd scenario, the effect will be **not significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 20 cd. In this case, the effect will remain **not significant**. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of visibility of cumulative wind farms at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 13: Tesco Dingwall

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.231 This representative viewpoint is located in the car park of the Tesco store in Dingwall and is included to represent views gained by people in Dingwall town centre.

7.12.232 The foreground of this view is strongly characterised by the infrastructure of the Tesco store and the urban fabric of Dingwall. Beyond this, the skyline of the view is an open outlook across the Ben Wyvis massif, including Little Wyvis, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor, seen rising above the roof of the store. This backdrop provides a scenic contrast to the urban foreground and its attractiveness is emphasised by being the only part of the view that gains a long, open outlook across the surrounding countryside, with almost all other aspects of the view contained by urban features.

7.12.233 There are no operational, under construction or consented wind farms visible from this viewpoint.

7.12.234 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value; it has no formal recognition in mapping or other documentation, the viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation, there

are no interpretative signs, and while there is parking, this is not specifically provided for the enjoyment of the view. However, there is value in the long, open views to the Ben Wyvis massif, across the Ben Wyvis SLA. The susceptibility to change of people walking around Dingwall town centre is high-medium, as many of them are likely to be residents of the local area and Dingwall is a community where the landscape setting contributes to the landscape setting experienced by residents.

7.12.235 The sensitivity of the viewpoint is **medium** due to a combination of the medium-low value of the view and high-medium susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.236 Six of the turbines in the Proposed Development are theoretically visible to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 11.81 km away. The hubs of three of the turbines are theoretically visible while the other three are seen as blades only, and they will cover approximately 5º of the view. However, buildings and vegetation will screen parts of the turbines and actual visibility is likely to be limited to three hubs and one blade. Infrastructure will be screened by landform and buildings although cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will result in a minor alteration to the baseline view, seen at moderate proximity on the periphery of the open and eye-catching part of the view;
- the turbines will be seen rising above the horizontal roofline of foreground houses, and this emphasises their vertical nature; and
- the Proposed Development will introduce movement into the otherwise static skyline of the view.

7.12.237 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- the very limited theoretical and actual visibility of the turbines and the very small proportion of the view that will be affected will considerably reduce the impact of the Proposed Development on the view;
- while the Proposed Development is on the periphery of the open skyline aspect of the view, it has no association with the Ben Wyvis massif and will not affect the skyline of the massif;
- the Proposed Development will be seen at a low point on the skyline with higher landform and features on either side, and this reduces the perceived scale of the turbines; and
- this view is strongly characterised by a wide variety of development and activity, into which the addition of the Proposed Development will have a very limited influence.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.238 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.239 As described above, there is no theoretical visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms at this viewpoint, and there is also no theoretical visibility of application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.240 This viewpoint has been visited during hours of darkness but hours of darkness visualisations have not been prepared and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out.

7.12.241 There is extensive lighting around this viewpoint, including street and car park lighting and lighting from cars, houses and other buildings and the Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure

7.9a) shows high light pollution in Dingwall. There is no visibility of operational or consented lit wind farms.

7.12.242 A light on one turbine (T9) is theoretically visible from a minimum of 12.33 km away. This will have a very limited effect on the view due to a combination of distance, the high level of baseline lighting and the single light that has theoretical visibility, and the effect in both scenarios will be **not significant**. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint as well as very limited visibility of lighting on the Proposed Development.

Viewpoint 14: Culbokie

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.243 This representative viewpoint is located to the rear of the Culbokie Inn and is included to represent the outlook gained by people visiting the Inn and using the beer garden (which is to the rear), residents of Culbokie, and people walking on the John O'Groats Trail, which passes the Inn.

7.12.244 Culbokie lies in an elevated position on the northern side of the Black Isle and gains long, open and scenic views across the Cromarty Firth to the Ben Wyvis massif. Mountainous areas to the north-west are also visible, although these are more peripheral to the strong north-westwards orientation of the landform and views.

7.12.245 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2, 16.4 km away; limited visibility of Fairburn, a minimum of 18.9 km away; part of Novar and Extension at a minimum of 12.4 km away; and limited visibility of Strathrory Redesign, 18.5 km away.

7.12.246 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value, arising from a combination of the presence of the John O'Groats Trail, which implies a value to the views available, and the scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA, although the viewpoint itself does not lie within a scenic designation. The use of this location as a beer garden with facilities to enjoy the view, such as seating, also implies value. The absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint and its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation prevent the judgement of a high value.

7.12.247 The susceptibility to change is high for all of the receptor groups, including residents who gain a similar view from their houses, people travelling on the John O'Groats Trail and people visiting the Inn/beer garden, both of which groups are likely to have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape. People walking around Culbokie also have a high susceptibility as many of them are likely to live in the local area, and Culbokie is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by residents.

7.12.248 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** for all receptor groups due to a combination of the high-medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.249 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be theoretically visible west-north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 16.97 km away. The hubs of five of the turbines will be visible while four are seen as blades only, although T1 is seen as a blade tip and is unlikely to be discernible at this distance. The full width of the Proposed Development will extend across around 6º of the view, which reduces to just under 5º when T1 is not included. Infrastructure will be screened by landform, although cranes might be discernible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **medium-low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be apparent in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the skyline that rises west-north-west of the viewpoint, enclosing the Cromarty Firth and its settled surrounds, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland and forestry setting in which it is seen;

- the Proposed Development will be seen in the open aspect of the view, to which the eye of the viewer is drawn; and
- although there is very little visibility of the towers, the turbines will have some vertical impact as they appear in a relatively level and horizontal part of the skyline.

7.12.250 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium-low level are as follows:

- this is a wide, open and elevated view that overlooks many landform features and, in this context, the Proposed Development will affect an extremely limited part of the view - approximately 5º - ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected;
- this view is characterised by a wide range of land uses and influences, and the addition of the Proposed Development into this setting will provide one more influence among many, rather than creating the focal point feature that it can introduce to a simpler outlook;
- the angle of this view ensures that the landform on which the Proposed Development will be seen has little association with the Ben Wyvis massif, especially the key features of An Cabar, Glas Leathad Mor and Glas Leathad Beag;
- this reinforces the location of the Proposed Development within the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies just under 17 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view;
- the location of the turbine bases behind the skyline ensures that they are associated with the uplands thus avoiding a sense of encroachment towards the Firth and the viewpoint;
- the screening of turbine bases also ensures that the turbines will not have a notable vertical impact on the skyline;
- the higher landform of the Ben Wyvis massif rising to the right of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines; and
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.251 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be not significant due to the separation of the Proposed Development from the distinctive skyline of the Ben Wyvis massif, the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, and the very small proportion of the wide open view that will be affected by it.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.252 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2 and Fairburn, both to the south-west, and Novar and Extension to the north-north-west. Auchmore 1 and 2 are discounted from the assessment due to their very limited influence on the view. In the predicted baseline scenario is the consented site at Strathrory Redesign, to the north of the viewpoint. There is also theoretical visibility of application stage wind farms at Abhainn Dubh, 9.1 km to the north-west, and Loch Liath. Loch Liath is discounted from the assessment due to its negligible theoretical visibility and further screening by buildings.

7.12.253 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Fairburn, and Novar and Extension);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Strathrory Redesign); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites plus application stage sites (the operational sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.12.254 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Fairburn, and Novar and Extension will have a **low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to a part of the view that is not otherwise affected by wind energy development. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a low level by the limited and distant visibility of all wind farms and the peripheral location of Fairburn; the very small proportion of the full open view that will be affected by wind energy development, ensuring that the great majority will remain unaffected, including the focal point of the Ben Wyvis massif; the medium-low magnitude of change of the Proposed Development itself; and the small number of visible wind farms (the Proposed Development, Fairburn and Novar and Extension).

7.12.255 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented site at Strathrory Redesign is also considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **low**. Visibility of Strathrory Redesign is very limited and distant, and it will have little influence on the view. It is also located in a peripheral position in relation to the main direction of the view and the orientation of the landform. This ensures that the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will still be applicable.

7.12.256 When application stage sites are also considered, Abhainn Dubh would introduce a wind farm at closer proximity to the viewpoint than other development (including the Proposed Development) and would be seen at the eastern end of the Ben Wyvis massif. In this scenario, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will increase to a **medium-low** level due to the greater number of single wind farms that would have theoretical visibility around the view, and the location of the Proposed Development and Abhainn Dubh to the west and east of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.257 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate-minor (in the current and predicted baseline scenarios) or moderate (when application stage sites are also considered) and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low or medium-low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the limited effect that the Proposed Development itself will have on the view, the limited influence that the operational and consented wind farms have on the view, and the small part of the full open view that will be affected by wind energy development.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.258 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that as the nearest lit turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 17 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 15: A862, west of Inverness

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.259 The representative viewpoint is located on the A862 (NC500), near Phopachy, approximately 3.5 km to the west of Inverness. This specific point was selected due to its prominent location on the coastline, close to the firth and giving an open and unobstructed view across the wider landscape. There is no layby in this location, and the view will be gained by people travelling

westwards on the road (the Proposed Development lies behind eastbound travellers). Many views from this stretch of the A862 are filtered by roadside vegetation, and this is one of the clearer views available.

7.12.260 The natural focus of this view is westwards along the Beauly Firth, where the eye of the viewer is drawn by the channelling landform and the dramatic mountainous skyline that lies in this direction, as well as it being the direction of travel. The expanse of the firth also creates a separation between the viewpoint and the layers of landscape that lie to the north. The first layer is characterised by the farmland and woodland of Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 345), and beyond this rises the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)), including the high points of Little Wyvis, Tom na Caillich, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor.

7.12.261 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2, Achany Extension, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extensions. The closest of these are Auchmore 1 and 2, 13.1 km away, which are seen on the skyline but have a limited effect due to their small size. The group at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart is seen from close to the edge of its own study area (over 32 km away) and has a very limited influence on the view as does Fairburn, which has limited theoretical visibility from a minimum of 18.5 km away.

7.12.262 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising from the classification of this stretch of the A862 as part of the nationally recognised NC500 and Moray Firth tourist routes, which are valued for their scenic outlooks. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation but does overlook SLAs: the Ben Wyvis SLA and, further away to the west and north-west, the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation and the absence of facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as a layby, parking, or interpretative signs. The susceptibility to change of viewers is high as a number of people travelling on the A862 will be following the NC500 or Moray Firth tourist routes and are likely to have a specific focus on the landscape setting.

7.12.263 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.264 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 23.17 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across around 3º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of part of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access tracks and hardstandings but these are unlikely to be discernible due to distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint and the moving nature of viewers. Cranes and other activity will be theoretically visible during the construction phase but are unlikely to be readily discernible. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low-negligible** due to a combination of the very small proportion of the view that will be affected, the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, the low-lying, unremarkable location of the Proposed Development in relation to the main focus of the view, and the moving nature of viewers.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.265 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors considered in the low-negligible magnitude of change on the view despite the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.266 As described above, there is some limited and distant visibility at this viewpoint of operational and consented wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extensions. There is also negligible theoretical visibility of the application stage site at Abhainn Dubh from just over 20 km away.

7.12.267 The maximum cumulative magnitude of change in any scenario will be **low**, limited to this level by the limited and distant visibility of all wind farms, including the Proposed Development, and the moving nature of viewers. The cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed

Development will be **not significant** due to the maximum low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.268 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 16: Great Glen Way near Ladycairn

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.269 This representative viewpoint is located on the Great Glen Way to the north of Abriachan. The Great Glen Way follows a minor road over this stretch, and the view will also be gained by other road-users.

7.12.270 This elevated location gains long and open views around 180º, with a widely varied skyline. To the west and north-west, the rugged, dramatic mountains form an eye-catching a backdrop to the foreground and middle ground of farming and moorland landscapes, interspersed by woodland and forestry. To the south-west, the outlook is down the western side of Loch Ness (although the loch itself isn't visible), and north-north-west is the Ben Wyvis massif, which provides one of the skyline features in the view with the flat-topped skyline of Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar giving way in the west to the Bealach Mor and then the lower high points of Little Wyvis and Tom na Caillich. To the east of Glas Leathad Mor is the high ground around Glas Leathad Beag, which bookends the eastern side of the massif.

7.12.271 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2, Bhlaraidh and Extension, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II. The closest of these are Auchmore 1 and 2, 12.9 km away, which are backclothed by landform and have a limited effect due to their small size, although they are visible in certain lighting conditions. Fairburn, a minimum of 18.5 km away, is also visible in certain lighting conditions. Corriemoillie is seen from close to the edge of its own study area (34.5 km away) and has a very limited influence on the view. The consented Lochluichart Extension II will be seen from 37.1 km away in conjunction with Corriemoillie, while Kirkan (33.8 km away) lies to the east of these sites, with some separation. These sites form a series of three groups of turbines to the north-west of the viewpoint, starting in the west with Fairburn, then a cluster of Auchmore 1 and 2, Corriemoillie and Lochluichart Extension II, and finally Kirkan. To the south-west of the viewpoint is another distant cluster formed of Bhlaraidh and Bhlaraidh Extension, seen largely as hubs and blades.

7.12.272 Other operational wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.273 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising from a combination of the presence of the Great Glen Way, which implies a value to the views available, and the scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA and, to the west and north-west, the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA. The value is moderated by the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint, its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and the absence of facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as seating, interpretative boards, or parking. The susceptibility to change is high as many people who gain the view will be following the Great Glen Way and are likely to have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape and the long, open views.

7.12.274 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.275 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 26.21 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across around 3º of the view. The borrow pit search areas and several stretches of access tracks and hardstandings have theoretical visibility but these are unlikely to be discernible due to distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes and other activity will be theoretically visible during the construction phase but are unlikely to be readily discernible. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be result in a very minor alteration to the baseline view, seen in a part of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development, where it will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting;
- the Proposed Development will appear on the periphery of a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif; and
- the turbines will be seen partially on the skyline and partially backclothed by landform, which can be eye-catching.

7.12.276 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- this is a wide, open and elevated view that overlooks many eye-catching landform features and, in this context, the Proposed Development will affect an extremely limited part of the view - approximately 3º - ensuring that the great majority of the outlook, including the eye-catching and dramatic mountains to the west and north-west, will remain unaffected;
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 26 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view;
- while the Proposed Development will be seen in the same broad aspect of the view as the Ben Wyvis massif, it will be peripheral to the principal focus of the view, which is further to the east, across Ben Wyvis, and has little association with the key landform of An Cabar, Glas Leathad Mor, Bealach Mor and Glas Leathad Beag;
- in this peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif; and
- the higher landform of Little Wyvis and the Ben Wyvis massif rising to the right of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.277 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.278 As described above, there is some distant theoretical visibility of operational and consented wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2, Bhlaraidh and Extension, Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II. There is also limited theoretical visibility of the application stage site at Abhainn Dubh from just over 26.6 km away and Chrathaich and Loch Liath, both over 20 km away.

7.12.279 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Auchmore 1 and 2, Bhlaraidh, Corriemoillie and Fairburn);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Bhlaraidh Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites plus application stage sites (the operational sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh, Chrathaich and Loch Liath).

7.12.280 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Auchmore 1 and 2, Bhlaraidh, Corriemoillie, Corrimony and Fairburn will have a **low**

cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development, with larger turbines, to the two groups of operational turbines that are seen to the north-west of the viewpoint. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a low level by the limited and distant visibility of all wind farms, including the Proposed Development; the very small proportion of the full open view that will be affected by wind energy development, ensuring that the great majority will remain unaffected, including the Ben Wyvis massif; the low magnitude of change of the Proposed Development itself; and the integration of the Proposed Development into the pattern of operational wind farms already seen to the north-west of the viewpoint.

7.12.281 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Bhlaraidh Extension, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **low**. Bhlaraidh Extension will be seen in direct association with Bhlaraidh, and will have a very limited additional influence on the view. Similarly, Lochluichart Extension II will be seen in conjunction with Corriemoillie, leading to a very limited additional influence. Kirkan will be seen as a separate cluster that lies to the east of Corriemoillie/Lochluichart Extension II, and the baseline situation to which the Proposed Development is added will therefore be increased in this scenario. However, the Proposed Development will continue the pattern of development to the north-west of the viewpoint, with a similar separation from Kirkan as is seen with the baseline sites, and will not lead to coalescence across the view. The limited and distant theoretical visibility of all wind farms will also continue to moderate the cumulative magnitude of change.

7.12.282 When application stage sites are also considered, Abhainn Dubh would introduce a wind farm at a similar proximity to the viewpoint as the Proposed Development and would be seen to the east of the Ben Wyvis massif. In this scenario, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development would increase to a **medium-low** level due to the greater number of single wind farms that would have theoretical visibility around the view, and the location of the Proposed Development and Abhainn Dubh to the west and east of the Ben Wyvis massif. However, theoretical visibility of Abhainn Dubh is also limited and distant, and this ensures that the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development is restricted to a medium-low level.

7.12.283 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate-minor (in the current and predicted baseline scenarios) or moderate (when application stage sites are also considered) and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low or medium-low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the limited effect that the Proposed Development itself will have on the view, the limited influence that the operational, consented and application stage wind farms have on the view, and the integration of the Proposed Development into the baseline pattern of development.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.284 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant.**

Viewpoint 17: Inverness Castle

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.285 This specific viewpoint is located at Inverness Castle in the centre of Inverness. The Castle is currently undergoing renovation work but will be reopened to the public, and this viewpoint represents the outlook that might be gained by future visitors to the Castle. The ZTV shows theoretical visibility from the eastern part of central Inverness but actual visibility is greatly limited by intervening buildings and vegetation, and this location provides a clear and open view to the north and north-west, towards the Proposed Development.

7.12.286 The focus of views from here is north-westwards, across the Moray Firth and towards the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)) which provides a focal point in the view. The flat-topped skyline of Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar gives way in the west to the lower high points of Little Wyvis and Tom na Caillich while to the east of Glas Leathad Mor is

the high ground around Glas Leathad Beag, which forms the eastern side of the massif. Views are also gained to the south-west, across the city centre and River Ness.

7.12.287 There is very limited and distant theoretical visibility of Novar and Extension at this viewpoint, but this is screened by foreground vegetation and buildings and it has negligible influence on the view. Farr Wind Farm has negligible theoretical visibility and this will anyway be screened by buildings. There is no other visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms.

7.12.288 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value; the location is of historic interest as well as being a visitor attraction and the view is a scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA. The value is moderated by the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint and its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation. The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will be visiting the Castle and views of the surrounding landscape are an important contributor to the experience.

7.12.289 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** due to a combination of the high-medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.290 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint, some as hubs and others as blades only, from a minimum of 28.65 km away, and will extend across less than 3º of the view. However, the turbines will be almost completely screened by foreground vegetation with just several blade tips potentially visible. Infrastructure will be screened by landform. The magnitude of change on this view will be **negligible** due to the negligible visibility of the Proposed Development and its distance from the viewpoint.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.291 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the negligible magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.292 The cumulative magnitude of change at this viewpoint will be **negligible** due to the negligible visibility of the Proposed Development, and the cumulative effect will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.293 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 18: Milton of Leys Primary School

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.294 This representative viewpoint is located in the parking area adjacent to Milton of Leys Primary School on the southern edge of Inverness. The ZTV shows theoretical visibility from eastern areas of Inverness but actual visibility is limited by intervening buildings and vegetation, and this location provides a clear and open view to the north and north-west, towards the Proposed Development. This view will be gained by people using the parking area and a similar view will be gained by people visiting or attending the school.

7.12.295 The focus of views from here is north-westwards, across the Moray Firth and towards the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)) which provides a focal point in the view. The flat-topped skyline of Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar gives way in the west to the lower high points of Little Wyvis and Tom na Caillich while to the east of Glas Leathad Mor is the high ground around Glas Leathad Beag, which forms the eastern side of the massif. More rugged mountainous areas lie further away to the north-west of the viewpoint.

7.12.296 There is very limited and distant theoretical visibility of Fairburn, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II at this viewpoint. Other operational and consented wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.297 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value; it does not lie within a scenic designation, does not have formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and there are no facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as seating or interpretative boards. It does, however, gain a scenic outlook over the Ben Wyvis SLA and, further away, the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA. The susceptibility to change is high-medium. People who gain this view are likely to be residents of the local area who are walking around the parking and school area, and this elevated southern part of Inverness is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by residents.

7.12.298 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium** due to a combination of the medium-low value of the view and the high-medium susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.299 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 32.75 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across less than 3º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access tracks and hardstandings but these are unlikely to be discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes will be theoretically visible during the construction phase but are unlikely to be readily discernible. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low-negligible** due to a combination of the very small proportion of the wide, open view that will be affected, the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, and the peripheral location of the Proposed Development in relation to the main focus of the view, which is across the Ben Wyvis massif.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.300 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low-negligible magnitude of change on the view and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.301 The cumulative magnitude of change at this viewpoint will be **low-negligible** due to the limited and distant visibility of cumulative wind farms and the low-negligible magnitude of change of the Proposed Development, and the cumulative effect will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.302 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 19: Culloden Battlefield

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.303 This representative viewpoint is located on the waymarked core path route at Culloden Battlefield. This is an important historical location and visitor destination, and interpretation signs are placed around the route.

7.12.304 The focus of views from here is north-westwards, across the Moray Firth and towards the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)) which provides a focal point in the view. The flat-topped skyline of Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar gives way in the west to the lower high points of Little Wyvis and Tom na Caillich while to the east of Glas Leathad Mor is the high ground around Glas Leathad Beag, which bookends the eastern side of the massif.

7.12.305 There is very limited and distant theoretical visibility of consented wind farms at Strathrory Redesign and Bhlaraidh Extension at this viewpoint but these sites will have a negligible effect on the view due to very limited theoretical visibility, distance and screening by vegetation. Other operational and consented wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.306 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value; it is accessed by a waymarked core path (with parking provided), and the location is of historic interest as well as being a visitor attraction. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation but has a

scenic outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA. The value is moderated by the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint and its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation. The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will be walking around the Battlefield on the waymarked path and views of the surrounding landscape are an important contributor to the experience.

7.12.307 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** due to a combination of the high-medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.308 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 35.18 km away, with eight hubs visible and one turbine seen as a blade only, and will extend across less than 2.5º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access tracks and hardstandings but these are unlikely to be discernible due to screening by vegetation and the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes will theoretically be visible during the construction phase but are unlikely to be readily discernible. The magnitude of change on this view will be **negligible** due to a combination of the very small proportion of the wide, open view that will be affected, the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, and the peripheral location of the Proposed Development in relation to the main focus of the view, which is across the Ben Wyvis massif.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.309 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the negligible magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.310 The cumulative magnitude of change at this viewpoint will be **negligible** due to the negligible visibility of the Proposed Development, and the cumulative effect will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.311 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 20: Simpsons Garden Centre

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.312 This representative viewpoint is located in the parking area adjacent to Simpsons Garden Centre, which lies to the east of the A9 on the south-eastern edge of Inverness. The ZTV shows theoretical visibility from eastern areas of Inverness, including the A9, but actual visibility is limited by intervening buildings and vegetation, and this location provides a clear view to the north, towards the Proposed Development. This view will be gained by people visiting the garden centre.

7.12.313 As with the other viewpoints around Inverness the focus of this outlook is northwards, towards the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)) which provides a focal point in the view. However, the lower elevation of this location in comparison to Viewpoint 18 (Milton of Leys Primary School) means that the outlook is less open and the landform of Ord Hill screens the eastern part of the Ben Wyvis massif. Vegetation in the foreground also partially obscures the open view.

7.12.314 There is negligible visibility of operational and consented wind farms at Fairburn, Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II and Strathrory Redesign at this viewpoint. Other operational and consented wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.315 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value; it does not lie within a scenic designation, does not have formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and there are no facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as seating or interpretative boards. It does, however, gain a scenic outlook over the Ben Wyvis SLA. The

susceptibility to change is also medium-low. People who gain this view will be people visiting the garden centre, an activity that does not depend upon an appreciation of views of the landscape.

7.12.316 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low** due to a combination of the medium-low value of the view and the medium-low susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.317 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 31.56 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across less than 2.5º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access tracks and hardstandings but these are unlikely to be discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes will theoretically be visible during the construction phase but are unlikely to be readily discernible. The magnitude of change on this view will be **negligible** due to a combination of the very small proportion of the open view that will be affected, the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, the peripheral location of the Proposed Development in relation to the main focus of the view, which is across the Ben Wyvis massif, and the partial screening of turbines by intervening vegetation and buildings.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.318 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be negligible and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the negligible magnitude of change on the view and the medium-low sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.319 The cumulative magnitude of change at this viewpoint will be **negligible** due to the negligible visibility of the Proposed Development, and the cumulative effect will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.320 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 21: A9, Black Isle

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.321 This representative viewpoint is in a layby beside the A9 as it passes over the Black Isle, north of Duncanston and is included to represent views gained by people who are travelling northwards on the road or have stopped in the layby.

7.12.322 This stretch of the A9 is elevated on the landform of the Black Isle and gains a clear, open and scenic view to the north, across the Cromarty Firth and towards the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)) which provides a focal point in the view. The flat-topped skyline of Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar gives way in the west to the lower high points of Little Wyvis and Tom na Caillich while to the east of Glas Leathad Mor is the high ground around Glas Leathad Beag, which forms the eastern side of the massif. To the north of the Firth, the farmed slopes of Tulloch Hill and Cnoc a Bhreacaich rise in front of the eastern part of the Ben Wyvis massif, obscuring its lower slopes. The settlement of Dingwall can be seen on the northern bank of the Firth, north-west of the viewpoint.

7.12.323 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2, 14.7 km away; limited visibility of Fairburn, a minimum of 17.3 km away; Novar and Extension at a minimum of 13.1 km away; and a very small part of Strathrory Redesign, 19.9 km away.

7.12.324 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising from the provision of a layby which allows people to stop and enjoy the scenic view, which includes the designated landscape of the Ben Wyvis SLA. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, the absence of signage or interpretative material in relation to the view, and the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint.

7.12.325 The susceptibility to change of viewers is medium. The view will be gained by road-users, and this stretch of the A9 is not identified as a tourist route. However, people travelling on the road or stopping in the layby are likely to have a focus on the scenic views and the landscape setting.

7.12.326 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and medium susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.327 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen west-north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 16 km away, with six hubs visible and three turbines seen as blades only. However, T1 is seen as a blade tip only and unlikely to be discernible at this distance. The full width of the Proposed Development will extend across around 6º of the view, which reduces to just under 5º when T1 is not included. There is theoretical visibility of a very short stretch of access track and a hardstanding but these are unlikely to be discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes might be discernible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will vary dependent on whether the viewer is travelling on the A9 or stopped in the layby. For people who have stopped in the layby, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be apparent on a skyline that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the skyline that rises to the north-west of the viewpoint, enclosing the Cromarty Firth and its settled surrounds, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland and forestry setting in which it is seen;
- the Proposed Development will appear on the periphery of a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the peripheral lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the open aspect of the view, to which the eye of the viewer is drawn; and
- although there is limited visibility of the towers, the turbines will have some vertical impact as they appear in a relatively level and horizontal part of the view.

7.12.328 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium-low level for people who have stopped in the layby are as follows:

- this is a wide, open and elevated view and, in this context, the Proposed Development will affect less than 5º of the view, ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected;
- this view is characterised by a wide range of land uses and influences, and the addition of the Proposed Development into this setting will provide one more influence among many, rather than creating the focal point feature that it can introduce to a simpler outlook;
- the Proposed Development will not be seen in the main direction of the view from this location which is north-westwards for people who have stopped in the layby and northwards for people travelling on the A9;
- the angle of this view ensures that the landform on which the Proposed Development will be seen has little association with the Ben Wyvis massif, especially the key features of An Cabar, Glas Leathad Mor and Glas Leathad Beag;
- this reinforces the location of the Proposed Development within the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies 16 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view;

- the location of the turbine bases behind the skyline ensures that they are associated with the uplands thus avoiding a sense of encroachment towards the Firth and the viewpoint;
- the screening of turbine bases also ensures that the turbines will not have a notable vertical impact on the skyline;
- the higher landform of the Ben Wyvis massif rising to the right of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines; and
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons.

7.12.329 For people travelling on the A9, the magnitude of change will be **low** due to the moving nature of viewers and the peripheral location of the Proposed Development in relation to the direction of travel.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.330 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor or minor and **not significant** for people stopped in the layby and people travelling on the A9 respectively due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low or low magnitude of change on the view and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.331 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2 and Fairburn, both west-south-west, and Novar and Extension to the north-north-west. In the predicted baseline scenario is the consented site at Strathrory Redesign, to the north of the viewpoint. There is also limited theoretical visibility of application stage wind farm at Abhainn Dubh, 9.2 km to the north-west.

7.12.332 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Auchmore 1 and 2, Fairburn, and Novar and Extension);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Strathrory Redesign); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.12.333 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Fairburn, and Novar and Extension will have a **low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to a part of the view that is not otherwise affected by wind energy development. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a low level by the limited and distant visibility of all wind farms; the separation between the wind farms and the very small proportion of the full open view that will be affected by wind energy development, which avoids coalescence and ensures that the great majority of the view will remain unaffected, including the focal point of the Ben Wyvis massif; the peripheral location of Fairburn in relation to the wider view; the similarity in the appearance of the wind farms; and the low or medium-low magnitude of change of the Proposed Development itself.

7.12.334 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented site at Strathrory Redesign is also considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **low**. Visibility of Strathrory Redesign is very limited and distant, and it will have little influence on the view. This ensures that the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will still be applicable.

7.12.335 When application stage sites are also considered, Abhainn Dubh would introduce limited visibility of a wind farm at closer proximity to the viewpoint than other development (including the Proposed Development) and would be seen at the eastern end of the Ben Wyvis massif. In

this scenario, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will increase to a **medium-low** level due to the greater number of single wind farms that would have theoretical visibility around the view, and the location of the Proposed Development and Abhainn Dubh to the west and east of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.336 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be minor (in the current and predicted baseline scenarios) or moderate-minor (when application stage sites are also considered) and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low or medium-low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.337 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that as the nearest lit turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 16 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant.**

Viewpoint 22: A835/B9169 Crossroads

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.338 This representative viewpoint is the first in a series of five viewpoints that are located on the A835, starting to the south of the site and following the route as it passes to the west of the site and then continuing to the north-west. This viewpoint is located at the crossroads between the A835 and the B9169 at the western end of the Black Isle and is included to represent views that will be gained by road-users travelling northbound on the A835.

7.12.339 This outlook is drawn northwards by the landform sloping gently down to the River Conon and is characterised by a transition from the lowland to upland landscapes. In the foreground and middle ground, on either side of the River Conon, is the pattern of fields bounded by hedgerows and woodland that characterises the Open Farmed Slopes LCT (LCT 346). This rises gently into the forested Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330), and then steeply upwards to the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif, where the distinctive skyline of Little Wyvis, An Cabar, Glas Leathad Mor and Glas Leathad Beag forms a focal point in the view. The flat-topped profile of An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor is particularly notable in this view, with the smaller foothills (including Little Wyvis to the west) 'bookending' this at either side. While these smaller hills are relatively unremarkable in terms of their scale and form, they do form part of the setting to the Ben Wyvis range.

7.12.340 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2, 9.7 km away; Coire na Cloiche, a minimum of 26.3 km away; Fairburn, a minimum of 13.3 km away; and Novar and Extension at a minimum of 16.9 km away. Auchmore 1 and 2 is screened by vegetation as are Coire na Cloiche and much of Novar and Extension. These sites are also peripheral to the main north-westwards view, with Auchmore and Fairburn lying to the west and Novar and Coire na Cloiche lying to the north.

7.12.341 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium-low value, arising from the informal scenic value of the outlook across the Ben Wyvis SLA and the enjoyment of it that is likely to be gained by road-users. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, the lack of facilities for the enjoyment of the view, and the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint. The susceptibility to change of viewers is medium. The view will be gained by road-users, and these stretches of the A835/B9169 are not identified as a tourist route. However, people travelling on the roads are likely to have an awareness of the scenic view and the landscape setting.

7.12.342 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium** due to a combination of the medium-low value of the view and medium susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.343 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 14.96 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across around 5º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of part of a borrow pit search area, a short

stretch of access track and a hardstanding but these are unlikely to be discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes might be discernible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **medium-low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be apparent, with some vertical impact, in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the prominent skyline that rises to the north-west of the viewpoint, enclosing the lowland farmlands and the River Conon valley, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the Proposed Development will appear on the periphery of a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif; and
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the line of the view of people travelling northwards on the A835, and in the open aspect of the view, to which the eye of the viewer is drawn.

7.12.344 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium-low level are as follows:

- this is a wide, open and elevated view and, in this context, the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part of the view - approximately 5º - ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected;
- while the Proposed Development will be seen in the same broad aspect of the view as the Ben Wyvis massif, it is peripheral to the principal focus of the view, which is further to the east, across Ben Wyvis, and it has little association with the key landform of An Cabar, Glas Leathad Mor and Glas Leathad Beag;
- in this peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in a low-lying position where it does not compete with the scale of the surrounding landform and is enclosed by high points that reduce the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines,
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies just under 15 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be relatively minor features in the view; and
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.345 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.346 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at Auchmore 1 and 2 and Fairburn, both west of the viewpoint, and Novar and Extension and Coire na Cloiche to the north. Auchmore and Coire na Cloiche are discounted due to lack of actual visibility. No wind farms are visible in the predicted baseline scenario. There is limited theoretical visibility of hubs and blades at the application stage wind farm at Abhainn Dubh, 11.9 km to the north, where it is seen adjacent to Novar and Extension.

7.12.347 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Fairburn, and Novar and Extension); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites plus application stage sites (the operational sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.12.348 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development will have a **low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to a part of the view that is not otherwise affected by wind energy development. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a low level by the limited and distant influence of all wind farms; the small number of visible wind farms; the peripheral location of Fairburn and Novar and Extension in relation to the direction of travel; the separation between all of the wind farms and the very small proportion of the full open view that will be affected by wind energy development, which avoids coalescence and ensures that the great majority of the view will remain unaffected, including the focal point of the Ben Wyvis massif; the similarity in the appearance of the wind farms; and the not significant of the Proposed Development itself.

7.12.349 When application stage sites are also considered, Abhainn Dubh would introduce limited visibility of a wind farm at closer proximity to the viewpoint than other development (including the Proposed Development) and would be seen at the eastern end of the Ben Wyvis massif. It does, however, have limited visibility and would be seen in association with Novar and Extension rather than as a separate site, and this ensures that the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario would still be applicable. The cumulative magnitude of change will therefore remain **low**.

7.12.350 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline and application stage sites, will be minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low cumulative magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.351 An hours of darkness photomontage has been produced for this viewpoint, and it has been visited at night-time. Baseline lighting at the location where this photograph was taken is relatively limited, but people travelling on the A835, whom the viewpoint is intended to represent, are affected by car lights on the road, urban lighting from Dingwall, and lighting within vehicles. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows light pollution in this area. At dusk and dawn, the distinctive skyline of the Ben Wyvis massif provides a strong landscape feature, as it does during the day. Other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.352 The hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers. People travelling on the A835 will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including dashboards and internal lights and externally, lights on other vehicles. Combined with the medium-low value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low**.

7.12.353 Lighting on four turbines (T1, T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 15.2 km away at this viewpoint. The position of lights on the skyline where there is no other apparent lighting will increase its effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise and the location of the lighting in the direction of travel. The magnitude of change is moderated by the distance of the light from the viewpoint; the location of the lighting peripheral to the Ben Wyvis massif, so it will not affect the most distinctive part of the skyline seen at dawn and dusk; the moving nature of viewers and the lighting that will affect them within their vehicles; and the presence of baseline lighting in the view, external to vehicles, so that the turbine lights will not introduce lighting into a completely dark environment.

7.12.354 In the 200 cd scenario, the magnitude of change will be **low**, with the lighting having a minor effect on the view. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 58 cd. This reduction in the intensity of light will lead to a **low-negligible** magnitude of change for 200 cd lights. The effect of turbine lighting at this viewpoint will be minor and **not significant** in both scenarios due to the factors considered in

the medium-low sensitivity of the viewpoint and the low or low-negligible magnitude of change. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required at this viewpoint due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites.

Viewpoint 23: A835, Contin

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.355 This is the second of the series of viewpoints located on the A835 and is in the centre of Contin, beside the A835 (NC500). The representative viewpoint is included to represent the outlook gained by people travelling northwards on the A835 and people walking through Contin. The effect of the Proposed Development on views gained from the principal visual receptor of the settlement of Contin is assessed subsequently in this chapter.

7.12.356 Views towards the site from public areas in Contin, including those from the A835, are generally screened of filtered to some degree by the building and vegetation of the village, and this is one of the very few clear and open views that is available towards the site. It should be noted that this viewpoint is located on the footpath that runs on the eastern side of the A835 and the view gained by people travelling northwards on the A835 is slightly less open due to foreground screening. This specific viewpoint has been selected as it represents the exact views gained by pedestrians and a similar view to that gained by road-users whilst being in a safe location for photography.

7.12.357 The foreground of this view is strongly characterised by the urban fabric of Contin, with houses, streetlights, road signs, garden fences and other infrastructure all readily apparent. Beyond this, Contin is surrounded by a patchwork of lowland LCTs, characterised largely by farming and woodland. The viewpoint itself lies within Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 345), although none of the characteristics of this landscape are seen in the view due to the urban elements of the settlement, and it is the surrounding upland LCTs that have the greatest external influence on the outlook. The most prominent topographical feature in the view is the eye-catching focal point landform of Tor Achilty, 1.4 km to the south-west of the viewpoint, which rises above the foreground houses, while to the south are the distinctive landforms of Cul Mor and Cul Beag, just over 4 km away from the viewpoint. The skyline – often wooded - between these landforms is also important in its provision of an enclosing backdrop to Contin.

7.12.358 The view to the north-west, towards the site, is backdropped by the undulating ridge that runs eastwards from Carn Fearna, with the landform of Little Wyvis rising behind this. An Cabar is theoretically visible but screened by vegetation and buildings.

7.12.359 There is theoretical visibility of Auchmore and Fairburn wind farms at this viewpoint. In reality, however, Auchmore is screened by vegetation, and lies to the south, behind the direction of travel for road-users, while Fairburn has negligible visibility due to landform screening. There are therefore no relevant baseline wind farms seen from this viewpoint.

7.12.360 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising primarily from the classification of this stretch of the A835 as part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route, which is valued for its scenic outlooks. It is also relevant that while the viewpoint is not within a scenic designation, part of the view – including Little Wyvis but not Carn Fearna - is covered by the Ben Wyvis SLA. However, the value of the view is moderated by the lack of formal recognition of this location as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, and facilities such as parking, signs and interpretative boards are not provided for the enjoyment of the view. The susceptibility to change is high for all of the receptor groups, including people travelling on the A835 - due to its identification as part of the NC500 tourist route - and people walking around Contin, as they are likely to be residents of the local area, and Contin is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by residents.

7.12.361 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** both for people travelling on the A835 and those walking through Contin, due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.362 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen north-north-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 6.59 km away, with all hubs visible. These will theoretically extend across

around 11º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform and, in places, by vegetation, other than a part of a borrow pit search area and several sections of access tracks and hardstandings, and cranes and other activity will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will vary dependent on the receptor group; for people travelling on the A835 the magnitude of change will be **medium**, while for people walking through Contin the magnitude of change will be **high-medium**.

7.12.363 The high-medium magnitude of change for people walking through Contin arises for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at relatively close proximity in an elevated aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development, where they will have vertical impact on the skyline;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the prominent, elevated backdrop of the view, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the Proposed Development will be seen across the open aspect of the view (which is tightly contained on each side by urban elements) and in the direction of travel of people walking or driving northbound along the A835;
- two turbines will appear in front of Little Wyvis, which forms a focus in the view; and
- the Proposed Development will be partly backclothed by landform and partly on the skyline, which can be eye-catching.

7.12.364 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level for people walking through Contin are as follows:

- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen appears as a large-scale landform with uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons and reduces the perceived scale of the turbines;
- the Proposed Development will not affect the full open aspect of the view, but is rather punctuated at each end by elevated landforms, and this prevents a perception of it ‘straggling’ around the view with no containment;
- the turbines are associated with the uplands, with a clear visual separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, thus avoiding a sense of encroachment towards Contin; and
- whilst the distance that lies between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development is not great, it does ensure that the turbines will not become the only defining influence on the view, and other elements and features around the view will continue to be apparent and definitive.

7.12.365 The reduction to a medium magnitude of change for people travelling on the A835 is due to the screening and filtering of many views from the A835 and the moving nature of these viewers, which ensures that the outlook will be briefly glimpsed and of short duration.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.366 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major-moderate (for people walking through Contin) or moderate (for people travelling on the A835) and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium or medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the direction of travel of road-users on the A835 towards the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.367 As described above, there is negligible actual visibility of operational wind farms at this viewpoint due to a combination of very limited theoretical visibility and screening by vegetation. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore

no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.368 This viewpoint has been visited during hours of darkness but hours of darkness visualisations have not been prepared and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. Overall conclusions regarding effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.369 There is extensive baseline lighting in Contin, including streetlights, lighting at houses and vehicle lights, and the baseline view towards the Proposed Development is affected by all of these. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows an area of light pollution around Contin. There is no visibility of operational or consented lit wind farms. The lighting in the settlement and in views towards the site diminishes the importance of the landscape setting around Contin, and the skyline that is clearly apparent in the daytime is less notable during hours of darkness. The hours of darkness susceptibility of viewers will reduce to a low level due to baseline lighting influence. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low**.

7.12.370 Lights on four turbines (T1, T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 6.59 km away and will be seen in a regular pattern on the skyline. The position of the lights above the skyline where there is no other clearly apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise. For people travelling northwards on the A835, the direction of travel towards the Proposed Development will also increase the effect. The magnitude of change is moderated by the extensive baseline lighting around the viewpoint; the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 10º), the distance of the lights from the viewpoint, and the limited influence of the landscape setting in this well-lit environment.

7.12.371 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that in the 200 cd scenario, the effect in this well-lit context will be **not significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 15 cd and the effect will remain **not significant**. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 24: A835, south end of Loch Garve

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.372 This is the third viewpoint located on the A835 (NC500) and is located in a layby beside the A835 at the southern end of Loch Garve. This representative viewpoint is included to represent the outlook gained by people who have stopped in the layby and a similar view will be gained by people travelling on the A835. Many views from this stretch of the A835 are filtered by roadside vegetation, and this is one of the clearer views available.

7.12.373 This viewpoint lies within the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335) and displays the typical characteristics of “low lying, mainly rocky moorlands, with sinuous glens and narrow gorges… A back drop of mountains and lochs often glimpsed through tree cover“.

7.12.374 The characteristics described for this LCT are appropriate to the A835, and for this viewpoint specifically: “…[the glens] usually contain sinuous transport routes which weave between rocky high points, follow the line of rivers, or hug the shore lines of inland water bodies…Roads are usually accompanied by service poles and overhead wires, but the undulations of the landscape and high proportion of tree cover often limit their effect on character. Infrequent road-side facilities for travellers such as viewpoints and laybys occur within this landscape…Nearby mountains and lochs are a constant backdrop and usually glimpsed through tree cover. Views occasionally open out over water bodies and down wider glens.”

7.12.375 In the direction of the Proposed Development, beyond the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335), are the rising slopes of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), within

which the site lies. This LCT forms an enclosing, upland skyline, with the rounded landform of Carn Fearna seen towards the left of the view. The top of Little Wyvis rises slightly above the ridge but is not distinctive or eye-catching, and Glas Leathad Mor and An Cabar are not visible.

7.12.376 To the west of the viewpoint, in the direction of travel of the A835 and also seen from the layby, Loch Garve and its mountainous surroundings form a scenic and eye-catching focal point in the view.

7.12.377 Parts of the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension wind farms and several turbines of the consented Lochluichart Extension II are theoretically visible at a minimum of 10.6 km away to the north-west of the viewpoint. However, as the viewpoint has been very specifically located to gain the highest level of visibility of the Proposed Development, this visibility is almost completely screened by vegetation in the foreground of the view. These cumulative sites are visible from elsewhere in the layby, and intermittently along this stretch of the A835, where visibility of the Proposed Development is reduced due to screening by vegetation.

7.12.378 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising primarily from the classification of this stretch of the A835 as part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route, which is valued for its scenic outlooks, and the provision of a layby from which the view might be enjoyed. As noted in the LCT description, there are infrequent roadside facilities in this landscape, and this layby is an opportunity to stop and enjoy the view. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, the absence of signage or interpretation of the view, and the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint and across the majority of the view (the Ben Wyvis SLA is largely screened by foreground landform, with just parts of the upper skyline lying within it). The susceptibility to change of viewers is high as a number of people travelling on the A835 or stopping in the layby will be following the NC500 tourist route and are likely to have a specific focus on the landscape setting.

7.12.379 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.380 Seven of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the north of this viewpoint from a minimum of 2.83 km away, with five turbines seen as hubs and two as blades only. These will extend across around 27º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform, although cranes will be visible during the construction phase. The magnitude of change on this view will be **high-medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at close proximity in an elevated aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the prominent, elevated skyline that forms the northern aspect of the view, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the turbines will have some vertical impact on this skyline, albeit limited by the screening of lower towers by landform; and
- T2 and T7 will be seen as blades only and will have an appearance of ‘blade-tipping’ on the skyline, which can be eye-catching.

7.12.381 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level are as follows:

- the Proposed Development will not affect the scenic views along Loch Garve, which is the focal point of the outlook from the layby and for westbound travellers on the A835;
- the screening of lower towers reduces vertical impact as the turbines will not be seen at full height on the skyline;

- the location of the turbine bases behind the skyline ensures visual separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, avoiding a sense of encroachment of the turbines towards the viewpoint, Loch Garve and the A835;
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen appears as a simple, large-scale landform with uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons and reduces the perceived scale of the turbines;
- the high ground of Carn Fearna at the left side of the Proposed Development will also reduce the perceived scale of the turbines;
- the appearance of the Proposed Development on a single landform beneficially aids cohesion between the turbines, ensuring that the Proposed Development has a simple and balanced image; and
- for people travelling on the A835, the Proposed Development will lie perpendicular to the direction of travel and will be seen by moving viewers.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.382 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major-moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.383 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension, and in the predicted baseline scenario is the consented site at Lochluichart Extension II. These sites are not clearly seen at the viewpoint itself due to vegetation screening but can be seen from other parts of the layby. Where they are visible, visibility of the Proposed Development itself is likely to be reduced due to vegetation screening.

7.12.384 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Lochluichart Extension II).

7.12.385 The cumulative magnitude of change will vary dependent on the nature of the viewer. For people who have stopped in the layby and have got out of their vehicles, the cumulative magnitude of change in the current baseline scenario will be **medium-low.** This will arise as a result of the introduction of very readily apparent wind energy development to a part of the view that is not otherwise affected by wind energy development. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the grouping together of the operational wind farms, so that they appear as a single site; the limited and distant visibility of the operational wind farms; and the separation between the Proposed Development and the operational wind farms, which avoids coalescence. The filtering of views by vegetation also reduces the cumulative magnitude of change as the operational sites and Proposed Development are unlikely to be clearly visible simultaneously; this is especially the case in summer, when vegetation provides a considerably greater screen.

7.12.386 For people who have stopped in the layby and have got out of their vehicles, the cumulative magnitude of change in the predicted baseline scenario will remain **medium-low** as the one consented site, Lochluichart Extension II, will appear as part of the same group as the operational sites, and the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will still be applicable.

7.12.387 For people travelling on the A835, the cumulative magnitude of change will be **low** in both the current and predicted baseline situations. This is due to the limited, relatively distant and filtered visibility of the cumulative wind farms that is gained by moving viewers, exacerbated by the twisting nature of this stretch of the road, which limits opportunities for glimpsed views.

This will arise only for people travelling north-westwards, as the cluster of cumulative wind farms will not be seen by south-eastbound travellers.

7.12.388 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline and predicted baseline, will be moderate (for people who have stopped in the layby and got out of their vehicles) and moderate-minor (for people travelling south-eastwards on the A835) and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low or low cumulative magnitude of change and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect (as gained in both the current and predicted baseline scenarios by people who have stopped in the layby) can be assessed as significant or not significant. In this case, it is assessed as **not significant** due to the grouping together of the cumulative sites and their limited and relatively distant visibility, as well as the vegetation filtering that generally precludes simultaneous clear visibility of the Proposed Development and the cumulative wind farms.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.389 An hours of darkness photomontage has been produced for this viewpoint, and it has been visited at night-time. There is limited baseline lighting in the view for people who have stopped in the layby and switched off their vehicle lights, with this restricted to headlights and tail lights of passing vehicles. Some people who have stopped in the layby might also see the lights at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart Wind Farms, which are visible from some parts of the layby (dependent on vegetation screening). People travelling on the A835 will have a higher level of baseline lighting due to internal and external vehicle lights but are unlikely to clearly see the Corriemoillie and Lochluichart lights. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution in this area.

7.12.390 At dusk and dawn, the eye is drawn to the dramatic skyline landform that encloses Loch Garve, while the loch itself is a focal point at dawn and dusk and, in darkness, can be emphasised by the light of the moon. The skyline that rises to the east of the viewpoint also provides a strong landscape feature, as it does during the day. Other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.391 The hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers. People travelling on the A835 will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including, internally, dashboards and internal lights and externally, lights on other vehicles. People stopped in the layby will have a darker environment if they have switched off their vehicle lights as both internal and external influences will be considerably more limited, and their susceptibility will be medium. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low** for people travelling on the road and **medium** for people stopped in the layby.

7.12.392 Lighting on two turbines (T4 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 2.83 km away at this viewpoint. The position of the lights on the elevated skyline - which is one of the features of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise. The magnitude of change is moderated by the visibility of only two lights; the location of the lights where they will not affect the notable skyline around Loch Garve, or views of the loch itself; the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (less than 10º); and the location of the lights close above the skyline rather than in a very elevated position. For people travelling on the road, their moving nature and exposure to baseline vehicle lighting also reduces the magnitude of change, while for people stopped in the layby, vegetation can screen or filter visibility, especially when trees are in leaf.

7.12.393 In the scenario of 200 cd, the magnitude of change will be **medium** for people stopped in the layby and **medium-low** for people on travelling on the A835. When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 8 cd. This reduction in the intensity of light will lead to a **low** (for people stopped in the layby) or **negligible** (for people travelling on the A835) magnitude of change.

7.12.394 The effect will be moderate and **significant** in the 200 cd scenario for people stopped in the layby due to the combination of the maximum medium magnitude of change and the medium sensitivity of viewers. A moderate effect can be significant or not significant; in this case it is

assessed as significant due to the location of the lights on the prominent skyline and the relatively dark baseline nature of the view gained by these viewers. When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the effect for people stopped in the layby will be **not significant** due to the low magnitude of change in this scenario. For people travelling on the A835 the effect will be **not significant** in both scenarios due to the combination of the maximum medium-low magnitude of change and the medium-low sensitivity of viewers.

7.12.395 Cumulative effects may arise between the Proposed Development and lighting on the operational turbines at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart. For people travelling on the A835, this effect will be limited by their moving nature and the brief, very intermittent glimpses of lighting that will be available. For people stopped in the layby the effect might be increased, but during hours of darkness people are less likely to get out of their vehicles at this location, and it is unlikely that people would see lighting on both the Proposed Development and Corriemoillie and Lochluichart from within vehicles due to vegetation screening and the different angles of view. The cumulative effects of lighting will be **not significant.**

Viewpoint 25: A835, Loch Glascarnoch

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.396 This is the final viewpoint on the A835, located in a large layby with car parking beside the A835 as is passes along the southern side of Loch Glascarnoch to the north-west of the site. This representative viewpoint is included to represent the outlook gained by people who have stopped in the layby and a similar view will be gained by people travelling south-eastwards on the A835. Visibility of the Proposed Development from this stretch of the A835 is limited by landform screening and this is one of the few clear and open views available.

7.12.397 This viewpoint lies within the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330), with landform channelling the view south-eastwards towards the Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)), where the high points of Little Wyvis, Tom na Caillich, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor are focal points on the skyline, as is the deeply incised Bealach Mor. To the north and north-west there are spectacular and eye-catching rugged mountain views including the distinctive skyline of Beinn Dearg.

7.12.398 This is a vast, open and remote landscape, and while there are elements of human influence in the infrastructure on the loch, snow poles and bollards along the road and overhead lines, these are relatively minor features in relation to the landscape setting.

7.12.399 There are no operational or under construction wind farms visible from this viewpoint. There is, however, theoretical visibility of two consented wind farms, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II. Lochluichart Extension II is theoretically visible as one blade tip, and is discounted from the assessment on the basis of negligible visibility. Kirkan has a higher level of visibility and will be seen in front of the Proposed Development at a minimum distance of 6.1 km away. In the predicted baseline scenario, visibility of Kirkan will alter the effect of the Proposed Development on this view, and the assessment is therefore carried out in two parts; with the current baseline (operational wind farms) and the predicted baseline (which also considers consented sites).

7.12.400 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising from the provision of a layby which allows people to stop and enjoy the view and the extensive and scenic designated landscapes that are seen in the view – the Ben Wyvis SLA to the south-east and the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA to the north, west and north-west. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation, the absence of signage or interpretative material relating to the view, and the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint.

7.12.401 The susceptibility to change of viewers is medium. The view will be gained by road-users, and this stretch of the A835 is not identified as a tourist route or recreational route. However, people travelling on the road or stopping in the layby are likely to have a focus on the scenic views and the landscape setting.

7.12.402 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and medium susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.403 Six of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the south-east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 14.10 km away, with four hubs visible and two turbines seen as blades only, and will extend across just under 4º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform, although cranes might be discernible during the construction phase.

7.12.404 In the current baseline (e.g. in the context of operational and under construction wind farms), the magnitude of change on this view will be **medium-low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will have an apparent influence on a skyline that is unaffected by large-scale development and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the landform along each side of the loch channels the eye of the viewer to the skyline on which the Proposed Development will be seen;
- the Proposed Development will appear on the periphery of a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif; and
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the line of the view of people travelling south-eastwards on the A835.

7.12.405 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium-low level are as follows:

- the limited visibility of the turbines will reduce the impact of the Proposed Development on the view, and the screening of towers and hubs by landform will minimise the vertical impact of the turbines on the skyline;
- while the Proposed Development will be seen in the same broad aspect of the view as the Ben Wyvis massif, it is peripheral to the principal landform of the massif and will not affect the focal point skyline of Little Wyvis, Tom na Caillich, the deeply incised Bealach Mor, An Cabar and Glas Leathad Mor (to which the eye of the viewer is drawn by the form of the loch as well as by the dramatic skyline);
- in this location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the relatively unremarkable lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the screening of turbine bases, towers and hubs ensures visual separation between the viewpoint and the turbines, ensuring that they will not appear to encroach towards the viewpoint or into the landscape around Loch Glascarnoch;
- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part – less than 4º - of the wide, open view ensuring that the great majority of this outlook – including the highly scenic views up Loch Glascarnoch, to the north-west - will remain unaffected;
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies just over 14 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be relatively minor features in the view; and
- the higher landform that rises to each side of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale of the turbines.

7.12.406 In the predicted baseline scenario (with consented wind farms also considered) the Proposed Development will appear behind Kirkan Wind Farm, which is a minimum of 6.1 km away. There will be a high level of visual integration between the two sites, although some scale comparison between the more distant Proposed Development turbines and the closer Kirkan turbines is likely to be discernible. In this scenario, the magnitude of change will reduce to **low** as the Proposed Development will appear as part of Kirkan and will not introduce a new feature into this aspect of the view as it does in the current baseline scenario.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.407 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor or minor and **not significant** in the current and predicted baseline scenarios respectively due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low or low magnitude of change on the view and the medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.408 As described above, there is no theoretical visibility of operational wind farms at this viewpoint, and there is also no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There is, however, visibility of the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, of which the latter is discounted from the assessment on the basis of negligible visibility. There is therefore one relevant cumulative scenario; the addition of the Proposed Development to the predicted baseline of the consented site at Kirkan. In this scenario, Kirkan will appear in front of the Proposed Development, as described above, and the two wind farms will appear as a single development, with some minor scale comparisons likely to be discernible. The cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **low** due to the integration of the two sites, and the cumulative effect will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.409 Hours of darkness photomontages have been produced for this viewpoint, and it has been visited during hours of darkness. This viewpoint has different current baseline and predicted baseline scenarios as Kirkan Wind Farm will be seen across the view in front of the Proposed Development.

7.12.410 In the current baseline, there is very limited lighting in the view for people who have stopped in the layby and switched off their vehicle lights, with this restricted to several domestic lights and vehicle headlights and tail lights. However, for people travelling on the A835 or sitting in the layby with headlights switched on, there are a number of reflective bollards and snow poles on the road and these create a ‘busy’ illuminated environment of red lights when vehicle lights are switched on. Internal vehicle lights also create a higher level of baseline lighting. The Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution in this area. In the predicted baseline when Kirkan Wind Farm is taken into consideration, three of its nacelle lights will be seen in the view (as shown on Figure 7.40g) at a minimum distance of 6.1 km away.

7.12.411 At dusk and dawn, the distinctive skyline of the Ben Wyvis massif provides a strong landscape feature, as it does during the day. The loch is also a focal point at dawn and dusk, and can be emphasised by the light of the moon. Other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.412 The hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint will differ for people who have stopped in the layby and those who are travelling on the road. People travelling on the A835 will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including dashboards and internal lights and, externally, lights on other vehicles and the reflective road infrastructure of bollards and snow poles. People in the layby will have a considerably darker environment if they have switched off their vehicle lights as both internal and external influences will be considerably more limited, and their susceptibility will remain medium.

7.12.413 Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low** for people travelling on the road, and **medium** for people who have stopped in the layby.

7.12.414 Lighting on two turbines (T1 and T4) will be visible from a minimum of 14.1 km away at this viewpoint.

7.12.415 In relation to the current baseline (Figure 7.40h), the position of the Proposed Development lights on the skyline where there is no other apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise and, for people travelling on the road, the location of the lighting in the direction of travel. The magnitude of change is moderated by the distance of the lights from the viewpoint; the visibility of only two lights; the location of the lighting away from the loch and peripheral to the Ben Wyvis massif, so it will not affect the most distinctive part of the skyline seen at dawn and dusk; and for travellers on the road, the moving nature of viewers and the lighting that will affect them within and outwith their vehicles.

7.12.416 In the current baseline, the magnitude of change on this view in the 200 cd scenario will be **low**, with the lighting having a minor effect on the view. In the predicted baseline (Figure 7.40i), the Proposed Development lights will be seen directly behind, and considerably further away than, the Kirkan turbines and the magnitude of change will be **negligible** due to the very limited additional influence of the Proposed Development. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 86 cd and this will lead to a **low-negligible** magnitude of change. The effect of turbine lighting at this viewpoint will be minor or negligible and **not significant** in all scenarios, including current and predicted baseline, due to the factors considered in the medium or medium-low sensitivity of the viewpoint and the low, low-negligible or negligible magnitude of change.

7.12.417 The cumulative effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to the consented site at Kirkan are assessed above. There are no other relevant cumulative scenarios at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 26: A832, Strath Bran

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.418 This representative viewpoint is the first in a series of three locations on the A832 (NC500) that are intended to represent the views gained by travellers on the road as they approach the Proposed Development from the west. This is the most distant A832 viewpoint, and is located in Strath Bran, near Knockban. While the Kyle of Lochalsh railway runs alongside the road at this point, this view will not be gained by train passengers as the Proposed Development will lie in their direct line of travel rather than in the perpendicular views that are the main outlook from the train.

7.12.419 This viewpoint is located on the southern verge of the A832, and a very similar outlook will be gained by eastbound travellers on the A832 only, as the Proposed Development lies behind westbound travellers. There is no layby in this location and the outlook will be gained by moving travellers. Many views from this stretch of the A832 are filtered by roadside vegetation, and this is one of the clearer views available.

7.12.420 This stretch of the A832 runs through the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330) and is surrounded by various other upland landscape types, which combine to create a vast, open and sometimes desolate setting with a remote character. To the right are the prominent landforms of Sgùrr a' Mhuilinn (Viewpoint 29), Sgurr a Ghlas Leathaid and Sgurr a Choire-rainich, which are within the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA. To the south-east, the distinctive, craggy skyline is formed of Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), and to the east is the ridge formed by Beinn a’ Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich, behind which the site lies. Little Wyvis is to the left of this, is partly obscured by woodland, while An Cabar is just visible on the skyline.

7.12.421 There are no operational, under construction or consented wind farms visible from this viewpoint.

7.12.422 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising primarily from the classification of this stretch of the A832 as part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route, which is valued for its scenic outlooks. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation and the absence of facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as a layby, parking, or interpretative signs. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation but does overlook parts of the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and Ben Wyvis SLA, including Little Wyvis. The susceptibility to change of people travelling on the A832 is high as a number of them will be following the NC500 tourist route and are likely to have a specific focus on the landscape setting.

7.12.423 The sensitivity of this viewpoint for travellers on the A832 is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.424 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen to the east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 20.13 km away, with all hubs visible, extending across approximately 6º of the view. However, roadside vegetation will screen one turbine (T1) and

the Proposed Development will extend across around 4.5º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of part of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access track and hardstanding, but this is unlikely to be discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes and other construction activity are unlikely to be readily discernible, again due to distance.

7.12.425 The magnitude of change on this view will be **medium-low** for the following reasons

- the Proposed Development will have an influence on the view, seen on a skyline that is unaffected by large-scale development, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;
- the strath landform channels the eye of the viewer to the skyline on which the Proposed Development will be seen;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in the line of the view of people travelling eastwards on the A832; and
- the turbines will be partially backclothed by landform and partially seen on the skyline, which can be eye-catching, and the location of turbines bases in front of the skyline can lead to a perception of encroachment.

7.12.426 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium-low level are as follows:

- the visible part of the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part – approximately 4.5º - of the wide, open view ensuring that the great majority of the outlook, including the eye-catching and scenic summits that rise to the south and south-east, will remain unaffected;
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 20 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view;
- this is a brief view due to screening by roadside vegetation, and will be gained by moving viewers; and
- higher landform that rises to each side of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale of the turbines, while the low landform on which the Proposed Development will be seen ensures that it will not be prominent in the view.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.427 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effect is considered to be not significant due to the moving nature of the viewer and the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.428 As described above, there is no theoretical visibility of operational, under construction or consented wind farms at this viewpoint, and there is also no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant.**

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.429 This viewpoint lies outwith the 20 km hours of darkness study area and does not have potential to be significantly affected by turbine lighting. The hours of darkness effect will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 27: A832, Lochluichart

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.430 This is the second viewpoint on the A832 to the west of the site and is located in a layby beside the A832 (NC500) in the hamlet of Lochluichart. This representative viewpoint is included to represent the outlook gained by residents of Lochluichart (some houses are likely to gain similar views) and people travelling eastwards on the A832, as well as those who have stopped in the layby. Similar views will be gained from the railway line.

7.12.431 This long, open view is channelled along Loch Luichart, enclosed by uplands, with the loch providing the focal point of the outlook. The backdrop to the view across the loch is formed by the Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) and Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) LCTs. These LCTs provide an upland setting, with Ben Wyvis, An Cabar, Little Wyvis, Beinn a' Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich (with its masts) all visible. Ben Wyvis and An Cabar are partly screened by woodland and do not appear as eye-catching or distinctive forms, while Little Wyvis is the most distinctive peak and the landform of Beinn a' Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich forms a relatively uniform ridge. To the right of this, the loch channels views to the south-east, enclosed by the Loch Luichart unit of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331).

7.12.432 The sections of the A832 that lie to the east and west of this layby, and the viewpoint, are screened and filtered by vegetation, and this is an unusually clear and open view from this stretch of the road.

7.12.433 One blade in the operational Corriemoillie Wind Farm is theoretically visible but is screened by vegetation in the foreground of the view. The consented site at Kirkan has negligible theoretical visibility.

7.12.434 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising from the classification of this stretch of the A832 as part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route, which is valued for its scenic outlooks, and the provision of a layby from which the view might be enjoyed. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation and the absence of a scenic designation at the viewpoint, although it does overlook part of the Ben Wyvis SLA.

7.12.435 The susceptibility to change of viewers varies dependent on the receptor. Residents of Lochluichart who gain a similar view from their houses have a high susceptibility, as do people travelling on the A832 (including those who have stopped in the layby to look at the view) due to the identification of this stretch of the road as part of the NC500 tourist route. People travelling on the railway have a medium susceptibility as there is no formal recognition attached to this route.

7.12.436 For residents of houses that gain a similar view, the sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** as the high susceptibility of residential viewers outweighs the medium value of the view. For people travelling on the A832 or stopping in the layby, the sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium**, due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of the viewers. For people travelling on the railway, the sensitivity is **medium** due to a combination of the medium value and the medium susceptibility of these viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.437 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 9.06 km away, with eight hubs visible and the ninth turbine seen as a blade only. These will extend across around 12º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of part of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access track and hardstanding, but much of this will be screened by vegetation. Where it can be seen, the influence on the view will be limited due to the distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development. Cranes and other construction activity might be seen although influence will again be limited by distance.

7.12.438 The magnitude of change on this view will vary dependent on the receptor group; for people travelling on the A832 the magnitude of change will be **medium-low**, while for residents of Lochluichart, people who have stopped in the layby to enjoy the view, and people travelling on the train, the magnitude of change will be **medium**.

7.12.439 The medium magnitude of change for residents of Lochluichart, people who have stopped in the layby to enjoy the view, and people travelling on the train arises for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be readily apparent at moderate proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen on the lower slopes to the right of Little Wyvis, which is prominent in the view, and will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland and forestry setting in which it is seen;
- the varied backdrop to the turbines – some seen against landform and others on the skyline - can be eye-catching;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in part of the open aspect of the view, to which the eye of the viewer is drawn;
- some turbine bases are in front of the skyline, and this can lead to a perception of encroachment towards the viewpoint; and
- the train travels slowly through Lochluichart and might stop at the station (it is a request stop), and has an open outlook towards the Proposed Development, which increases the opportunity to see the Proposed Development.

7.12.440 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a medium level are as follows:

- the Proposed Development will affect a limited part - approximately 12º - of the wide, open view ensuring that the great majority of this outlook will remain unaffected, including the channelled view along Loch Luichart;
- the higher landform of Little Wyvis rising to the left of the Proposed Development reduces the perceived scale and vertical impact of the turbines;
- the landform on which the Proposed Development will be seen is located behind the prominent ridge that encloses the northern side of Loch Luichart, and this creates a beneficial separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, ensuring that the turbines are associated with the more distant uplands despite the visibility of turbine bases;
- this prominent, enclosing ridge also ensures a separation between the loch and the Proposed Development, ensuring that the loch remains unaffected as a focal point in the view;
- the skyline on which the turbines will be seen, and with which they are associated, is a large-scale landform with simple, uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons; and
- for people travelling on the train, this is a moving view, albeit slow-moving, and is of brief duration as views from nearby stretches are filtered and screened by vegetation.

7.12.441 The reduction to a medium-low magnitude of change for people travelling on the A832 (and not stopping in the layby to enjoy the view) is due to the following factors:

- the screening and filtering of many views from this stretch of the A832 and the moving nature of these views; and
- the Proposed Development, which lies to the east, will be peripheral to the main direction of travel (which is northwards) rather than in the direct line of view.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.442 For residents of Lochluichart, the effect of the Proposed Development will be major-moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

7.12.443 For travellers on the A832 who have stopped in the layby to enjoy the view and people travelling on the train, the effect of the Proposed Development will be moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium magnitude of change on the view and the medium (people travelling on the train) or high-medium (people who have stopped in the layby) sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in both of these cases, the moderate effect is considered to be significant due to the factors that contribute to the medium magnitude of change.

7.12.444 For people travelling on the A832 and not stopping in the layby the effect will be moderate and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the medium-low magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint. In this case, the moderate effect is considered to be not significant due to the factors that lead to the reduced – medium-low - magnitude of change for this receptor group; that is, the moving nature of the viewers, the very short duration of the view, and the location of the Proposed Development peripheral to the direction of travel.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.445 As described above, there is negligible actual visibility of operational and consented wind farms at this viewpoint due to a combination of very limited/negligible theoretical visibility and screening by vegetation. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. There are therefore no relevant cumulative wind farm sites and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.446 This viewpoint has been visited during hours of darkness but hours of darkness visualisations have not been prepared and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. Overall conclusions regarding effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.447 There is limited lighting at this viewpoint, arising primarily from houses and vehicle lights, and the Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution in this area. The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is generally dark, although some domestic lighting is visible. There is no visibility of operational or consented lit wind farms. At dusk and dawn, the distinctive skyline of the Ben Wyvis massif provides a strong landscape feature, as it does during the day. The loch is also a focal point at dawn and dusk and can be emphasised by the light of the moon. Other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.448 For residential viewers, sensitivity remains **high**, as assessed for daylight hours, because of the lack of street lighting around the viewpoint, and the limited baseline lighting that is apparent in the view. The hours of darkness susceptibility of people travelling on the A832 and the railway will reduce to a low level due to lighting associated with vehicles/trains, including internal lights and headlights. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity for people travelling on the A832 and the railway is therefore **medium-low**. People who have stopped in the layby will have a medium susceptibility which, combined with the medium value of the view, will lead to a **medium** sensitivity.

7.12.449 Lights on four turbines (T1, T4, T7 and T9) will be visible from a minimum of 9.24 km away and will be seen on the skyline. The position of the lights above the skyline - which is one of the features of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other clearly apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise. The magnitude of change is moderated by the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 11º); the distance of the lights from the viewpoint; the location of the lights where they will not affect the notable skyline around Loch Luichart, or views of the loch itself; and the location of the lights close above the skyline rather than in a very elevated position. For people travelling on the road, their moving nature and exposure to baseline vehicle lighting also reduces the magnitude of change.

7.12.450 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that for all viewers, the effect in the 200 cd scenario will be **not significant**. When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, information provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1) indicates that the 200 cd

lights will be perceived as 30 cd and the effect will remain **not significant**. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of sufficient visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 28: A832 near Torriegorrie

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.451 This is the third and final viewpoint on the A832 (NC500) to the west of the site and is the closest to the Proposed Development, approximately 1.8 km to the west of its junction with the A835. It is a representative viewpoint, included to illustrate the outlook gained by people travelling eastbound on the A832; westbound travellers will not see the Proposed Development as it lies behind them. There is no layby in this location and the outlook will be gained only by moving travellers. Many views from this stretch of the A832 are filtered by roadside vegetation, and this is one of the clearer views available.

7.12.452 This stretch of the A832 runs through the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340). As described at Viewpoint 2 in Gorstan, this part of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) does not contain a notable watercourse, so the landform is less tightly enclosed and orientated to the south-east, giving an open aspect towards the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331). This LCT provides an upland backdrop to the Strath, with Beinn a' Ghuilbhein and Meall Ruighe an Fhirich (with its masts) forming a relatively uniform ridge with forested lower slopes. Behind this rises the larger landform of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), including the distinctive form of Little Wyvis. Further away, and less conspicuous, is Ben Wyvis, which is filtered by vegetation in this view (located to show the most open visibility of the Proposed Development) but clearly seen from nearby locations.

7.12.453 Several turbines in the operational Lochluichart Wind Farm are theoretically visible at 5.1 km away, but these are almost completely screened by vegetation, and lie in the opposite direction of travel to the Proposed Development. The consented site at Kirkan has negligible theoretical visibility, perpendicular to the road.

7.12.454 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a medium value, arising primarily from the classification of this stretch of the A832 as part of the nationally recognised NC500 tourist route, which is valued for its scenic outlooks. The value of the view is moderated by its lack of formal recognition as a viewpoint in mapping or other documentation and the absence of facilities for the enjoyment of the view, such as a layby, parking, or interpretative signs. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation but does overlook parts of the Ben Wyvis SLA, including Little Wyvis and Ben Wyvis. The susceptibility to change of viewers is high as a number of people travelling on the A832 will be following the NC500 tourist route and are likely to have a specific focus on the landscape setting.

7.12.455 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high-medium** due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.456 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 4.72 km away, with seven hubs visible and two turbines seen as blade tips only. These will extend across around 21º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of a small part of a borrow pit search area and several stretches of access track, much of which is upgraded from existing track. Cranes and other activity will be visible during the contraction phase.

7.12.457 The magnitude of change on this view will be **high-medium** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be very readily apparent at relatively close proximity in an aspect of the view that is unaffected by large-scale development;
- the Proposed Development will be seen in relation to the elevated skyline – including the prominent landform of Little Wyvis - that encloses the eastern side of the strath through which the road passes, and will introduce vertical elements, movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen;

- the Proposed Development will be seen in the line of view of eastbound travellers on the A832;
- the masts on Meall Ruighe an Fhirich are visible in this view, and the introduction of turbine blades on the same skyline can lead to juxtaposition of static and moving elements;
- the varied backdrop to the turbines – some seen against landform and others on the skyline - can be eye-catching; and
- T5 and T9 will be seen as blades only and will have an appearance of 'blade-tipping' on the skyline, which can be eye-catching.

7.12.458 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a high-medium level are as follows:

- the screening of parts of towers by landform will reduce the vertical impact of the turbines on the skyline;
- the location of the turbine bases behind the skyline or by landform in front of the skyline ensures visual separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, avoiding a sense of encroachment of the turbines down into the strath, towards the A832;
- the ridge on which the turbines will be seen appears as a simple, large-scale landform with uniform landscape patterns that can accommodate the turbines without uncomfortable scale comparisons and reduces the perceived scale of the turbines;
- the appearance of the Proposed Development on the ridge landform also beneficially aids cohesion between the turbines, ensuring that the Proposed Development has a simple image;
- the turbines will not be seen in direct relation to the focal point of Little Wyvis, but on the distinctly separate ridgeline below it, ensuring that Little Wyvis remains a prominent feature in the view, with the turbines subservient to it;
- the enclosure of the ridge by the higher landform of Little Wyvis will also reduce the perceived scale of the turbines and reduce their vertical impact; and
- while the juxtaposition of the turbine blades and the masts can be eye-catching, the masts do provide a precedent for vertical development on the skyline.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.459 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be major-moderate and **significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the high-medium magnitude of change on the view and the high-medium sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.460 As described above, there is very limited actual visibility of operational and consented wind farms at this viewpoint due to a combination of very limited/negligible theoretical visibility and screening by vegetation. This influence is further reduced by the location of the cumulative wind farms behind or perpendicular to the direction of travel in which the Proposed Development will be seen. There is no theoretical visibility of any application stage sites. The cumulative magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development will be **negligible** and the cumulative effect will be **not significant**.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.461 A full assessment of hours of darkness effects has not been carried out for this viewpoint as while it has been visited at night-time, a photomontage has not been produced. However, overall conclusions regarding hours of darkness effects are drawn from the assessment of the viewpoints for which photomontages have been produced and full assessments carried out.

7.12.462 The baseline view towards the Proposed Development is generally dark, with no street lighting, characterised only by domestic lighting at houses and vehicle lights on the road. The

Baseline Light Pollution Map (Figure 7.9a) shows no light pollution at this location. At dusk and dawn, the skyline of the Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) and Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) LCTs provides a strong landscape feature to the east of the viewpoint, as it does during the day while other details of the landscape are less apparent due to darkness.

7.12.463 The hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers. People travelling on the A832 will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including dashboards and internal lights and externally, lights on other vehicles. Combined with the medium value of the view (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of this viewpoint is **medium-low**.

7.12.464 Lighting on three turbines (T1, T4 and T7) will be visible from a minimum of 4.93 km away at this viewpoint. The position of the lights on the elevated skyline - which is a feature of the landscape at dawn and dusk - where there is no other apparent lighting will increase the effect on the view, as will the flashing appearance that is likely to arise and the appearance of the lights in the eastbound direction of travel of the road. The magnitude of change is moderated by the visibility of three lights; the limited part of the view that will be affected by lighting (approximately 14º); the distance of the lights from the viewpoint; the moving nature of the viewer; and the location of the lights close above the skyline rather than in a very elevated position.

7.12.465 Drawing on the assessment of effects on the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25), it can be concluded that the effect of the 200 cd lights will be **significant.** When the proposed use of vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, calculations provided in the WPAC report (Table 8 of Technical Appendix 15.1)) indicate that the 200 cd lights will be perceived as 13 cd. This reduction in the intensity of light will lead to a **not significant** effect. A cumulative night-time assessment is not required due to lack of visibility of relevant wind farm sites at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 29: Sgùrr a' Mhuilinn

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.466 This specific viewpoint is located at the summit of Sgùrr a' Mhuilinn (879 m AOD), one of a group of hills on the northern side of Strathconon. These hills are clearly seen from the A832 in Strath Bran (see Viewpoint 26) and are covered by the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), the same LCT that covers the Ben Wyvis massif. While smaller in extent and lower in elevation than Ben Wyvis, this area has a similar massive form and presence in the landscape, described in the NatureScot landscape character classification (2019) as "…*high, core mountain groups which sit within a broad belt of lower, smooth rounded hills, moorland slopes and straths*".

7.12.467 This viewpoint has a panoramic outlook across a wide variety of landscapes. The site lies to the north-east of this viewpoint, and is seen on the lower western slopes of the Ben Wyvis massif. The high points of Glas Leathad Mor, Tom a' Choinnich and An Cabar are all visible as is Little Wyvis (backdropped by landform), although the whole of the Ben Wyvis massif appears less prominent in this view than is seen elsewhere due to the elevated location of the viewpoint. In the middle ground of the view is the distinctive peak of Sgurrachd Ire, which lies within the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331) to the south-west of Loch Luichart (part of which can also be seen in the view). The high ground that runs south-eastwards from this peak appears as a notable ridgeline across the centre of the view.

7.12.468 The Ben Wyvis skyline is a focal point in the otherwise generally low-lying and settled area that lies to its south, around the Cromarty Firth. To the north and west is an eye-catching, dramatic outlook of layers of rugged mountains that extend around the view. East of the viewpoint, the settled, wooded landscape of Strathconon (Inland Strath LCT (LCT 339)) also forms a contrasting focal point.

7.12.469 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including the group at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extensions and Kirkan, seen from a minimum of 11.1 km away; and Fairburn, a minimum of 14.5 km away. Other wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.470 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value. While it is not marked on mapping as a scenic viewpoint and there is no specific path route, it is a destination for hillwalkers and lies within and overlook the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA as well as overlooking other scenic designations, including the Ben Wyvis SLA. It also has value in the scenic and panoramic view that is available from the summit. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers engaging in outdoor recreation, who will have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.471 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its high-medium value results in a **high** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.472 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen east-north-east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 17.08 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across less than 7º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of borrow pit search areas, a temporary construction compound, the substation and temporary substation compound, access tracks and hardstanding, but this is unlikely to be clearly discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes and other construction activity are also unlikely to be readily discernible due to distance.

7.12.473 The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be slightly apparent in an aspect of the outlook that is unaffected by large-scale development, where it will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen; and
- the Proposed Development will appear in a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.474 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part – less than 7º - of the panoramic view, ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected, including the most scenic and dramatic aspects that lie to the west and north-west;
- the focal point of Strathconon will also remain unaffected;
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 17 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view;
- the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension wind farms provide a precedent for wind energy development in the view, ensuring that the Proposed Development will not introduce an entirely new influence;
- in its peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the backclothing of the turbines by landform will prevent the vertical impact that can arise when they are seen on the skyline;
- the massive landform that is seen in the same aspect of the view as the Proposed Development, including the Ben Wyvis massif, will reduce the perceived scale of the turbines as does the elevation of the viewpoint above the Proposed Development, which also ensures that the turbines appear subservient in the view; and
- the distinctive peak of Sgurrachd Ire and the ridge that runs south-eastwards from it create a separation between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, so that it is not perceived as encroaching towards the viewpoint.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.475 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.476 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility at this viewpoint of operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension (to the north-east of the viewpoint) and Fairburn (east-south-east of the viewpoint). In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, both to the north-east of the viewpoint. There is some very limited theoretical visibility of the application stage wind farm at Abhainn Dubh, seen behind the Proposed Development at a minimum of 28.8 km away.

7.12.477 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension);
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation; and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh).

7.12.478 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites at Corriemoillie, Fairburn, and Lochluichart and Extension will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to the view, between the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster and Fairburn. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the small number of clearly visible wind farms (the Proposed Development, Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, which appear as a single site); the location of the Proposed Development between Fairburn and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, which ensures that wind farm influence is not extended to an otherwise unaffected part of the view; the location of all the operational wind farms within less than 90º of the panoramic view, which ensures that the great majority of the view will remain unaffected by wind farm influence, including the dramatic outlook to the west and north-west; the similarity in layout of the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster and the Proposed Development; and the location of the Proposed Development and other wind farms almost completely below the skyline, so that the long, open views to the horizon will remain unaffected. The not significant effect of the Proposed Development itself is also relevant.

7.12.479 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **medium-low**. This is because Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation have a strong association with operational wind farms, which ensures that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to this scenario will not notably differ from that in the current baseline scenario. As a result, the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will remain applicable.

7.12.480 When application stage sites are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium-low.** Abhainn Dubh has limited and distant theoretical visibility, and would be seen behind the Proposed Development, appearing as part of the same site. This in turn means that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes these sites will not notably increase from the current or predicted baseline scenarios.

7.12.481 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the location of the Proposed Development

in an aspect of the view that is affected by wind energy development, between two operational wind farms; the grouping of development in one aspect of the view, so that the great majority of the outlook remains unaffected by wind energy development; the not significant effect of the Proposed Development itself; and the limited and distant theoretical visibility of the application stage site.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.482 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that as the Proposed Development lies over 17 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 30: Beinn a' Bha'ach Ard

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.483 This specific viewpoint is located near the high point of Beinn a' Bha'ach Ard (862 m AOD), from where a panoramic view is gained. This Corbett is in the area of Rugged Massif – Inverness LCT (LCT 220) that lies between Glen Orrin in the north and the eastern end of Glen Strathfarrar in the south.

7.12.484 The site lies north-north-east of this viewpoint and is seen on the lower western slopes of the Ben Wyvis massif. Due to the angle of the view, the high points of Ben Wyvis are aligned in a row and are less recognisable than is often the case, although Glas Leathad Mhor and Little Wyvis are distinguishable on the skyline. The foreground landform of Sgurr a' Pholllain foreshortens the view towards the site and, with its massive, rounded form, reduces the prominence of Ben Wyvis in the outlook.

7.12.485 To the north-west is an eye-catching, dramatic outlook of layers of rugged mountains that extend around the view. East of the viewpoint, the settled, wooded landscape of the River Beauly valley (Farmed Strath – Inverness LCT (LCT 227)) and, beyond that, the Beauly Firth also form a contrasting focal point.

7.12.486 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including Auchmore 1 and 2 (12.7 km away); Corrimony (18.5 km away); Bhlaraidh and Extension (21.4 km away); the group at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extensions and Kirkan, a minimum of 22.2 km away; and Strathrory Redesign (43.8 km away). Other wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.487 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value. While it is not marked on mapping as a scenic viewpoint and there is no specific path route, it lies within and overlooks the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and WLA 24 Central Highlands, as well as overlooking other scenic designations, including the Ben Wyvis SLA. It also has value in the scenic and panoramic view that is available from the summit. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers engaging in outdoor recreation, who will have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.488 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its high-medium value results in a **high** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.489 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen north-north-east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 19.54 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across less than 6º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of borrow pit search areas, the substation and temporary substation compound, access tracks and hardstanding, but this is unlikely to be clearly discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes and other construction activity are also unlikely to be readily discernible due to distance. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be slightly apparent in an aspect of the outlook that is unaffected by large-scale development, where it will introduce

movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen; and

- the Proposed Development will appear in a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif (albeit that the prominence of the massif is reduced in this view by the foreground landform of Sgurr a' Phollain).

7.12.490 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part – less than 6º - of the panoramic view, ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected, including the most scenic and dramatic aspects that lie to the west and north-west;
- the focal point of the River Beauly valley and the Beauly Firth will also remain unaffected;
- the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension wind farms provide a precedent for wind energy development in the same aspect of the view, ensuring that the Proposed Development will not introduce an entirely new influence;
- the massive landform of Sgurr a' Phollain that is seen in the foreground of the view towards the Proposed Development will reduce the perceived scale of the turbines as does the elevation of the viewpoint above the Proposed Development, which also ensures that the turbines appear subservient in the view;
- in its peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the backclothing of the turbines by landform will prevent the vertical impact that can arise when they are seen on the skyline; and
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 19 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.491 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.492 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility at this viewpoint of grouped operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension (to the north of the viewpoint), Corrimony and Bhlaraidh and Extension (south of the viewpoint), and Auchmore (north-east of the viewpoint). In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, both to the north of the viewpoint, and Strathrory Redesign, to the north-east. There is also distant theoretical visibility of the application stage wind farms at Abhainn Dubh (a minimum of 28.1 km away to the north-east), Chrathaich (a minimum of 20 km away to the south) and Loch Liath (18.6 km away, also to the south). Auchmore 1 and 2 is discounted from the assessment due to its very limited influence on the view.

7.12.493 There are therefore three relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Corrimony, and Bhlaraidh and Extension);

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II and Strathrory Redesign); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites plus application stage sites (the operational and consented sites listed above plus Abhainn Dubh, Chrathaich and Loch Liath).

7.12.494 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Corrimony, and Bhlaraidh and Extension will have a **medium-low** cumulative magnitude of change. This will arise as a result of the introduction of a further wind energy development to the view, to the east of the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster. As a result, wind energy development will be seen to the north (Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension), south (Corrimony, and Bhlaraidh and Extension), and north-north-east (the Proposed Development) of the viewpoint.

7.12.495 The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a medium-low level by the grouping together of the operational wind farms, which ensures that there are only two clusters of operational development; the containment of Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and the Proposed Development within less than 35º of the panoramic view, which ensures that the Proposed Development will not extend influence to an otherwise unaffected part of the view; the relatively limited and distant visibility of the cumulative sites, particularly Corrimony and Bhlaraidh and Extension, which limits wind farm influence in this southern aspect of the view; the extensive part of the view that will remain unaffected by wind farm influence, including the full 180º western, north-western and south-western aspect, which is where the most dramatic and eye-catching part of the view is seen; the similarity in layout and appearance of the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster and the Proposed Development; and the location of the Proposed Development and the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster below the skyline, so that long, open views to the horizon will remain unaffected. The low magnitude of change of the Proposed Development itself is also relevant.

7.12.496 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II and Strathrory Redesign are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **medium-low**. This is because Strathrory Redesign will have very limited influence, seen from over 40 km away, and Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation have a strong association with operational wind farms, ensuring that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to this scenario will not notably differ from that in the current baseline scenario. Importantly, separation is maintained between Kirkan and the Proposed Development, ensuring that coalescence will not arise. As a result, the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will remain applicable.

7.12.497 When application stage sites are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development will remain **medium-low**. Abhainn Dubh has limited and distant theoretical visibility and would be seen in the same north to north-east aspect of the view as the Proposed Development and Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster. Chrathaich and Loch Liath would be seen at some distance and in association with Corrimony and Bhlaraidh and Extension. This in turn means that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario that includes these sites will not notably increase from the current or predicted baseline scenarios.

7.12.498 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline, predicted baseline and application stage sites, will be moderate and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint. A moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the location of the Proposed Development in an aspect of the view that is affected by wind energy development; the generally distant visibility of all wind farms, including the Proposed Development; and the grouping of development so that the great majority of the outlook remains unaffected by wind energy development.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.499 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that as the Proposed Development lies just under 20 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 31: An Coileachan

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.500 This specific viewpoint is located at the summit of An Coileachan (923 m AOD). This Munro is the most easterly Munro summit in the Fannichs and rises to the north of Loch Fannich, within an area of Rugged Mountain Massif - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 328).

7.12.501 The site lies east-south-east of this viewpoint, and is seen on the periphery of the lower western slopes of the Ben Wyvis massif. While this is a less familiar angle of view towards Ben Wyvis, the high points of Glas Leathad Mor, Tom a' Choinnich, An Cabar and Little Wyvis are all visible and the whale-back ridgeline is apparent. In the middle ground of the view are the operation Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms, straddling the Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) and Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) LCTs and to the right of these is the waterbody of Loch Luichart. To the west and north-west is an eye-catching, dramatic outlook of layers of rugged mountains.

7.12.502 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including the group at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extensions and Kirkan, seen from a minimum of 7.9 km away; Fairburn, a minimum of 22.3 km away; a very small part of Novar, 29.7 km away; and a very small part of Meall Buidhe, 34.5 km away. Other wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.503 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value. While it is not marked on mapping as a scenic viewpoint and there is no specific marked path route, it lies within and overlooks the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA and WLA 28 Fisherfield - Letterewe – Fannichs, as well as overlooking a number of other scenic designations, including the Ben Wyvis SLA. It also has value in the scenic and panoramic view that is available from the summit. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers engaging in outdoor recreation, who will have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.504 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its high-medium value results in a **high** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.505 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen east-south-east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 18.52 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across less than 6º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of borrow pit search areas, a temporary construction compound, the substation and temporary substation compound, access tracks and hardstanding, but this is unlikely to be clearly discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes and other construction activity are also unlikely to be readily discernible due to distance. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be slightly apparent in an aspect of the outlook that is characterised by the turbines at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart wind farms, where there is potential for cumulative effects to arise; and
- the Proposed Development will appear in a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.506 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part – less than 6º - of the panoramic view, ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected, including the most scenic and dramatic aspects that lie to the west and north-west;
- the focal point of Lochluichart will also remain unaffected;
- the massive landscape that is seen in the view towards the Proposed Development will reduce the perceived scale of the turbines as does the elevation of the viewpoint above the Proposed Development, which ensures that the turbines appear subservient in the view;
- the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension wind farms provide a precedent for wind energy development in the same aspect of the view, ensuring that the Proposed Development will not introduce an entirely new influence;
- in its peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the backclothing of the turbines by landform will prevent the vertical impact that can arise when they are seen on the skyline; and
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 18 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.507 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.508 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility at this viewpoint of grouped operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension (east of the viewpoint), Fairburn (north-east of the viewpoint) and Novar (east-north-east of the viewpoint). In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, both to the east of the viewpoint, and Meall Buidhe, to the north-east. There is no theoretical visibility of application stage wind farms. Meall Buidhe and Novar are discounted from the assessment due to their very limited and distant visibility.

7.12.509 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension and Fairburn); and
- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II).

7.12.510 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, and Fairburn will have a **low** cumulative magnitude of change. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a low level by the location of the Proposed Development behind, and entirely within the horizontal visual envelope of, Lochluichart Wind Farm, which is closer to the viewpoint than the Proposed Development. This means that the Proposed Development will appear to be integrated with the Lochluichart and Corriemoillie cluster. The increased distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint in relation to Lochluichart results in some vertical separation between the two wind farms but this is in keeping with the baseline appearance of Lochluichart and Corriemoillie wind farms, which are seen as groups and clusters of turbines rather than a single cohesive whole. It is also relevant that the Proposed Development will itself have a low magnitude of change, and will not extend wind farm development around the view due to its containment within the horizontal visual envelope of Lochluichart Wind Farm.

7.12.511 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **low**. Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II have a strong association with the operational wind farms in the same cluster, ensuring that the effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to this scenario will not notably differ from that in the current baseline scenario. Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II also have a similar grouped appearance as the operational wind farms, so that the vertical separation of the Proposed Development will remain in keeping with the cumulative sites.

7.12.512 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current baseline and predicted baseline, will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.513 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that, as the Proposed Development lies over 18 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 32: Am Faochagach

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.514 This specific viewpoint is located close to the summit of Am Faochagach (954 m AOD). A Munro, Am Faochagach is just under 5 km to the south-east of Beinn Dearg and is the highest point in the massif that lies to the north of Loch Glascarnoch and east of Strath Vaich. The viewpoint has been located slightly to the south-east of the summit in order to allow a clear and open view in the direction of the Proposed Development without screening by landform in the foreground.

7.12.515 The site lies east-south-east of this viewpoint, and is seen on the periphery of the lower western slopes of the Ben Wyvis massif. The familiar whale-backed form of the Ben Wyvis massif is prominent in the south-eastern aspect of the view, with Glas Leathad Mor, Tom a' Choinnich, An Cabar and Little Wyvis all visible on the skyline. In the middle ground of the view are the operational Corriemoillie and Lochluichart Wind Farms, along with the consented Lochluichart Extension II and Kirkan, straddling the Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329) and Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) LCTs.

7.12.516 The high point of Am Faochagach obscures the longer view to the north-west of the viewpoint. However, the long, open outlook to the west remains clear, with its eye-catching, dramatic view of rugged mountains.

7.12.517 Several operational and consented sites are theoretically visible from this viewpoint, including the group at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extensions and Kirkan, a minimum of 10.5 km away; Fairburn, a minimum of 28.2 km away; Novar and Extension, a minimum of 23.7 km away; and Coire na Cloiche, a minimum of 27.9 km away. Other wind farms are shown on the wirelines but are not included in the assessment as they are seen from outwith their own study areas.

7.12.518 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high-medium value. While it is not marked on mapping as a scenic viewpoint and there is no specific marked path route, it lies within and overlooks the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA and WLA 29 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis, as well as overlooking a number of other scenic designations, including the Ben Wyvis SLA. It also has value in the scenic and panoramic view that is available from the summit. The susceptibility to change at this viewpoint is high as people who gain the view will be walkers engaging in outdoor recreation, who will have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape.

7.12.519 The combination of the high susceptibility to change of the view and its high-medium value results in a **high** sensitivity for this viewpoint.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.520 All of the turbines in the Proposed Development will be seen to the south-east of this viewpoint from a minimum of 19.78 km away, with all hubs visible, and will extend across less than 4º of the view. There is theoretical visibility of infrastructure, including borrow pit search areas, a temporary construction compound, and access tracks and hardstanding, but this is unlikely to be clearly discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. Cranes and other construction activity are also unlikely to be readily discernible due to distance. The magnitude of change on this view will be **low** for the following reasons:

- the Proposed Development will be slightly apparent in an aspect of the outlook that is unaffected by large-scale development, where it will introduce movement and contrasting colour and texture into the upland moorland setting in which it is seen; and
- the Proposed Development will appear in a sensitive aspect of the view – in the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which forms the lower slopes that abut the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329) of the Ben Wyvis massif.

7.12.521 The factors that restrict the magnitude of change to a low level are as follows:

- the Proposed Development will affect a very limited part – less than 4º - of the panoramic view, ensuring that the great majority of the outlook will remain unaffected, including the most scenic and dramatic aspects that lie to the west and north-west;
- the massive landscape that is seen in the view towards the Proposed Development will reduce the perceived scale of the turbines as does the elevation of the viewpoint above the Proposed Development, which ensures that the turbines appear subservient in the view;
- in its peripheral location, the Proposed Development is clearly associated with the lower slopes of the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), which covers the site, rather than the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), which covers the Ben Wyvis massif;
- the backclothing of the turbines by landform will prevent the vertical impact that can arise when they are seen on the skyline; and
- the closest turbine in the Proposed Development lies over 19 km away from the viewpoint, at which distance the turbines will be minor features in the view.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.522 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the low magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.523 As described above, in the current baseline scenario there is theoretical visibility at this viewpoint of operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension (south-south-east of the viewpoint); Fairburn, seen partly behind Corriemoillie; Novar and Extension (east-south-east of the viewpoint); and Coire na Cloiche (east of the viewpoint). In the predicted baseline scenario are the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, seen in conjunction with the Corriemoillie/Lochluichart cluster. There is also distant theoretical visibility of the application stage wind farms at Acheilidh and Garvary, 39.5 km and 36.7 km away respectively to the north-east. Acheilidh and Garvary are discounted from the assessment due to their very limited influence on the view.

7.12.524 There are therefore two relevant cumulative scenarios:

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current baseline of operational sites (Coire na Cloiche, Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension, Fairburn, and Novar and Extension); and

- the addition of the Proposed Development to the current and predicted baseline of operational and consented sites (the operational sites listed above plus Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II).

7.12.525 In the current baseline scenario, the addition of the Proposed Development to operational sites will have a low cumulative magnitude of change. The cumulative magnitude of change is moderated to a **low** level by its grouping together with the operational wind farms at Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Extension and Fairburn in one aspect of the view that covers approximately 30º. These wind farms, including the Proposed Development, have a similar appearance and are all contained below the skyline. It is also relevant that the Proposed Development will itself have a low magnitude of change, while the operational sites at Coire na Cloiche and Novar, which lie outwith this closer cluster, have a very limited influence on the view. Overall, wind energy influence, including the Proposed Development, is limited to a very small proportion of the panoramic view, with the great majority of the outlook remaining unaffected.

7.12.526 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are considered in addition to the operational sites, the cumulative magnitude of change will remain **low**. This is because Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II Variation have a strong association with operational wind farms and will in fact increase the integration between the Proposed Development and operational wind farms. As a result, the considerations described above in relation to the magnitude of change for the current baseline scenario will remain applicable.

7.12.527 The cumulative effect at this viewpoint in all scenarios, including the current and predicted baselines, will be moderate-minor and **not significant** due to the factors that lead to the low cumulative magnitude of change despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.528 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that as the Proposed Development lies just under 20 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant**.

Viewpoint 33: Cnoc Fyrish monument

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.529 This specific viewpoint is located at the Fyrish Monument, on the northern side of the Cromarty Firth. The Fyrish Monument was built in 1782 on the orders of Sir Hector Munro in order to provide employment for local people, and is modelled on the Gate of Negapatam, a port in Madras, India.

7.12.530 This elevated viewpoint, accessed by a core path, gains a spectacular panoramic view that ranges from low-lying coastal farmlands to the mountainous north-west. The Ben Wyvis massif (Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329)) lies to the west of the viewpoint, where its skyline is less distinctive than in some views due to the angle of the view and screening by the foreground landform of Cnoc Ceislein.

7.12.531 There is visibility of operational and consented wind farms from this viewpoint as shown on Figures 7.48b, c, d and e.

7.12.532 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the view and the susceptibility of the viewer. This view has a high value; it is marked on OS maps as a viewpoint, is accessed by a core path (with parking provided), and the monument is of historic interest. The viewpoint does not lie within a scenic designation, but does overlook several scenic designations, including the Ben Wyvis SLA. The susceptibility to change is high as people who gain the view will have walked there to visit the viewpoint and the monument, and will have a specific focus on the surrounding landscape and the long, open views.

7.12.533 The sensitivity of this viewpoint is **high** due to a combination of the high value of the view and the high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.534 Six of the turbines in the Proposed Development will theoretically be seen west-south-west of this viewpoint from a minimum of 18.71 km away, with five hubs visible and one turbine seen as a blade only, and will extend across less than 3º of the view. Infrastructure will be screened by landform and while cranes might be theoretically visible during the construction phase, they are unlikely to be readily discernible due to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint. The magnitude of change on this view will be **negligible** due to a combination of the limited visibility of the turbines, the very small proportion of the panoramic view that will be affected, the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, and the low-lying and peripheral location of the Proposed Development in relation to the view across the Ben Wyvis massif.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.535 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be minor and **not significant** due to a combination of the factors that lead to the negligible magnitude of change on the view despite the high sensitivity of the viewpoint.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.536 The cumulative magnitude of change arising from the addition of the Proposed Development at this viewpoint will be **negligible** due to the negligible visibility of the Proposed Development, and the cumulative effect will be **not significant.**

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.537 This viewpoint has not been visited during hours of darkness and a full assessment of lighting effects has not been carried out. The assessment of the viewpoints for which hours of darkness photomontages have been produced (Viewpoints 1, 2, 22, 24 and 25) and full assessments carried out indicates that as the Proposed Development lies just under 19 km away, the hours of darkness effect (including cumulative effect) will be **not significant**.

Principal Visual Receptor: Settlement of Contin

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.538 The settlement of Contin lies on the A835 and the majority of the houses in the village are in a linear pattern along this road, with some expansion eastwards up the wooded hillside and westwards down to the Black Water. This assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Development on residents in their homes and garden grounds as well as people using streets and public spaces throughout the village.

7.12.539 Contin lies on the eastern side of the Black Water valley at the confluence of a number of landscape character types. The majority of the settlement is within the Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 345), although the characteristics of this landscape are not apparent in the village due to the overlaid urban development. To the east of Contin, this LCT gives way to Forest Edge Farming LCT (LCT 341), which is apparent in the rising slopes and woodland cover. Immediately to the west of the main part of the settlement is the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342), which covers the course of the Black Water and within which a few peripheral properties are located.

7.12.540 The landform orientation of the village is to the west and south-west, across the River Conon and Black Water valley. A number of houses in the village – particularly the newer properties on the sloping ground of the eastern edge – are orientated in this direction, where there is a scenic and eye-catching outlook with the focal point of Tor Achilty and, further away, Cul Mor and Cul Beag.

7.12.541 Viewpoint 23 is located on the A835 in Contin and represents the higher type of visibility of the Proposed Development that may be gained from those parts of the settlement that gain an open view to the north-north-west.

7.12.542 There is theoretical visibility of Auchmore 1 and 2 and Fairburn Wind Farms from Contin. This is, however, very limited (as seen at Viewpoint 23) and is further reduced due to the screening effect of buildings and vegetation within and around the settlement. There is no theoretical visibility of other relevant operational or consented wind farms.

7.12.543 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to views from the settlement and the susceptibility of viewers. It should be noted that this assessment differs from that of Viewpoint 23 as the sensitivity of that location is specific to the viewpoint itself whereas this assessment relates to the settlement as a receptor. Views from the settlement of Contin have a medium value, arising largely from the importance of views across the Black Water valley to the west, where eye-catching landform gives informal value to the outlook. Views to the north also overlook a part of the Ben Wyvis SLA. However, the value of views is moderated by the lack of scenic designations within or immediately around Contin and the absence of specific, recognised viewpoints within the village, where facilities are provided for the enjoyment of the view.

7.12.544 The susceptibility to change is high for all of the receptor groups, including residents who gain a view from their houses and people walking around Contin, as they are likely to be residents of, or visitors to, the local area, and Contin is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by receptors.

7.12.545 For residents of Contin who gain a view from their houses or garden ground, the sensitivity of views is **high** as the high susceptibility of residential viewers outweighs the medium value of the view. For people walking around Contin, the sensitivity of views is **high-medium**, due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.546 The ZTV (Figures 7.7a-d) indicates consistent theoretical blade tip visibility of the Proposed Development across Contin. However, the great majority of views of the Proposed Development would be screened and filtered by buildings and vegetation within and around the settlement. It is also relevant that the main orientation of many houses in Contin is to the west and south-west, looking across the River Conon and Black Water valley towards Tor Achilty, Cul Mor and Cul Beag, whereas the Proposed Development lies north-north-west.

7.12.547 However, some views - often of a part of the Proposed Development rather than all of the turbines - are likely to be available; where this is the case, they would be similar to that seen at Viewpoint 23 but generally with less visibility of the Proposed Development due to screening and filtering by buildings and vegetation. The higher level of visibility, as shown in Viewpoint 23, is likely to be gained from the vicinity of the viewpoint and in glimpses from the A835. The Proposed Development will often be seen peripherally in views due to the main west/south-west orientation of landform in the village.

7.12.548 The assessment for Viewpoint 23 concludes that the Proposed Development will have a high-medium magnitude of change on the view for people walking around the village. Where clear and open views towards the Proposed Development are available from other parts of Contin, similar to those seen at Viewpoint 23, the magnitude of change on views is also likely to be high-medium. This level of change on views will be restricted to the specific areas that gain open views; elsewhere, where there is more limited actual visibility of the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change will have a considerably reduced level. Many parts of the settlement will have no change or a **negligible** magnitude of change due to lack of/very limited visibility.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.549 The effect of the Proposed Development on views from the majority of Contin will be **not significant** due to lack of, or limited, visibility of the turbines. However, the maximum high-medium magnitude of change combined with the high or high-medium sensitivity of the receptor may lead to a major or major-moderate and **significant** effect on views from some very limited locations, where there is clear and open visibility of the Proposed Development, as seen at Viewpoint 23.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.550 As described above, there is theoretical visibility of Auchmore 1 and 2 and Fairburn Wind Farms from Contin. This is, however, very limited (as seen at Viewpoint 23) and is further reduced due to the screening effect of buildings and vegetation within and around the settlement. There is no theoretical visibility of other relevant operational or consented wind farms or application stage wind farms.

7.12.551 In the current baseline, the maximum cumulative magnitude of change arising as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to views from Contin will be **low** due to the very limited visibility of other wind farms, and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development in this scenario will be moderate-minor and **not significant**. No other cumulative scenarios are relevant.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.552 An hours of darkness visualisation has not been produced for Contin and a full assessment of effects has not been carried out. However, overall conclusions can be drawn from the hours of darkness viewpoint assessment at Viewpoint 23, which is located in Contin. The effect on this viewpoint is assessed to be not significant in either the 200 cd scenario or in a scenario where vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, and this **not significant** effect is also likely to apply to the wider settlement.

Principal Visual Receptor: Settlement of Garve

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.553 Garve is a small village situated on the A835 (NC500) and also served by the Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh railway line. The majority of houses in Garve are located around the streets that lie to the east of the A835 (Stirling Drive and Matheson Road) with several properties also facing directly onto the A835.

7.12.554 Garve lies within the enclosed landform of Strath Garve (classified as Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340)), through which the Black Water runs. The strath is contained by the slopes of Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331) and Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330) LCTs which rise steeply to form a contrasting upland backdrop to the east and the west of the village.

7.12.555 The operational wind farms at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension have some theoretical visibility from Garve. This is, however, very limited and is further screened by buildings and vegetation. There is also very limited theoretical visibility of the consented Kirkan Wind Farm (as seen at Viewpoint 1) and Lochluichart Extension II but this will have a minor effect on views.

7.12.556 Viewpoint 1 is located on the A835 in Garve and represents the higher type of visibility of the Proposed Development that may be gained from those parts of the settlement that gain an open view to the east.

7.12.557 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to views from the settlement and the susceptibility of viewers. It should be noted that this assessment differs from that of Viewpoint 1 as the sensitivity of that location is specific to the viewpoint itself whereas this assessment relates to the settlement as a receptor. Views from Garve have a medium value, arising largely from the importance of views of the surrounding landscape to the setting of the village, which gives informal value. Views also overlook a part of the Ben Wyvis SLA. However, the value of views is moderated by the lack of scenic designations within or immediately around Garve and the absence of specific, recognised viewpoints within the village, where facilities are provided for the enjoyment of the view.

7.12.558 The susceptibility to change of is high for all of the receptor groups, including residents who gain a view from their houses and people walking around Garve, as they are likely to be residents of or visitors to the local area, and Garve is a community where views contribute to the landscape setting experienced by receptors.

7.12.559 For residents of Garve who gain a similar view from their houses or garden ground, the sensitivity of views is **high** as the high susceptibility of residential viewers outweighs the medium value of the view. For people walking around Garve, the sensitivity of views is **high-medium**, due to a combination of the medium value of the view and high susceptibility of the viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.560 The ZTV (Figures 7.7a-d) indicates limited theoretical blade tip visibility of the Proposed Development from Garve, with this ranging from one to six turbines. This is because Garve lies in the strath below the steep slopes of Meall Ruighe, which screen large parts of the Proposed Development as seen at Viewpoint 1. Screening by buildings and vegetation,

particularly woodland along the Black Water, will further reduce visibility of the Proposed Development.

7.12.561 However, some views of part of the Proposed Development are likely to be available, particularly from outside spaces; where this is the case, they would be similar to that seen at Viewpoint 1 but generally with less visibility of the Proposed Development due to screening and filtering by landform, buildings and vegetation. The higher level of visibility, as shown in Viewpoint 1, is likely to be gained from the vicinity of the viewpoint and in glimpses from the A835.

7.12.562 The assessment for Viewpoint 1 concludes that the Proposed Development will have a medium magnitude of change on the view for people walking through Garve or waiting at the bus stop. Where clear and open views towards the Proposed Development are available from other parts of Garve, similar to those seen at Viewpoint 1, the magnitude of change on views is also likely to be medium. This level of change on views will be restricted to the specific areas that gain open views; elsewhere, where there is more limited actual visibility of the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change will have a considerably reduced level and many parts of the settlement will have no change or a **negligible** magnitude of change due to lack of/very limited visibility.

Significance of the Effect

7.12.563 The effect of the Proposed Development on views from the majority of Garve will be **not significant** due to lack of, or limited, visibility of the turbines. However, the maximum medium magnitude of change combined with the high or high-medium sensitivity of the receptor may lead to a major-moderate or moderate and **significant** effect on views from some very limited locations, where there is clear and open visibility of the Proposed Development, as seen at Viewpoint 1. A moderate effect can be either significant or not significant; in this case the moderate effects are considered to be significant due to the location of the Proposed Development on the skyline in the open aspect of views from Garve and the proximity of the visible turbines to the settlement.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.564 As described above, there is theoretical visibility from Garve of current baseline sites at Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension. This is, however, very limited (these sites are not theoretically visible at Viewpoint 1) and is further reduced by the screening effect of buildings and vegetation In the predicted baseline scenario, there is limited theoretical visibility of the consented Kirkan Wind Farm (as seen at Viewpoint 1) and Lochluichart Extension II, but this will have a minor effect on views due to limited theoretical visibility and further screening by buildings and vegetation.

7.12.565 There is no theoretical visibility of relevant application stage wind farms.

7.12.566 In the current and predicted baseline, the maximum cumulative magnitude of change arising as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to views from Garve will be **low** due to the very limited visibility of other wind farms, and the cumulative effect arising from the addition of the Proposed Development in this scenario will be moderate-minor and not significant. No other cumulative scenarios are relevant.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.567 An hours of darkness visualisation has been produced for Viewpoint 1, which is located in Garve, and a full assessment of effects has been carried out. The hours of darkness effect on this viewpoint is assessed to be not significant in either the 200 cd scenario or in a scenario where vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, and this **not significant** effect is also likely to apply to the wider settlement.

Principal Visual Receptor: A835 Road

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.568 The A835 is approximately 110 km long and runs between the Tore roundabout in the south-east and Ullapool in the north-west. Within the 20 km study area it commences at the Tore roundabout and leaves the study area at Loch Droma, east of Loch Glascarnoch. Viewpoints 1, 22, 23, 24 and 25 are located on the A835.

7.12.569 The setting of the A835 and the nature of views available from the road varies considerably along its route as it passes through a number of character types. Travelling north-westwards, the first stretch of the road crosses the farmed, agricultural ridge of the western end of the Black Isle. The section between around Newton of Kinkell and Conon Bridge/Maryburgh drops gently down the northern side of the Black Isle into the valley of the River Conon with north and north-west-facing views, as seen at Viewpoint 22, which is located at the junction of the A835 with the B9169. Beyond Maryburgh, the road turns south-westwards to sweep around the southern slopes of Knockfarrel, rising out of the valley into the Farmed and Forested Slopes - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 345). Here, views extend across Strathconon to the Rounded Rocky Hills LCT (LCT 331), where Fairburn Wind Farm is intermittently visible.

7.12.570 Just past the A832 junction, the road (which now incorporates the A832) drops back down into the settled Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342) before turning to the north-west and passing through Contin (Viewpoint 23). Beyond Contin, the setting becomes more upland as the road passes into the Black Water valley and the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335), with intermittent forestry and woodland along the route. At the high point just north of Rogie Falls car park, the road sweeps round to run westwards towards Loch Garve and past Viewpoint 24. It passes into Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) as it runs along the southern side of Loch Garve, twisting and turning, before continuing northwards through Garve (Viewpoint 1).

7.12.571 At Gorstan, just past the junction where the A832 leaves the A835, the A835 turns north-eastwards and passes into the upland Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330), which continues until the route passes Loch Glascarnoch (Viewpoint 25) and leaves the 20 km study area. Between Gorstan and Loch Glascarnoch the road closely follows the watercourses of the Black Water and Glascarnoch River, and in some places – particularly the southern stretch, where the road is on the valley floor - is enclosed within a valley landform. Between Gorstan and Inchbae the road is also closely enclosed by the coniferous forestry of Garbat Forest.

7.12.572 Relevant operational and consented wind farms that are visible from the A835 include Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, Lochluichart and Extension, Lochluichart Extension II, and Novar and Extension, as seen at Viewpoints 1, 22, 23, 24 and 25. Other wind farms, including Auchmore 1 and 2, Coire ne Cloiche and Strathrory Redesign, have theoretical visibility but have very limited influence on views from the road. Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension, which are grouped together, are the closest cumulative wind farms to the A835, lying several kilometres to the south of the road as it runs along the southern edge of Loch Glascarnoch.

7.12.573 For people travelling south-east to north-west, Fairburn and Novar and Extension are the first operational wind farms to come into view, with theoretical visibility from the A835 as the road crosses the ridge of the Black Isle and starts dropping down into the River Conon valley. This continues over a stretch of approximately 5 km between as far as Conon Bridge (with the Proposed Development also theoretically visible, as described below), but the extent of actual visibility is considerably more limited due to roadside vegetation, the road being in cutting, and the direction of travel. Fairburn in particular is also peripheral to the direction of travel on the road, and both wind farms lie some distance away. The type of visibility that is available is shown at Viewpoint 22.

7.12.574 Theoretical visibility of Novar and Extension ceases just to the south of Conon Bridge and northbound travellers gain no further views of this wind farm. Theoretical visibility of Fairburn also ceases here, but commences again to the west of Maryburgh and continues until the road passes through Contin. This visibility is generally very limited due to landform screening and further filtering by roadside vegetation, and there are very few locations where the turbines are readily apparent to moving viewers on the road. Theoretical visibility ceases in Contin (Viewpoint 23 shows visibility of Fairburn from Contin) and while there are subsequently several very intermittent stretches of theoretical visibility, Fairburn lies behind northbound travellers and does not affect their views.

7.12.575 Theoretical visibility of Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension commences over a short stretch near Tarvie, just to the east of Viewpoint 24. In reality, visibility is very limited due to screening by landform and vegetation, and the type of theoretical visibility seen at Viewpoint 24 is the highest available. Theoretical visibility commences again in Garve, but again this is

very limited and vegetation and buildings provide further screening, ensuring that there is no readily apparent visibility over this stretch. Visibility then ceases until Inchbae Lodge, from where intermittent theoretical visibility continues until just west of the Aultguish Inn. Over this stretch, the principal visibility of Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension arises between Black Bridge and the Aultguish Inn, as the road passes directly to the north of the wind farms and they are seen at close proximity. Theoretical visibility then ceases, and the wind farms also lie behind people travelling to the north-west.

7.12.576 In the predicted baseline, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II will add to the cumulative visibility of wind farms from the A835. For people travelling north-westwards, Lochluichart Extension II has a similar pattern of visibility as Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension and will be seen in association with the operational turbines, thus adding little to the pattern of cumulative wind farms. Kirkan has higher theoretical visibility, and this will be most apparent on the stretch between Inchbae Lodge and the Aultguish Inn, where it will be seen from a minimum of less than 2 km away to the south of the road. At the Aultguish Inn, Kirkan will pass behind north-westbound travellers and will cease to affect their views. Nonetheless, Kirkan is associated with the operational sites and while it will increase the extent of visibility of this cluster, it will not introduce a completely new wind farm influence.

7.12.577 For people travelling in the other direction, north-west to south-east, Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension are the first wind farms to become visible from the A835, coming into view just to the west of the Aultguish Inn. This is, however, a very brief stretch of visibility as first Lochluichart and then Corriemoillie fall behind the south-eastwards direction of travel and will no longer be seen. There is one further short stretch to the north of Inchbae Lodge where they may be seen, but this visibility is perpendicular to the direction of travel and very intermittent. At Inchbae Lodge theoretical visibility ceases, and there is no further visibility of Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension as these sites lie behind south-eastbound travellers.

7.12.578 There are several stretches of theoretical visibility of Fairburn but these are very intermittent and limited. The area where travellers are most likely to gain views is to the north of Contin, where there is visibility over a short stretch – less than 1 km – although vegetation screens and filters the majority of this visibility. To the south of Contin, Fairburn lies behind south-eastbound travellers and there are no further effects on views.

7.12.579 Novar and Extension do not affect views gained by south-eastbound travellers as where there is theoretical visibility of these sites, it lies behind the direction of travel.

7.12.580 In the predicted baseline, Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II will add to the cumulative visibility of wind farms from the A835 for people travelling south-eastwards. While Lochluichart Extension II is likely to become visible before Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension as the road passes Loch Glascarnoch, this visibility is at first limited (as seen at Viewpoint 25) and there will be a very short stretch of additional visibility, where Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension have less visibility, before Lochluichart Extension II falls behind south-eastbound travellers. Overall, Lochluichart Extension II be seen in association with the operational turbines, thus adding little to the pattern of cumulative wind farms. Kirkan lies to the east of the operational sites and will extend close-proximity visibility of turbines for several additional kilometres before theoretical visibility ceases just begore Inchbae Lodge. There are several further stretches of theoretical visibility, but here Kirkan will lie behind south-eastbound travellers and will not affect their views.

7.12.581 The value of views from the A835 varies. Views from the section that is combined with the A832, between Moy Bridge and Gorstan, have a medium value as this is part of the nationally recognised NC500 route and views towards the Ben Wyvis SLA are available. The value of views is moderated by the absence of scenic designations covering the area through which the route passes and the lack of marked or mapped viewpoints along this stretch of the road where travellers would be encouraged to stop and enjoy the view. A medium value also arises on views from a very short stretch of the A835 at the north-western extremity of the 20 km study area, beyond Loch Glascarnoch, where the road passes into the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA, which implies a higher value to views.

7.12.582 Elsewhere on the A835, views have a medium-low value, arising from the scenic value of the outlook from the road (including views towards SLAs), its varied landscape character, and the enjoyment of this that is likely to be gained by road-users. The value of these views is

moderated by the lack of formal scenic recognition of the route and the absence of scenic designations covering the route.

7.12.583 The susceptibility of viewers also varies. Over the section between Moy Bridge and Gorstan, viewers have a high susceptibility as some people travelling here are likely to be following the NC500 and thus have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape. Elsewhere, the susceptibility to change of viewers is medium as they are road-users, and this stretch of the A835 is not identified as a tourist route or recreational route. However, people travelling on the road are likely to have a focus on the scenic views and the landscape setting of the route, and this leads to the medium susceptibility.

7.12.584 The sensitivity of the A835 will vary. Views from the stretch between Moy Bridge and Gorstan have a **high-medium** sensitivity due to the medium value of views and high susceptibility of viewers. Views from all other parts of the route have a **medium** sensitivity due to the medium-low or medium (over the short stretch west of Loch Glascarnoch) value and medium susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.585 Magnitude of change on views from the A835 will vary dependent on the direction and is described firstly for people travelling south-east to north-west and then north-west to south-east. The assessment covers those parts of the A835 that are within the 20 km study area, as the potential for significant effects to arise from the Proposed Development is considered to be contained within this area.

7.12.586 While the ZTV shows the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, it is important to note that actual visibility is considerably reduced by screening along the road. While buildings often prevent long views from roads as they pass through settlements, an important screening component on this route is woodland and forestry. Much of the woodland is self-seeded native birch woodland and, as birches are deciduous trees, views range from being heavily screened in summer to more lightly filtered in winter. Birch trees have dense but slender branches that provide some screening in winter even without leaves. This assessment has been carried out in autumn, when leaves are largely, but not completely, off the trees and the assessment has been carried out on the basis of very little leaf cover on the trees.

South-East to North-West

7.12.587 The A835 commences at the Tore roundabout and theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development commences after approximately 2.5 km, as the road crosses the ridge of the Black Isle and starts dropping down into the River Conon valley. Theoretical visibility continues over a stretch of approximately 5 km between here and Conon Bridge, but the extent of actual visibility is considerably more limited due to roadside vegetation, the road being in cutting, and the direction of travel. The highest visibility is gained around the junction with the B9169, where there is an open view to the north-west in the direction of the site. Viewpoint 22 is located at this junction and is assessed to have a **medium-low** magnitude of change; this level of change will be the highest found on this stretch of the road between Tore and Conon Bridge, with the majority having a maximum **low** change.

7.12.588 To the north of Conon Bridge, theoretical visibility ceases just before the A835 crosses the River Conon. The road then loops around the northern side of Maryburgh and continues south-westwards in a sweeping arc along the north side of the River Conon valley, with no theoretical visibility.

7.12.589 Theoretical visibility recommences around the A832 junction, where the two roads are combined, and continues for just over 2.5 km until reaching the eastern edge of Contin. While theoretical visibility is fairly consistent over this stretch, with just a few intermittent breaks where landform provides a screen, actual visibility is very limited due to a combination of roadside vegetation, skyline vegetation, cuttings, buildings on the skyline and the peripheral location of the Proposed Development – to the north-west - in relation to the westwards direction of travel of the road. Landform also orientates views to the west, across the valley and towards the focal point of Tor Achilty. Where the Proposed Development is visible, it will generally be seen as blades. Over this stretch, the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium-low**, which will arise very intermittently.

7.12.590 On the eastern edge of Contin there is a very short stretch of higher actual visibility, where screening ceases, and then over the next 2 km, as the road passes through the settlement, there will be brief glimpsed views where screening by buildings and vegetation allows. These are very intermittent and also depend on the height of the vehicle, as taller vehicles can in some cases gain longer views than standard cars. The maximum magnitude of change over this stretch will be **medium**, as assessed at Viewpoint 23, but the majority of views from this part of the route will have a **negligible** or **low** magnitude of change.

7.12.591 On the western edge of Contin there is a stretch of road several hundred metres long, orientated towards the Proposed Development, where there will be visibility of some turbines, enclosed on each side by roadside vegetation. The magnitude of change here will be a maximum of **medium**, as assessed at Viewpoint 23. Visibility then ceases again other than very brief and filtered glimpses as the road passes through woodland and forestry.

7.12.592 Just beyond the Rogie Falls parking area, the road rises and a clear view opens up once again. Here, the road is within the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335), and the key characteristics of this landscape become apparent, including "*Enclosed views focussing attention on foreground detail, occasionally opening to views of glens, lochs and mountains"* and "*A back drop of mountains and lochs often glimpsed through tree cover".*

7.12.593 From here, these characteristics are very apparent as the road runs to the southern end of Loch Garve, and then passes around Loch Garve, through the settlement of Garve to Gorstan, where there will be very intermittent and generally brief glimpses visibility of the Proposed Development over a stretch of approximately 8 km.

7.12.594 The stretch of the A835 between the southern end of Loch Garve and Gorstan runs through the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), and the description for this LCT notes the following relevant points.

> *"The character varies along the length of straths, from relatively enclosed, sheltered pastures to more open broad green fields, wetlands, broad river braids and natural shorelines. The open strath floor is the central visual focus, with views directed along and between opposite slopes. Visibility is limited where the strath curves through the landscape, resulting in a gradual change of scenery and a sense of intrigue. This is enhanced on un-improved roads which more closely follow the line of slopes…*
>
> *The sense of enclosure within the strath is partially influenced by landcover. An open water body provides the least enclosure of space, whilst vertical elements such as trees and buildings create further enclosure and their vertical edges emphasise the flatness of the strath ground. Blocks of woodland physically and visually break up the open character by subdividing the central space and reducing the extent of views along the strath. The sheltered, enclosed, farmed and settled character of these straths, and the presence of human activity, results in a landscape which is distinct from the surrounding uninhabited upland landscapes."*

7.12.595 This is relevant for this stretch of the road, which is largely unimproved in terms of its routeing and closely follows the landform of the Strath, particularly as it passes Loch Garve.

7.12.596 As noted in the NatureScot description, there is extensive woodland screening and this, combined with the many tight turns and bends on the road, ensures that views of the Proposed Development are gained only very briefly and intermittently. Moreover, as noted by NatureScot, "*the open strath floor is the central visual focus, with views directed along and between opposite slopes"* and the focus of drivers is on the road ahead, whereas the Proposed Development will be seen on the skyline, often perpendicular to and sometimes behind the direction of travel for northbound travellers. The waterbody of the loch also draws the eye downwards and along the waterbody rather than across it and upwards to the Proposed Development. Towards the northern end of this stretch, to the south of Garve and within Garve, the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development reduces due to landform screening, as seen at Viewpoint 1.

7.12.597 Where the Proposed Development is visible, the type of visibility available ranges from a similar view to that seen at Viewpoint 24, which is in a layby beside the A835, to that seen at Viewpoint 1, in Garve. The maximum magnitude of change on views from this stretch will be **high-medium**, as assessed at Viewpoint 24, but this will arise extremely intermittently due to landform and woodland screening and the location of the Proposed Development in relation to the direction of travel, as described above. The magnitude of change on views from the

majority of this stretch of the road will therefore be much lower, ranging from **negligible** to **medium**.

7.12.598 The final stretch of theoretical visibility from the north-westbound A835 is between the turn-off to Little Garve and Silverbridge. This stretch, which is less than 2 km long and is shown on the ZTV to have theoretical visibility of limited numbers of turbines, is lined with coniferous planting and one section is in cutting. There are, however, several points where a very brief glimpsed view might be available, including locations where an overhead line wayleave has created a gap in the forestry, and where the road crosses the Black Water at Silverbridge. These views will be peripheral to the direction of travel, partially filtered by vegetation, gained briefly by moving viewers, and of limited number of turbines, and the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium**.

7.12.599 At Silverbridge, the A835 turns to run northwards and the turbines in the Proposed Development will lie behind north-westbound travellers, no longer affecting views in this direction. The road does, however, pass the new site access near Silverbridge, and this will result in a localised effect around the entrance. This will be readily apparent with a **medium** magnitude of change during the construction phase for woodland removal and as the new track access is under construction when there will be visibility of associated operations. The temporary construction compound may also be visible, filtered by woodland that lines the road. When construction is complete, the magnitude of change arising will reduce to **low** as it will appear similar to the many forestry and other tracks that lead off the A835.

7.12.600 The road will then pass the new Off-site turning circle at Inchbae, and this too will result in a localised, short-term and temporary effect. This will be readily apparent with a **medium** magnitude of change during the construction phase as the Off-site turning circle is being built. When construction is complete, the magnitude of change will reduce to **low** as it will have a minor effect on views.

North-West to South-East

7.12.601 Travelling in a south-east direction, the A835 enters the 20 km study area at Loch Droma. The ZTV shows a few very intermittent patches of limited theoretical visibility for the first stretch of the road between Loch Droma and the Aultguish Inn, and Viewpoint 25 is located at the point of highest visibility. The maximum magnitude of change on views from this stretch will be **medium-low** (or **low** in the predicted baseline scenario), as assessed at Viewpoint 25, and this will arise rarely, with the majority having no change or a **negligible** or **low** magnitude of change.

7.12.602 Theoretical visibility ceases at the Aultguish Inn and there is then no visibility of the turbines until just south of Inchbae Lodge. From Inchbae to Silverbridge, the ZTV shows a few short sections of intermittent and very limited theoretical visibility, and in reality this will have a very limited effect due to the very small parts of turbines that are theoretically visible (generally several blades only), screening by woodland and forestry and, in some places, the location of the Proposed Development peripheral to the direction of the view. The maximum magnitude of change on views over this stretch will be **low**. At Inchbae, the new Off-site turning circle will be apparent; as described above, this will have a medium magnitude of change during construction, reducing to a low magnitude of change during the operational phase.

7.12.603 Just to the north of Silverbridge, the new site entrance will be apparent. As described above, this will have a **medium** magnitude of change during construction, reducing to a **low** magnitude of change during the operational phase of the Proposed Development. The temporary construction compound may also be visible, filtered by woodland that lines the road.

7.12.604 At Silverbridge, theoretical visibility increases again and there will be very brief glimpses towards the Proposed Development where the road crosses the Black Water. These views will be peripheral to the direction of travel, partially filtered by vegetation, gained briefly by moving viewers, and of a limited number of turbines, and the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium**.

7.12.605 The Proposed Development then lies behind south-eastbound travellers until Gorstan. Between Gorstan and just past Viewpoint 24, the effect of the Proposed Development on views gained by people travelling south-eastwards will be similar to those travelling north-westwards, as described above, as the Proposed Development lies broadly perpendicular to the A835. Over this stretch of approximately 7 km, the maximum magnitude of change on

views will be **high-medium**, as assessed at Viewpoint 24, but this will arise extremely intermittently due to landform and woodland screening and the location of the Proposed Development in relation to the direction of travel. The magnitude of change on views from majority of this stretch of the road will be much lower, ranging from **negligible** to **medium**.

7.12.606 To the east of Viewpoint 24, the Proposed Development will lie behind south-eastbound travellers and will no longer affect views in this direction.

7.12.607 In summary, the magnitude of change on the great majority of views from the A835 will be a maximum of **low** due to lack of or very limited, intermittent and briefly glimpsed visibility. There are, however, several stretches where the magnitude of change is increased for travellers in both directions, as described below:

South-East to North-West

- a very intermittent **medium** magnitude of change as the road passes through Contin, where there will be several brief views of the Proposed Development as seen at Viewpoint 23, and to the west of Contin where there will be partial visibility over several hundred metres;
- an extremely intermittent **high-medium** or **medium** magnitude of change between a point to the north of Rogie Falls and Gorstan, as seen at Viewpoint 24 (it should be noted that at Viewpoint 1, which is on this stretch, the magnitude of change for people travelling on the A835 is assessed to be **medium-low**);
- several brief glimpses with a **medium** magnitude of change between the turn-off to Little Garve and Silverbridge; and
- a very localised short-term and temporary **medium** magnitude of change during the construction phase of the new site access north of Silverbridge, reducing to a **low** magnitude of change during the operational phase of the Proposed Development.

North-West to South-East

- a very localised short-term and temporary **medium** magnitude of change during the construction phase of the new site access north of Silverbridge, reducing to a **low** magnitude of change during the operational phase of the Proposed Development;
- very brief glimpses with a **medium** magnitude of change at Silverbridge; and
- an extremely intermittent **high-medium** or **medium** magnitude of change between Gorstan and a point to the east of Viewpoint 24 (it should be noted that at Viewpoint 1, which is on this stretch, the magnitude of change for people travelling on the A835 is assessed to be **medium-low**).

Significance of Effect

7.12.608 The effect of the Proposed Development on the great majority of views from the A835 will be **not significant** due to lack of, or very limited, intermittent and briefly glimpsed visibility. There are, however, several stretches where a **significant** effect is likely to arise.

South-East to North-West

- A very intermittent moderate and **significant** effect as the road passes through Contin as seen at Viewpoint 23, and to the west of Contin where there will be partial visibility over several hundred metres, due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views from this stretch and the maximum medium magnitude of change. A moderate effect can be as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the appearance of the Proposed Development in the line of travel for people on the A835.
- An extremely intermittent major-moderate or moderate **significant** effect between a point to the north of Rogie Falls and Gorstan, as seen at Viewpoint 24, due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views from this

stretch and the maximum high-medium magnitude of change. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as significant due to the series of glimpse views of the Proposed Development that are likely to be gained from this stretch, which combine to have a greater effect. It should be noted that at Viewpoint 1, which is on this stretch, the effect on views gained by people travelling on the A835 is assessed as **not significant**.

- Several brief glimpses with a moderate and **significant** effect on the stretch between the turn-off to Little Garve and Silverbridge due to due to a combination of the medium sensitivity of views from this stretch and the maximum medium magnitude of change. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as **significant** due to the visibility of the Proposed Development on the previous stretch of the road, which means that travellers are already likely to be aware of the Proposed Development.

North-West to South-East

- An extremely intermittent major-moderate or moderate **significant** effect between Gorstan and a point to the east of Viewpoint 24, as seen at Viewpoint 24, due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views from this stretch and the maximum high-medium magnitude of change. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as significant due to the series of glimpsed views of the Proposed Development that are likely to be gained from this stretch, which combine to have a greater effect. It should be noted that at Viewpoint 1, which is on this stretch, the effect on views gained by people travelling on the A835 is assessed as not significant.

7.12.609 There is one further location – around Silverbridge - on the north-west to south-east route where a moderate effect will arise due to a combination of the medium sensitivity of views and medium magnitude of change on them. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as **not significant** due to the very brief nature of the glimpses, the location of the Proposed Development perpendicular to the road, and the moving nature of viewers.

7.12.610 The new site entrance north of Silverbridge and the Off-site turning circle at Inchbae will both have moderate (construction phase) or moderate-minor (operational phase) and **not significant** effects on views from the road due to a combination of the medium sensitivity of views and medium or low magnitude of change on them. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as not significant due to the short term and temporary construction effects and the very brief nature of the glimpses gained by moving viewers.

7.12.611 It is important to note that these effects will vary throughout the year as the seasons change, and effects that are significant in winter might be not significant in summer when trees are in leaf and views are less open. It should also be noted that some visibility of the Proposed Development from the A835 is screened by commercial forestry, as described in the assessment above. While the removal of this forestry would alter the type of views and visibility that are available from the road, it is not possible to make an assessment of the effect that the Proposed Development might have on a view. This is because it is not possible to predict what other features of woodland, forestry or landform would lie behind the forestry, or the extent of screening that they might provide to the Proposed Development. Forestry is generally felled in sections or coupes which are then replanted in succession, and many areas of forestry are edged or surrounded by self-seeded deciduous woodland that would not be removed as part of the felling operations, both of which considerations increase the difficulty in predicting levels of visibility. It is highly unlikely that the birch woodland that lines extensive stretches of the road, including along Loch Garve, will be removed for any reason.

Cumulative Effects

7.12.612 Visibility of operational and consented wind farms is described above. In addition to these sites, there is theoretical visibility of the application stage Abhainn Dubh Wind Farm. This theoretical visibility would be gained only by people travelling north-westwards and arises on the stretch of the A835 that passes over the Black Isle, to the north and south of Viewpoint 22. As seen at Viewpoint 22, this visibility is very limited and would be seen in association with Novar and Extension. Other application stage sites are discounted from the assessment due to lack of, or very limited and distant, visibility.

South-East to North-West

7.12.613 For people travelling from south-east to north-west, the cumulative magnitude of change in the current baseline scenario will be a maximum of **medium-low**, due to the following considerations:

- visibility of the Proposed Development – a wind farm that will have a significant effect on several stretches of the A835 – will be added to a road from which several wind farms – Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension - are visible at reasonably close proximity along with visibility of other more distant sites at Fairburn and Novar and Extension;
- the Proposed Development will introduce readily apparent visibility of wind energy development to a setting of the road that does not have current baseline wind farm influence;
- the Proposed Development will be seen before Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension, which are the closest sites to the road and have the highest visibility, and the additional influence of the Proposed Development in succession with these operational sites will increase the cumulative magnitude of change on views from the road; and
- Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension lies to the west/south of the road while the Proposed Development will be seen to the east, and the appearance of the Proposed Development to the other side of the road will also increase the cumulative magnitude of change.

7.12.614 The following considerations limit the cumulative magnitude of change to a medium-low level:

- the number of operational wind farms that can be clearly seen from the road is limited, with Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension being the key site with Fairburn and Novar and Extension providing a more limited and distant influence;
- while the Proposed Development is assessed to have significant effects on views from stretches of the road, these are intermittent and it will not be seen consistently with high visibility over lengthy parts of the route;
- the stretches of the road from which the Proposed Development will be clearly seen simultaneously with another visible wind farm are extremely limited, ensuring that travellers will not have an impression of being enclosed or surrounded by wind energy development;
- the maximum cumulative magnitude of change in the current baseline scenario at the viewpoints that represent views gained by north-westbound travellers (that is, people travelling on the road rather than people stopped in laybys) is assessed to be low; and
- extensive stretches of the road will remain without wind farm influence.

7.12.615 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change for north-westbound travellers will increase to a **medium** level. This increase is due to the additional predicted baseline visibility of Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II, which will increase the extent of high-visibility, close-proximity wind farms along the route, and to which the Proposed Development will be added. However, it should be noted that in some views (as seen at Viewpoint 25), Kirkan will be seen directly in front of the Proposed Development and will reduce the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development itself, irrespective of the cumulative effect.

7.12.616 When the application stage site at Abhainn Dubh is also considered in addition to the current and predicted baseline, the magnitude of change will remain **medium** as this site has limited visibility and would be seen in conjunction with Novar and Extension.

North-West to South-East

7.12.617 For people travelling from north-west to south-east, the cumulative magnitude of change in the current baseline scenario will be a maximum of **medium-low**, due to the following considerations:

- visibility of the Proposed Development – a wind farm that will have a significant effect on several stretches of the A835 – will be added to a road from which several wind farms – Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension - are visible at reasonably close proximity along with very limited visibility of the more distant site at Fairburn;
- the Proposed Development will introduce readily apparent visibility of wind energy development to a setting of the road that does not have current baseline wind farm influence;
- the Proposed Development will be seen after Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension, which are close to the road and have high visibility, and the additional influence of the Proposed Development in succession with these operational sites will increase the cumulative magnitude of change on views from the road; and
- Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension lies to the west/south of the road while the Proposed Development will be seen to the east, and the appearance of the Proposed Development to the other side of the road will also increase the cumulative magnitude of change.

7.12.618 The following considerations limit the cumulative magnitude of change to a medium-low level:

- the number of operational wind farms that can be clearly seen from the road is very limited, with Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and Extension being the key cluster and Fairburn providing a very limited influence;
- the influence of Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension is relatively limited in extent before they pass behind the south-eastbound traveller;
- while the Proposed Development is assessed to have significant effects on views from stretches of the road, these are intermittent and it will not be seen consistently with high visibility over lengthy parts of the route;
- the Proposed Development will not be seen simultaneously with another visible wind farm in views from the road, ensuring that travellers will not have an impression of being enclosed or surrounded by wind energy development;
- the cumulative assessment of the viewpoints that will be gained by south-eastbound travellers indicates that cumulative effects will not arise due to lack of notable visibility of cumulative wind farms at these locations; and
- extensive stretches of the road will remain without wind farm influence.

7.12.619 In the predicted baseline scenario, when the consented sites at Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are also considered, the cumulative magnitude of change for south-eastbound travellers will increase to a **medium** level. This increase is due to the additional predicted baseline visibility of Lochluichart Extension II and, particularly, Kirkan, which will increase the extent of high-visibility, close-proximity wind farms along the route, and to which the Proposed Development will be added. Travelling in this direction, Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and Extension have a limited and brief influence around the Aultguish Inn before they pass behind the south-eastbound traveller, and Kirkan will add to this in terms of both level and extent of visibility from the road.

7.12.620 The application stage site at Abhainn Dubh will not affect views in this direction of travel, and an application stage scenario will not arise.

7.12.621 The cumulative effect of the Proposed Development on the great majority of views from the A835 will be **not significant**. This includes effects arising in the current baseline scenario for travellers in both directions, where the effect on the part of the route that has a medium sensitivity will be moderate-minor and not significant, and the effect on the part of the route that has a high-medium sensitivity will be moderate and not significant. In this latter case, the

moderate effect can be assessed as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as not significant due to the very limited visibility of cumulative wind farms from the part of the route that has a high-medium sensitivity (Corriemoillie and Lochluichart and extension are primarily seen from the stretch that has a medium sensitivity) and the limited number of operational wind farms that are clearly visible from the route as a whole as it passes through the study area.

7.12.622 There will, however, be a moderate and **significant** cumulative effect on a part of the route in the predicted baseline scenario, when Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II are taken into consideration due to the factors that lead to the medium cumulative magnitude of change and medium or high-medium sensitivity of views from the route. In this case, the moderate effect is assessed to be significant due to the increased level of visibility and extent of close proximity wind farm influence along the route when Kirkan and, to a lesser extent, Lochluichart Extension II, are included in the baseline to which the Proposed Development will be added. In this scenario, the Proposed Development and the operational/consented cluster at Corriemoillie/Lochluichart will be seen sequentially from the road at relatively close proximity and with intermittently levels of high visibility.

7.12.623 For people travelling south-east to north-west, this significant effect will arise on the part of the route between Contin and west of the Aultguish Inn, as this stretch gains the higher level of visibility of both the Proposed Development and the current and predicted baseline cumulative wind farms. For people travelling north-west to south-east, this significant effect will arise on a shorter stretch of the route, between west of the Aultguish Inn and a point just before Viewpoint 24, where the Proposed Development falls behind this direction of travel.

7.12.624 It should be noted that the significant cumulative effects described above will only arise when travellers are following the full stretch of the A835 between Contin and west of the Aultguish Inn (for people travelling south-east to north-west) and west of the Aultguish Inn and a point just before Viewpoint 24 (for people travelling north-west to south-east). Visibility of the relevant wind farms will not necessarily be available to people using a shorter part of the road, and significant cumulative effects will in that case either be more limited in extent or not arise at all.

7.12.625 This is of particular importance for people following the NC500, or otherwise turning onto or off the A835 at the A832 junction, north of Garve. The cumulative effect for people joining or leaving the A835 at this point will be not significant as they will not gain a sufficient level of visibility of both the Proposed Development and the current and predicted baseline cumulative wind farms at Corriemoillie/Lochluichart.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.626 The A835 is used during hours of darkness and there is potential for the Proposed Development lighting to be seen by travellers. The hours of darkness sensitivity of the route will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers; people travelling on the A835 will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including, internally, dashboards and internal lights and externally, lights on other vehicles as well as lighting and reflectors on the road infrastructure and, as it passes through settlements, street lighting. Combined with the medium or medium-low value of views from the route (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of the A835 is **medium-low**.

7.12.627 The hours of darkness assessment of the five viewpoints on the A835 concludes that the effects for people travelling on the road will be **not significant** in both the 200 cd scenario and when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration. This assessment will also apply to the great majority of the A835. There may, however, be very intermittent **significant** effects in the 200 cd scenario on the stretch between Viewpoints 1 and 24 at locations where there is clear visibility of the lighting and where open views are gained, with no screening or filtering by trees or woodland and with no baseline lighting other than internal vehicle lights. When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the effect on this stretch will become **not significant** due to the reduced lighting intensity, as can be seen on Figure 7.9c and as described at Viewpoints 1 and 24.

Principal Visual Receptor: A832 Road

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.628 The A832 is just over 200 km long and runs between Cromarty in the east and Braemore junction in the west, via Gairloch and Dundonnell. Within the 20 km study area it runs between the Tore roundabout and Knockban, in Strath Bran. The section of the A832 between Moy Bridge and Gorstan follows the route of the A835 (and is signed as the A835), and the assessment of that section is therefore not replicated here. Viewpoints 10, 26, 27 and 28 are located on or near the A832, and Viewpoints 1, 23 and 24 are located on the stretch of the A832 that is signed as the A835.

7.12.629 As with the A835, the setting of the A832 and the nature of views from the road varies considerably along its route. Travelling north-westwards, the first stretch of the road within the 20 km study area crosses the farmed slopes of the south-western end of the Black Isle between Tore and Muir of Ord. At Muir of Ord, it enters the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342) and continues along the lower slopes of the southern River Conon valley until reaching Marybank. At Marybank, the road turns sharply northwards, dropping down into the valley floor before crossing the River Conon on the Moy Bridge. To the north of the river, the A832 joins the A835 and continues westwards, skirting along the northern edge of the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342).

7.12.630 The stretch of road that runs between Moy Bridge and Gorstan is signed as the A835 and is described in the assessment for the A835.

7.12.631 Several kilometres to the north of Garve, near Gorstan, the A832 leaves the A835 and travels westwards to the hamlet of Lochluichart, passing the waterbody of Loch Luichart. Viewpoint 28 is on the A832 to the east of Lochluichart and Viewpoint 27 is in Lochluichart. The road continues westwards through Strath Bran towards Achnasheen, passing out of the 20 km study area near Knockban, around the location of Viewpoint 26. From Gorstan to near Achanalt, the A832 passes through the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), which covers part of Loch Luichart and the River Bran as well as several smaller lochs. To the east of Achanalt, the strath gives way to Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330), evidenced in the massive, upland landscape that rises on each side of the road.

7.12.632 Operational and consented wind farms that are theoretically visible from the A832 include Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, Lochluichart and Extension, Lochluichart Extension II, and Novar and Extension, some of which are seen at Viewpoints 10, 26, 27 and 28. The cumulative ZTVs indicate that theoretical visibility of these wind farms is generally very limited and distant, with only brief stretches of the road intermittently or very intermittently gaining theoretical visibility. The closest cumulative sites to the road are the cluster of operational and consented schemes at Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, but even these have very limited visibility due to landform screening and further screening by woodland and forestry. Fairburn has theoretical visibility, but this is also very limited due to screening by landform and woodland/forestry. Visibility of Novar is very limited and distant. Theoretical visibility of cumulative wind farms is frequently perpendicular or oblique to the direction of travel.

7.12.633 The value of views from the A832 varies. Views from the majority of its route through the 20 km study area (between Muir of Ord and the north-western edge of the 20 km study area) have a medium value as this is part of the nationally recognised NC500 route and views towards several SLAs are available. The value of views is moderated by the absence of scenic designations covering the area through which the route passes and the lack of marked or mapped viewpoints along this stretch of the road.

7.12.634 Views from the stretch of the A832 that runs between the Tore roundabout and Muir of Ord have a medium-low value, arising from the scenic value of the outlook from the road across the Beauly Firth and the enjoyment of this that is likely to be gained by road-users. The value of these views is moderated by the lack of formal recognition of the route and the absence of scenic designations covering the route.

7.12.635 The susceptibility of viewers also varies. Over the section between Muir of Ord and the north-western edge of the 20 km study area, viewers have a high susceptibility as some people travelling here are likely to be following the NC500 and thus have a specific focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape. Between the Tore roundabout and Muir of Ord the susceptibility to change of viewers is medium as they are road-users, and this stretch of the

A832 is not identified as a tourist route or recreational route. However, people travelling on the road are likely to have some focus on the landscape setting of the route, and this leads to the medium susceptibility.

7.12.636 The sensitivity of the A832 will vary. Views from the stretch that is part of the NC500, between Muir of Ord and the north-western edge of the 20 km study area, have a **high-medium** sensitivity due to the medium value of views and high susceptibility of viewers. Views from between the Tore roundabout and Muir of Ord have a **medium** sensitivity due to the medium-low value of views and medium susceptibility of viewers.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.637 Magnitude of change on views from the A832 will vary dependent on the direction and is described firstly for people travelling south-east to north-west and then north-west to south-east. The assessment covers those parts of the A832 that are within the 20 km study area, as the potential for significant effects to arise from the Proposed Development is considered to be contained within this area.

7.12.638 A considerable stretch of the A832 within the study area is numbered as the A835. Over this stretch, between Moy Bridge and Gorstan, the description of the magnitude of change on the A835 should be referred to.

7.12.639 While the ZTV shows the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, it is important to note that actual visibility is considerably reduced by screening along the road. While buildings often prevent long views from roads as they pass through settlements, an important screening component on this route is woodland and forestry. Much of the woodland is self-seeded native birch woodland and, as birches are deciduous trees, views range from being heavily screened in summer to more lightly filtered in winter. Birch trees have dense but slender branches that provide some screening in winter even without leaves. This assessment has been carried out in autumn, when leaves are largely, but not completely, off the trees and the assessment has been carried out on the basis of very little leaf cover on the trees.

South-East to North-West

7.12.640 The A832 enters the study area at the Tore roundabout and theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development commences after approximately 6 km, on the eastern edge of Muir of Ord, and continues fairly consistently until the A832 joins the A835 just after Moy Bridge. However, actual visibility is very limited until the road reaches Urray due to screening by buildings, roadside and skyline vegetation; distance from the Proposed Development (between 12 and 17 km); and the location of the Proposed Development in relation to the main direction of travel.

7.12.641 Just after Urray West Church, views open up as the road rounds a bend and the Proposed Development will lie in the direction of travel for people on the A832 for less than 500 m, with some filtering by vegetation and overhead lines. Over this short stretch, which is approximately 12 km away from the Proposed Development, the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium-low**, arising from the visibility of the Proposed Development in the line of travel but restricted by the filtering of views, the brief extent of visibility, distance, and the moving nature of viewers.

7.12.642 The Proposed Development is then screened again for around 1 km as the road curves around Urray, crossing the River Orrin. After this, and over the following 1.7 km, the road runs in a straight line to Marybank and there will be fairly consistent views towards the Proposed Development although screening by vegetation and buildings increases on the eastern edge of Marybank. The Proposed Development does not lie in the direct line of travel - Tor Achilty forms a focal point in this direction - but will be seen in slightly angled views, and the elevation of this stretch of the road allows a generally open outlook to be gained. The magnitude of change over this stretch will be a maximum of **medium-low**, as assessed at Viewpoint 10 for people travelling on the A832. Views from within Marybank have more screening and the magnitude of change here will be reduced.

7.12.643 The A832 turns a right-angle in Marybank, and over the approximately 1 km stretch that runs from the northern edge of the village, across Moy Bridge, to the A835 junction, visibility of the Proposed Development will be intermittent due to screening and filtering by vegetation. The maximum magnitude of change over this stretch will be **medium-low**.

7.12.644 From Moy Bridge to Gorstan, the A832 is signed as the A835, and the assessment for that route should be referred to. At Gorstan, the A832 turns to run westwards and the Proposed Development will lie behind north-westbound travellers, no longer affecting views in this direction.

North-West to South-East

7.12.645 Travelling in a south-east direction, the A832 enters the 20 km study area at Knockban, near Viewpoint 26. The ZTV shows sometimes intermittent theoretical visibility between here and Grudie, over a distance of approximately 9 km. The magnitude of change at Viewpoint 26 is assessed to be **medium-low**, and this will be the maximum magnitude of change found on this stretch due to the limited and intermittent theoretical visibility of the turbines, which is further reduced by vegetation along the roadside and on the skyline.

7.12.646 At Grudie, the ZTV shows the start of a stretch of more consistent theoretical visibility that extends to Gorstan, where the A832 is signed as the A835. The stretch of the A832 between here and the south end of Loch Garve runs through the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340), and the description for this LCT notes the following relevant points.

> *"The character varies along the length of straths, from relatively enclosed, sheltered pastures to more open broad green fields, wetlands, broad river braids and natural shorelines. The open strath floor is the central visual focus, with views directed along and between opposite slopes. Visibility is limited where the strath curves through the landscape, resulting in a gradual change of scenery and a sense of intrigue. This is enhanced on un-improved roads which more closely follow the line of slopes…*
>
> *The sense of enclosure within the strath is partially influenced by landcover. An open water body provides the least enclosure of space, whilst vertical elements such as trees and buildings create further enclosure and their vertical edges emphasise the flatness of the strath ground. Blocks of woodland physically and visually break up the open character by subdividing the central space and reducing the extent of views along the strath. The sheltered, enclosed, farmed and settled character of these straths, and the presence of human activity, results in a landscape which is distinct from the surrounding uninhabited upland landscapes."*

7.12.647 This is relevant for this stretch of the road, which is largely unimproved over some parts in terms of its routing and closely follows the landform of the Strath.

7.12.648 As described by NatureScot, woodland along the road continues to screen and filter almost all visibility until the road reaches the western edge of Lochluichart, whereupon there are a few brief glimpses of visibility. When the Proposed Development is visible, the outlook will be similar to that seen at Viewpoint 27, but often with more filtering by woodland. This section of the road twists and turns so that views change quickly for travellers, and the Proposed Development will also frequently lie perpendicular to the direction of travel. The magnitude of change at Viewpoint 27 is assessed to be **medium-low** for people travelling on this stretch of the A832, and this level of change will be the maximum on the few views that are gained from the stretch of the road through Lochluichart.

7.12.649 After Lochluichart, woodland continues to almost completely screen views until just west of Corriemoillie Farm, where the landscape opens up. From here to Gorstan, a distance of approximately 3.8 km, there will be intermittent visibility of the Proposed Development in the broad direction of travel, but with frequent and sometimes dense woodland screening. The distance from the Proposed Development ranges from around 6.6 km to just over 3 km. Over this stretch, the level and type of visibility will vary, ranging from a **negligible** magnitude of change to the **high-medium** level of change that is seen at Viewpoint 28.

7.12.650 From Gorstan to just beyond Viewpoint 24 the A832 is signed as the A835, and the assessment for that route should be referred to. To the east of Viewpoint 24, the Proposed Development will lie behind south-eastbound travellers and will no longer affect views in this direction.

7.12.651 In summary, the magnitude of change on the great majority of views from the A832 will be a maximum of **low** due to lack of or very limited, intermittent and briefly glimpsed visibility. There are, however, several stretches where the magnitude of change is increased for travellers in both directions, as described below. This assessment does not include the part of the A832 that is signed as the A835; this stretch is covered in the assessment of effects on the A835.

South-East to North-West

- an intermittent **medium-low** magnitude of change over approximately 500 m to the west of Urray West Church; and
- an intermittent **medium-low** magnitude of change over approximately 2.7 km from Urray to Marybank and the A835 junction.

North-West to South-East

- very brief glimpses with a **medium-low** magnitude of change in Strath Bran and Lochluichart; and
- a very intermittent **high-medium** or **medium** magnitude of change between around Corriemoillie Farm and Gorstan.

Significance of Effect

7.12.652 The effect of the Proposed Development on the great majority of views from the A832 will be not significant due to lack of, or very limited, intermittent and briefly glimpsed visibility. There are, however, several stretches where a significant effect is likely to arise. This assessment does not include stretch that is signed as the A835; this is covered in the assessment of effects on the A835.

South-East to North-West

- An intermittent moderate and **significant** effect over approximately 2.7 km between Urray and the A835 junction, due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views from this stretch and the maximum medium-low magnitude of change. A moderate effect can be as significant or not significant; in this case it is assessed as significant due to the open and fairly consistent nature of the views (although there is filtering by vegetation and buildings) and the appearance of the Proposed Development at a slightly angled view to the direction of travel.

North-West to South-East

- An intermittent major-moderate (as seen at Viewpoint 28) or moderate **significant** effect over approximately 3.8 km between around Corriemoillie Farm and Gorstan, due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views from this stretch and the maximum high-medium magnitude of change. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as significant due to the intermittent but sometimes consistent visibility of the Proposed Development that can be gained from parts of this stretch.

7.12.653 There is one location – a stretch of approximately 500 m to the west of West Urray Church - on the south-east to north-west route where a moderate and **not significant** effect will arise due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views and medium-low magnitude of change on them. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as **not significant** due to the very brief nature of the view and the moving nature of viewers.

7.12.654 Similarly, on the north-west to south-east route, there are short stretches as the road passes through Strath Bran and then Lochluichart where a moderate and **not significant** effect will arise due to a combination of the high-medium sensitivity of views and medium-low magnitude of change on them. In this case the moderate effect is assessed as **not significant** due to the very brief nature of the views; the moving nature of viewers; in Lochluichart, the twisting and turning nature of the road; and in Strath Bran, the distance of the Proposed Development from the road.

7.12.655 It is important to note that these effects will vary throughout the year as the seasons change, and effects that are significant in winter might be not significant in summer when trees are in leaf and views are less open. It is unlikely that the birch woodland that lines extensive stretches of the road will be removed.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.656 Visibility of operational and consented wind farms is described above. In addition to these sites, there is limited and distant theoretical visibility of the application stage Abhainn Dubh Wind Farm from a very short stretch of the road to the west of Muir of Ord.

7.12.657 The very limited and/or distant and often perpendicular or oblique theoretical visibility of cumulative wind farms ensures that the maximum cumulative magnitude of change on views from the A832 will be **low** in all scenarios. Combined with the high-medium or medium sensitivity of views from the road, this leads to a moderate-minor or minor and **not significant** cumulative effect.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.658 The A832 is used during hours of darkness and there is potential for the Proposed Development lighting to be seen by travellers. The hours of darkness sensitivity of the route will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers; people travelling on the A832 will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including, internally, dashboards and internal lights and externally, lights on other vehicles as well as lighting and reflectors on the road infrastructure and, as it passes through settlements, street lighting. Combined with the medium or medium-low value of views from the route (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of the A832 is **medium-low**.

7.12.659 The hours of darkness assessment of the four viewpoints on the A832 concludes that the effects for people travelling on the road will generally be **not significant** in both the 200 cd scenario and when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration. This assessment will also apply to the great majority of the A832. A **significant** effect is, however, assessed in the 200 cd scenario for people travelling eastwards at Viewpoint 28 (A832 near Torriegorrie), and there is likely to be an intermittent **significant** effect on views from the stretch of the A832 around Viewpoint 28 and towards the A835 junction near Gorstan. When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the effect at Viewpoint 28 and on this stretch of the road will become **not significant** due to the reduced lighting intensity, as can be seen on Figure 7.9c and as described at Viewpoint 28.

Principal Visual Receptor: Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.660 The Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh railway line passes a minimum of approximately 2 km to the south of the Proposed Development. The assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Development on views gained by passengers travelling on this railway line. Viewpoints 1 and 27 are located on roads that run close to the railway line and are intended to represent views that might be gained from the train as well as from the road.

7.12.661 From Inverness to Dingwall, the railway line skirts around the south of the Beauly Firth, passing through Beauly and Muir of Ord to reach Dingwall. Much of this stretch of the route passes through the settled agricultural landscape of the Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342). At Dingwall, the line splits, with the eastern branch continuing up the east coast to Thurso and Wick as the Far North Line and the western branch passing through the hills to Kyle of Lochalsh on the west coast.

7.12.662 West of Dingwall, the line initially runs through the River Peffery valley (Farmed River Plains LCT (LCT 342)), along with the A834, before rising north-westwards into the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335), approximately 1.5 km to the north of Strathpeffer. It then skirts around the base of the higher ground before following the southern shore of Loch Garve, where it runs close to the A835 through the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340). At the north-western end of Loch Garve, the route continues northwards through Garve and past Gorstan, before turning westwards in close association with the A832. At the western end of Loch Luichart, the railway deviates from the A832, closely following the northern shore of the loch, before rejoining it at Lochluichart. From here, the line continues to follow several of the River Conon's tributaries, passing to the south of Loch a' Chuilinn and Loch Achanalt before reaching Achanalt station near the mouth of the River Bran. Just to the east of Achanalt station, the railway leaves the corridor of the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT (LCT 340) which it has followed since Loch Garve, and enters the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes LCT (LCT 330). The railway and A832 run together through Strath Bran as far as Achnasheen, where the railway turns south-westwards while the A832 continues to the west, parallel with the A890.

7.12.663 Approximately 7.5 km south-west of Achnasheen, the line drops into Glen Carron and once again lies within the corridor of the Strath - Ross & Cromarty LCT (LCT 340). It then follows

the course of the River Carron until leaving the western edge of the 45 km study area at Loch Dughaill.

7.12.664 The train route is scenic, passing through varied and contrasting landscape types. Some parts of the route gain long, open views, while elsewhere views are tightly enclosed by landform or coniferous forestry.

7.12.665 Operational and consented wind farms that are theoretically visible from the railway include Corriemoillie, Fairburn, Kirkan, Lochluichart and Extension, Lochluichart Extension II, and Novar and Extension, some of which are seen at Viewpoints 1 and 27. The cumulative ZTVs indicate that theoretical visibility of these wind farms is generally very limited and distant, with only brief stretches of the railway intermittently or very intermittently gaining theoretical visibility. as with the A832, the closest cumulative sites to the railway are the cluster of operational and consented schemes at Corriemoillie/Lochluichart, but even these have very limited visibility due to landform screening and further screening by woodland and forestry. Fairburn has theoretical visibility, but this is also very limited due to screening by landform and woodland/forestry. Visibility of Novar is very limited and distant.

7.12.666 The value of views from the Inverness - Kyle of Lochalsh railway line is medium. This railway line is a scenic route, which implies an informal value to views, and it passes through the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA as well as various stretches overlooking other designated areas, including the Ben Wyvis SLA and Wester Ross NSA. The susceptibility to change is medium as some people using the route are likely to have a focus on the scenery and surrounding landscape. The combination of the medium susceptibility to change and the medium value of views results in a **medium** sensitivity for views from the Inverness - Kyle of Lochalsh railway line.

Magnitude of Change

7.12.667 The magnitude of change is described travelling in a northward direction. The magnitude of change can apply to people who are travelling northbound or southbound, as views are gained perpendicular to the railway, and people can travel facing in either direction. The assessment covers those parts of the railway that are within the 20 km study area, as the potential for significant effects to arise from the Proposed Development is considered to be contained within this area.

7.12.668 While the ZTV shows the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, it is important to note that actual visibility is considerably reduced by screening along the tracks. While buildings often prevent long views from trains as they pass through settlements, the main screening component on this route is trackside woodland. The majority of this is dense self-seeded native birch woodland and, as birches are deciduous trees, views range from being heavily screened in summer to more lightly filtered in winter. Birch trees have dense but slender branches that provide some screening in winter even without leaves, and this is particularly noticeable when the trees grow thickly and close together as they do along many parts of this railway. This assessment has been carried out in autumn, when leaves are largely, but not completely, off the trees and the assessment has been carried out on the basis of very little leaf cover on the trees.

7.12.669 The railway enters the 20 km study area near Kirkhill, east of Beauly. The ZTV shows theoretical visibility from here, but the distance of this stretch of the railway from the Proposed Development – just under 20 km away – combined with filtering by trackside vegetation ensures that the maximum magnitude of change will be **low**. The next stretch of theoretical visibility is to the south of Muir of Ord, near Windhill, where there is potential for a very brief glimpse of the Proposed Development from approximately 17 km away. The maximum magnitude of change here will also be **low**.

7.12.670 As the railway passes through Muir of Ord, buildings and vegetation will prevent visibility until just to the north of the settlement, where intermittent views towards the Proposed Development can be gained over a stretch of approximately 1.5-2 km, with some filtering and screening by trackside vegetation, at a distance of approximately 13.5 km away. The maximum magnitude of change here will be **medium-low**, restricted by the brief and moving nature of the views and the intermittent screening.

7.12.671 This theoretical visibility ceases several kilometres to the south of Conon Bridge due to landform screening, and there is no further theoretical visibility until the railway reaches

Dingwall. Whilst the ZTV shows some limited theoretical visibility as it passes through Dingwall, this will be screened by buildings and vegetation. There is a short stretch of theoretical visibility to the north-west of Dingwall, but while glimpsed views might be gained from here, there is intermittent screening by vegetation and the views will also be restricted as they are gained in the direction of travel of the train rather than in the more open perpendicular angle of view. The maximum magnitude of change on these views will be **medium-low**.

7.12.672 Theoretical visibility then ceases again just after the railway crosses the A834 and landform continues to screen the Proposed Development until around Achterneed. Between Achterneed and just before the railway bridge across the Black Water, the ZTV shows limited and intermittent theoretical visibility, almost all of which is screened by local landform, cuttings, and trackside vegetation. This stretch of the railway passes through the Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland LCT (LCT 335), and the views are characterised by the woodland and craggy landform of this LCT. The NatureScot description of this LCT notes the nature of views that are available, stating "*most views from within this landscape are enclosed by rocky outcrops and tree cover giving an overall intimate character, the eye often focusing on details such as exposed rock strata, water movement, and the jumbled arrangement of vegetation amongst moss and lichen covered boulders. Nearby mountains and lochs are a constant backdrop and usually glimpsed through tree cover. Views occasionally open out over water bodies and down wider glens*."

7.12.673 As suggested in this description, there are several brief open views to the north-west, where the Proposed Development might be glimpsed and the magnitude of change here will be a maximum of **medium**, restricted by the very intermittent nature of the views, the limited visibility of the Proposed Development and the brief, moving glimpses that would be available.

7.12.674 Just to the east of the Black Water bridge, views open up again as the railway joins the southern edge of Loch Garve, and theoretical visibility continues as it follows the southern side of Loch Garve, through the settlement of Garve to the west of Gorstan, covering approximately 7 km. This stretch of the route follows the A835 very closely, and the level of theoretical and actual visibility is very similar to that seen from the road, with some landform screening and extensive filtering by birch woodland along the edge of the loch. Where the Proposed Development is visible, the type of visibility available ranges from a similar view to that seen at Viewpoint 24, which is in a layby beside the A835, to that seen at Viewpoint 1, in Garve. It should be noted, however, that as it runs along the loch, the railway often runs at a lower level than the A835, including as it passes north of Viewpoint 24, and this increases the focus of travellers on the loch rather than the skyline where the Proposed Development will be seen.

7.12.675 The maximum magnitude of change over this stretch will be **high-medium**, but this will arise only very intermittently due to landform and woodland screening. While the Proposed Development will be seen on a prominent skyline, the focus of views from this stretch of the railway is very much over the loch, which draws the eye downwards and along the waterbody rather than across it to the Proposed Development.

7.12.676 Towards the northern end of this stretch, in Garve, the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development reduces due to landform screening, as seen at Viewpoint 1, and the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium**, as assessed at Viewpoint 1. To the north of Garve, south of Gorstan, visibility increases again as the railway rises above the level of the A835 and a more open outlook of the Proposed Development will be available. Here, the maximum **high-medium** magnitude of change is likely to arise intermittently, with some filtering by vegetation. Where there is clear and open visibility, the Proposed Development will have a similar appearance to that seen at Viewpoint 28.

7.12.677 Beyond this, west of Gorstan, the railway realigns to run westwards, and while theoretical visibility remains, the Proposed Development will have a considerably reduced effect on views as the direction of the train is towards/away from the Proposed Development and the main view of the rail passengers will be perpendicular to this. Trackside vegetation also increases, and views will be screened and filtered by woodland. Visibility will continue to be very limited until the railway reaches Lochluichart, and the maximum magnitude of change will be **medium-low**.

7.12.678 In Lochluichart, in the vicinity of Viewpoint 27, actual visibility increases again for a short stretch of several hundred metres - as trackside vegetation reduces and the railway turns southwards, allowing a more perpendicular view to be gained. The maximum magnitude of

change here will be **medium**, as seen at Viewpoint 27. Shortly thereafter, to the east of Lochluichart Station, vegetation once again filters views and the railway runs in the direct line of view towards the Proposed Development, greatly restricting views of passengers. The maximum magnitude of change here will be **medium-low**. Views from the station itself are screened by woodland.

7.12.679 Theoretical visibility ceases at Grudie, recommencing with very limited and intermittent theoretical visibility as the railway passes to the south of Loch a' Chuilinn, where views will also be limited by the appearance of the Proposed Development in the line of travel of the train rather than perpendicular. While theoretical visibility increases as the train runs westwards from here, actual visibility will continue to be limited by the angle of view towards the Proposed Development as well as by increasing distance from the Proposed Development, and the maximum magnitude of change will be **low**. At Viewpoint 26, the railway leaves the 20 km study area, with the Proposed Development still seen in the direct line of travel of the train.

Significance of Effect

7.12.680 The effect of the Proposed Development on the great majority of views from the Kyle of Lochalsh railway line will be **not significant** due to lack of, or very limited, intermittent and briefly glimpsed visibility, and a resultant maximum medium-low magnitude of change. There are, however, several stretches where the magnitude of change is increased: between around Achterneed and just to the east of the Black Water bridge, where an extremely intermittent medium magnitude of change may arise; between east of the Black Water bridge and west of Gorstan, where an intermittent/very intermittent medium or high-medium magnitude of change will arise; and in Lochluichart, where a medium magnitude of change will arise.

7.12.681 Over the first of these stretches, between around Achterneed and just to the east of the Black Water bridge, the effect will be moderate and **not significant** due to the extremely intermittent, brief and glimpsed nature of views that are gained by moving viewers.

7.12.682 Over the stretch between east of the Black Water bridge and west of Gorstan, an intermittent/very intermittent moderate and **significant** effect will arise over a stretch of around 7 km long as the railway passes Loch Garve and then through Garve. A moderate and **significant** effect will also arise in Lochluichart over a stretch of approximately 500 m in the vicinity of Viewpoint 27. These moderate effects are assessed as significant for the reasons described at Viewpoints 1, 24 and 27.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.683 Visibility of operational and consented wind farms is described above. In addition to these sites, there is limited and distant theoretical visibility of the application stage Abhainn Dubh Wind Farm from a very short stretch of the railway to the south of Conon Bridge, where it would be seen in the direct line of travel of the train, which means that passengers would be very unlikely to gain clear visibility.

7.12.684 The very limited and/or distant theoretical visibility of cumulative wind farms ensures that the maximum cumulative magnitude of change on views from the Kyle of Lochalsh railway will be **low** in all scenarios. Combined with the medium sensitivity of views from the road, this leads to a minor and **not significant** cumulative effect.

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.685 The railway is used during hours of darkness and there is potential for the Proposed Development lighting to be seen by travellers. The hours of darkness sensitivity of the route will differ from the daytime sensitivity due to a reduction in the susceptibility of viewers; people travelling on the railway will have a low susceptibility due to the existing light sources to which they are exposed including primarily internal lights but also external lighting along parts of the route, particularly as it passes through settlements and stations. Combined with the medium value of views (which remains the same as during the daytime), the hours of darkness sensitivity of the Kyle of Lochalsh railway line is **medium-low**.

7.12.686 The hours of darkness assessment of the two viewpoints that illustrate a similar outlook to that gained from the railway (Viewpoint 1 and 27) concludes that the effects will be **not significant** in both the 200 cd scenario and when vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration. This assessment will also apply to the great majority of the railway line. There

are, however, likely to be very intermittent **significant** effects in the 200 cd scenario on the stretch between east of the Black Water bridge and west of Gorstan, arising where there is clear visibility of the lighting and where open views are gained with no screening or filtering by trees or woodland and with no baseline lighting other than lights within the train. When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the effect on this stretch will become **not significant** due to the reduced lighting intensity, as can be seen on Figure 7.9c and as described at Viewpoints 1 and 24, which are located on the A835 close to the railway.

Principal Visual Receptor: Core Paths

Baseline and Sensitivity

7.12.687 This assessment draws broad conclusions from the viewpoint assessment as to the level of visibility and effects that the Proposed Development will have on views from the core path network within a 20 km radius. The viewpoint assessment has indicated that effects on views gained from beyond 20 km away will be not significant and these more distant routes are therefore discounted from the assessment. Core paths that lie within 20 km of the nearest turbine in the Proposed Development are shown on Figure 7.6b and in conjunction with the ZTV on Figure 7.13b.

7.12.688 A number of the LVIA viewpoints are located on or near and are accessed by core paths and are therefore of particular relevance to this assessment. These include Viewpoint 7, Viewpoint 8, Viewpoint 11, Viewpoint 19 and Viewpoint 33. Other viewpoints are located on paths or routes which, while not core paths, are also relevant as they are used by people walking; these are Viewpoint 4, Viewpoint 5, Viewpoint 6, Viewpoint 12, Viewpoint 14, Viewpoint 16, Viewpoint 29, Viewpoint 30, Viewpoint 31 and Viewpoint 32.

7.12.689 Sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value attached to the views from the core paths and the susceptibility of viewers to the Proposed Development. While the value of views from paths can vary according to the specific views that are gained, as described at the viewpoints, for the purpose of this specific assessment, it has been assumed that the value of views is high-medium due to their identification as core paths. The susceptibility to change of viewers is high as views from core paths are gained by people engaging in outdoor recreation who are likely to have a specific focus on the views available. The combination of the high susceptibility to change of viewers and the high-medium value of the views results in a **high** sensitivity for views from the core path network.

Significance of Effect

7.12.690 The viewpoint assessment gives an indication of the effect that the Proposed Development is likely to have on views from core paths within the 20 km radius. In the viewpoint assessment, significant effects are found from between 980 m (Viewpoint 4 (Little Wyvis)) and 9.37 km (Viewpoint 10 (Marybank)) away from the Proposed Development, with magnitude of change ranging from high to medium-low. There are viewpoints within this distance range that have a not significant effect, and significant effects will arise only where there is clear and open visibility of the Proposed Development, particularly at greater distances from the Proposed Development, as is the case at Viewpoint 10.

7.12.691 Very broadly, it may therefore be concluded that where there is clear and open visibility of the Proposed Development from core paths within approximately 10 km of the Proposed Development, the effect on views is likely to be **significant**. Where visibility is more limited, effects within this range may be not significant, and it should be noted that a number of core paths do pass through forested areas where vegetation restricts the occurrence of clear and open views of the Proposed Development. Effects beyond around 10 km are likely to be **not significant** although significant effects may arise in specific circumstances, e.g. where there is a specific directional or framed view towards the Proposed Development. The high sensitivity of views from core paths ensures that significant effects may arise at greater distances than views from receptors that have a lower sensitivity, such as roads that are not identified as tourist routes.

Cumulative Effect

7.12.692 Significant cumulative effects are found at four of the LVIA viewpoints, all arising in specific circumstances of cumulative visibility. It is not possible to draw overall conclusions as to the occurrence of significant cumulative effects, and the likelihood of significant cumulative effects arising on views from core paths requires to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. There are

no significant cumulative effects on LVIA viewpoints that are located on core paths, but three of the significant cumulative effects found in the viewpoint assessment are in locations accessed by walkers (Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6).

Hours of Darkness Effect

7.12.693 The viewpoint assessment gives an indication of the effect that the Proposed Development is likely to have on hours of darkness views from core paths within the 20 km radius. In the viewpoint assessment, significant hours of darkness effects are found in the 200 cd scenario from between 980 m (Viewpoint 4 (Little Wyvis)) and 5.37 km (Viewpoint 8 (Loch Kinellan) away from the Proposed Development. Viewpoint 8 is located on a core path. There are viewpoints within this distance range that have a not significant hours of darkness effect, and significant effects will arise only where there is clear and open visibility of lighting on the Proposed Development, particularly at greater distances from the Proposed Development, as is the case at Viewpoint 8.

7.12.694 Very broadly, it may therefore be concluded that where there is clear and open visibility of the Proposed Development from core paths within approximately 5.5 km of the Proposed Development, the hours of darkness effect on views is likely to be **significant** in the 200 cd scenario. Where visibility is more limited, effects within this range may be not significant. Effects beyond around 5.5 km are likely to be **not significant** although significant effects may arise in specific circumstances, e.g. where there is a specific directional view towards the Proposed Development from a location that is popular for stargazing.

7.12.695 When vertical directional intensity mitigation is taken into consideration, the effects on all viewpoints included in the assessment are **not significant**, and this is likely to apply to the majority of views from core paths, although there may be very specific circumstances where a significant effect is found despite vertical directional intensity mitigation.

7.12.696 It is important to remember that people using paths at night are likely to be carrying a torch, which will reduce the effect of the Proposed Development lighting.

7.13 Summary

7.13.1 The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and record the potential effects that the Proposed Development will have on physical elements of the landscape; landscape character; areas that have been designated or otherwise identified for their scenic or landscape-related qualities; and views from various locations such as settlements, routes, tourism features and other sensitive locations. The potential cumulative effects that will arise from the addition of the Proposed Development to other wind farms are also considered.

7.13.2 The study area for the LVIA covers a radius of 45 km from the outer turbines in the Proposed Development. The assessment has shown that the effect on the landscape and visual resource of the great majority of this study area will be not significant, which means that the effect of the Proposed Development will not be one of the defining influences, and the existing characteristics of the landscape and views will continue to prevail. The assessment indicates that the Proposed Development will not affect any national landscape planning designations and will not significantly affect local scenic designations with the exception of the Ben Wyvis SLA.

7.13.3 While the effect on the landscape and visual resource of the majority of the study area will be not significant, as described above, the LVIA has indicated that there is potential for the Proposed Development to result in some significant effects within the 20 km study area that has been defined for the detailed assessment. The LVIA has identified that there is potential for significant effects to arise as follows:

- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on the landscape character of the site and some parts of its surroundings up to a maximum of approximately 5.5 km away from the nearest turbine, including the following landscape character types:
  - Rounded Rocky Hills (LCT 331);
  - Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes (LCT 330);
  - Rounded Mountain Massif (LCT 329);

- Forest Edge Farming (LCT 341);
- Strath - Ross & Cromarty (LCT 340);
- Wooded Glens and Rocky Moorland (LCT 335);

- localised intermittent significant effect on the Ben Wyvis SLA;
- significant effect on one of the WLQs of WLA 29, up to a maximum of approximately 5 km away from the Proposed Development;
- very intermittent significant effects on views from the settlements of Contin (as seen at Viewpoint 23) and Garve (as seen at Viewpoint 1), restricted to areas where there is a clear, open view with high visibility of the Proposed Development;
- intermittent significant effects on views from residential areas (that are not classified as settlements) around Gorstan (as seen at Viewpoint 2), Lochluichart (Viewpoint 27), Marybank (Viewpoint 10) and Tarvie (Viewpoint 3);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from several stretches of the A835, including in the vicinity of Contin (Viewpoint 23) and the south end of Loch Garve (Viewpoint 24);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from several stretches of the A832, including in the vicinity of Marybank (Viewpoint 10) and Torriegorrie (Viewpoint 28);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from several stretches of the Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line, including in the vicinity of Garve (Viewpoint 1), the south end of Loch Garve (Viewpoint 24) and Lochluichart (Viewpoint 27);
- intermittent or very intermittent significant effects on views from paths (including core paths), up to a maximum of approximately 10 km away, where there is a clear, open view with high visibility of the Proposed Development, including:
  - core path at Loch Kinellan (Viewpoint 8);
  - core path at Knockfarrel (Viewpoint 11);
  - Peffery Way at Fodderty Cemetery (Viewpoint 12);
  - views from hilltops/walking destinations at:
  - Little Wyvis (Viewpoint 4);
  - An Cabar (Viewpoint 5); and
  - Glas Leathad Mor (Ben Wyvis) (Viewpoint 6).

7.13.4 As well as assessing the effect of the Proposed Development itself, the LVIA considers the cumulative effect that may arise when the Proposed Development is added to various scenarios of operational, under-construction, consented and application-stage wind farms. The 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 four viewpoints – Tarvie (Viewpoint 3), Little Wyvis (Viewpoint 4), An Cabar (Viewpoint 5) and Glas Leathad Mor (Viewpoint 6) – as well as very intermittent and localised cumulative significant effects on part of the Ben Wyvis unit of Rounded Mountain Massif LCT (LCT 329), the Ben Wyvis SLA, and one of the WLQs of WLA 29.

7.13.5 The hours of darkness assessment has indicated that a significant effect is likely to arise from visible aviation lighting in the 200 cd scenario only at the following locations:

- views from residential areas at Gorstan (as seen at Viewpoint 2) and Tarvie;
- views from hilltops/walking destinations at Little Wyvis and An Cabar (and an effect on WLA 29 at these locations);

- the core path at Loch Kinellan;
- intermittent/very intermittent effect on views gained by people travelling on the A835 between Garve (Viewpoint 1) and the south end of Loch Garve (Viewpoint 24) but not at these viewpoints;
- the view gained by people who have stopped in the layby on the A835 at Viewpoint 24;
- intermittent/very intermittent effect on views gained by people travelling on the A832 at and around Torriegorrie;
- very intermittent significant effects on views gained by people travelling on the Inverness – Kyle of Lochalsh railway line on the stretch between east of the Black Water bridge and west of Gorstan; and
- views from core paths up to approximately 5.5 km away from the Proposed Development.

7.13.6 This summary indicates that the Proposed Development will result in some significant effects, including hours of darkness effects, on aspects of the landscape and visual resource. It is important to note, however, that assessments of this type tend to focus on those locations and receptors where significant effects may arise. There are large parts of the 45 km study area where ZTVs show that there will be no visibility of the Proposed Development at all or very limited visibility, and this should be taken into consideration in the review of significant effects of the Proposed Development.

7.14 References

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