

Coille Beith Wind Farm

Technical Appendix 4.1: Landscape Character Descriptions

June 2025



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1. Location and Extent of Landscape Character Types

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The following appraisal of landscape character types (LCTs) is based on NatureScot's (NS) online national landscape character¹ and seascape character assessment² databases.
- 1.1.2 **Figure 4.3** (EIA Report Volume 3a) presents the location and extent of LCTs within the Study Area, within which potential for a significant effect is most likely. All LCTs that have potential for a significant landscape or visual effect within the Study Area are listed in **Table 1.1**. LCTs that are present within the Study Area but fall entirely out of the viewshed of theoretical visibility for the Proposed Development have been omitted from further assessment, see **Figure 4.4** (EIA Report Volume 3a).
- 1.1.3 In addition, a number of LCTs have been omitted on the basis of a combination of distance and consequent reduced prominence, the screening effect of intervening landform and/or vegetation and the anticipated limit of influence of the Proposed Development on key characteristics of the relevant LCTs.
- 1.1.4 The LCTs with the most potential for a significant direct and indirect effects include:
 - LCT 135: Rounded Hills Caithness and Sutherland; and
 - LCT142: Strath Caithness and Sutherland.
- 1.1.5 Other LCTs that are subject to potential effects comprise:
 - LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows;
 - LCT 136: Rocky Hills and Moorland;
 - LCT 137: Cnocan Caithness and Sutherland;
 - LCT 138: Lone Mountains;
 - LCT 139: Rugged Mountain Massif Caithness and Sutherland;
 - LCT 145: Farmed and Forested Slopes with Crofting;
 - LCT 328: Rugged Mountain Massif Ross and Cromarty;
 - LCT 329: Rounded Mountain Massif;
 - LCT 330: Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes Ross and Cromarty; and
 - LCT 332: High Rock Moorland and Plateau Ross and Cromarty.

1.2 Description of Key Characteristics and Sensitivity of LCTs

- 1.2.1 **Table 1.1** provides a summary and justification of the LCTs to be discounted and the justification for their omission from detailed assessment. **Table 1.2** contains details of the key characteristics of LCTs and their sensitivity to the type of development proposed based on the criteria set out in **Section 4.5** of **Chapter 4** (EIA Report Volume 2). These have been verified during fieldwork during the autumn and winter of 2024 and spring 2025.
- 1.2.2 **Table 1.3** provides an assessment of residual effects during the operational phase, on the basis that this this is a 'worst case' and effects during construction, and decommissioning would be short term, limited in extent, and reversible. Landscape and visual effects during construction and decommissioning would be equivalent.
- 1.2.3 In assessing potential cumulative landscape and visual effects consideration has been given to 'In-Addition' effects attributable specifically to the Proposed Development, as well as its 'In Combination' effects, where the combined effect of the Proposed Development and other cumulative schemes are taken into account. **Chapter 4** (EIA Report Volume 2) contains a detailed description of the methodology used in the assessment of cumulative effects.

 ¹ NatureScot (2019) Scottish Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <u>https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscapecharacter-assessment/landscape-character-assessment-scotland</u> [Accessed January 2025)
 ² NatureScot (2019) Description of Coastal Character Types. Available at: <u>https://www.nature.scot/doc/description-coastal-character-typesincluding-caithness</u> [Accessed January 2025]



Table 1.1: Landscape Character Types to be Carried Forward to Detailed Assessment	ŧ .
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Landscape Character Type	Distance and Direction from the Site	Assessed in the LVIA	Justification for Omission		
Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Landscape Character Types (LCTs)				
LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows	13.5 km north and northeast	No	There is an area of low-level visibility to the northwest approximately 18 km from the Site and an additional area of theoretical visibility at over 23 km within south and southwest facing summits and elevated locations within and adjacent to extensive areas of commercial forestry to the northeast. Where visible the Proposed Development would be seen distantly, beyond a number of existing and consented wind energy developments. The Proposed Development is therefore unlikely to influence the key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent.		
LCT 135: Rounded Hills – Caithness and Sutherland	Proposed Development is located within this LCT	Yes	Not applicable (N/A).		
LCT 136: Rocky Hills and Moorland	22 km northwest	No	Limited area of theoretical visibility at over 22 km and confined to a small number of elevated locations. Where visible the Proposed Development would be seen distantly as a feature within a panoramic view which contains operational wind energy developments. The Proposed Development is therefore unlikely to influence the key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent.		
LCT 137: Cnocan – Caithness and Sutherland	23 km northwest	No	Very limited area of theoretical visibility. Any visibility would be highly localised and intermittent. The Proposed Development would be seen distantly (at distances of over 23 km) and in the context of existing wind energy development. The Proposed Development would therefore be unlikely to pose significant effects on this LCT.		
LCT 138: Lone Mountains	There are four separate units of this LCT, two in the vicinity of Glencannis Forest (25 km northwest), one at Dunaig (34 km northwest), and one by Loch Choire Forest (34 km northeast).	No	The Proposed Development would be seen distantly, and when seen from Loch Choire Forest would be seen in the context of intervening wind farms. Seen from Glencannis and Dunaig units the Proposed Development would be seen distantly and in close conjunction with other operational wind farms such as Achany and Rosehall which are relatively closer. The Proposed Development is therefore unlikely to influence the key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent.		
LCT 139: Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness and Sutherland	2.9 km southeast, south and west	Yes	N/A		
LCT 142: Strath – Caithness and Sutherland	Proposed Development is located within this LCT	Yes	N/A		
LCT 145: Farmed and Forested Slopes with Crofting	There are two separate units of this LCT, one by Lairg (approximately 15 km east northeast) and the second situated along the sides of the Dornoch Firth (19 km to the southeast).	No	Limited theoretical intervisibility comprising up to three turbines from a small section shown to be within or adjacent to a large area of commercial forestry that would interrupt potential views of the Proposed Development. Given the limited extent of theoretical visibility and constrained nature of such visibility it is unlikely that the Proposed Development would constitute significant effects on either unit of the LCT.		
LCT328: Rugged Mountain Massif	12.7 km southwest and west.	Yes	N/A		
LCT 329: Rounded Mountain Massif	13 km south and southwest.	Yes	N/A		



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Landscape Character Type		Assessed in the LVIA	Justification for Omission	
LCT 330: Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross and Cromarty	6.2 km southeast, south and southwest	Yes	N/A	
LCT 332: High Rocky Moorland and Plateau – Ross and Cromarty	10.8 km southwest and west	Yes	N/A	
Seascape Character Types (SCT)				
SCT 11: Less Developed Inner Firths	17 km southeast		Whilst some limited theoretical visibility is predicted within this SCT no discernible views of the Proposed Development are anticipated due to a combination of distance, and the screening effect of intervening topography and vegetation.	

Table 1.2: Landscape Character Types Description and Sensitivity Appraisal

Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Sensitivity to the Proposed Development
LCT 135: Rounded Hills – Caithness and Sutherland	 The key characteristics of the Rounded Hills Caithness and Sutherland LCT are noted as follows: "Rolling hills forming broad, subtly rounded summits but with some more pronounced hills also occurring, these often featuring steeper slopes along the coast or where truncated by deep glens. Hills cut by numerous narrow burns and small lochans lie within dips, corries and on plateau summits. Predominantly dense heather ground cover and moorland grasses, but also some areas of bog. Fragments of broadleaf woodland in inaccessible locations. Scarcely settled with a largely uninhabited interior and widely scattered crofts and farms on lower slopes adjoining straths and farmed landscapes. Narrow glens and lower hill slopes often rich in archaeology with features such as standing stones, brochs and medieval townships. Wind farms located in more accessible and generally lower rolling hills, either close to extensive forestry or the high voltage transmission line aligned broadly parallel to the south-east Sutherland coast. Convex character of hill slopes limiting distant visibility and views of the hill tops when travelling through the landscape. Views into the interior of the hills very restricted. Strong sense of wild character can be experienced within the more remote and little modified parts of this landscape." 	 Susceptibility: High to Medium. Wind energy is an established land use within certain areas of the LCT which lowers the susceptibility of the receptor to this type of development. There would higher susceptibility within the more remote and upland areas, that are relatively undeveloped. The convex character of the rounded hillside topography limits longer- distance views. Value: High to Medium. LCT is partially overlapped by WLA 29: Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis, WLA 34: Reay-Cassley, and WLA: 35 Ben Kilbreck – Armine Forest classifications. Sensitivity: High to Medium.
LCT 139: Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness and Sutherland	 The key characteristics of the Rugged Mountain Massif - Caithness & Sutherland LCT are noted as follows: "Mountains with very steep slopes which are often covered in scree and commonly feature narrow rocky ridges, buttresses, crags and pronounced peaks. Deeply indented sea lochs of Lochs Glendhu and Glencoul and a number of sheer sided glens, cut into the mountains of northwest Sutherland, generally orientated on long northwest to southeast fault lines. Dark, narrow lochs within some of the northwest Sutherland mountain glens. Mountain peaks form landmarks, rising above the interlocking mass of lower slopes and distinguished by their height, distinctive and recognisable profile. Largely uninhabited and difficult to access. The small number of settlements and roads which do exist tend to be located at the edges of this character type and at the intersection of a strath or loch. Interior of this landscape is mainly visited by hill walkers and deer stalkers. 	 Susceptibility: High. Due to the undeveloped and remote nature of this LCT in which the type of development proposed could be seen to be anomalous. Value: High. Located within WLA: 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg- Ben Wyvis classification and SLA:18 Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie designation and recognised for its wild and scenic qualities. Sensitivity: High.



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Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Sensitivity to the Proposed Development
туре	 Limited visibility within the glens which lie between or at the foot of these mountains, due to their steepness of 	
	 slope and immense size. Extensive views of the surrounding landscape and an exhilarating experience of openness and exposure from mountain ridges and summits. 	
	 Natural unmodified character of the high mountains, with their remoteness, ruggedness, and difficulty of access, creating a strong wild character." 	
LCT 142: Strath – Caithness and Sutherland	 The key characteristics of the Strath - Caithness & Sutherland LCT are noted as follows: "Straths range from fairly straight deeply incised troughs to more winding valleys with a number of minor side glens. River terraces and hummocky lower side slopes a common feature. Water is a key characteristic with straths accommodating a central river meandering across the floodplain, often traced by clumps of birch and alder. Smooth and fairly large pastures are the predominant land cover on the floodplains of the straths, commonly enclosed by wire fences. Semi-improved pastures, heather and grass moorland and coniferous plantations covering lower side slopes. Increasing extent of moorland and woodland generally further up the straths, where the floodplain narrows, and settlement is sparser. Some crofts within the Straths more randomly dispersed or staggered on lower hill slopes. Occasional small farms located in the broader and more fertile parts of the straths. Settlement generally denser within the lower reaches of many straths, especially at bridging points, on the coast and close to major roads. Focus in views from roads provided by a number of estate shooting lodges, and clustered, predominantly 19th Century, often estate style buildings. Rounded Hills often forming prominent edges to the straths with shapely well-defined hills, providing a distinctive skyline and scenic backdrop. 	 Susceptibility: High. Due to the distinctive skyline that enclose the Strath which are formed by Rounded Hills – Caithness and Sutherland LCT and the focus on views from roads such as the A837. Value: Medium. LCT is not overlapped by any classification or designations but is valued locally and has scenic value. Sensitivity: High to Medium.
	- Highly scenic backdrop of mountains often revealed in some of the upper reaches of these straths."	
LCT 328: Rugged Mountain Massif	 The key characteristics of Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross and Cromarty are noted as follows: "High rugged mountains on a broad, bulky base, forming discrete groups separated by deep linear glens and fjords. Angular skyline of rocky peaks and ridges, stony summits, steep mountain sides, and scree slopes. Glacial landforms including corries, narrow mountain lochs, deep u-shaped valleys, basin-shaped lochans and deep gorges. High proportion of bare rock on summits. 	 Susceptibility: High. Due to the remote and largely undeveloped nature of the landscape. Value: High. Due to the scenic and diverse nature of this LCT which is overlapped by NSA 36: Assynt – Coigarch and partially overlapped by WLA 32: Interpolly-Glen Canisp Sensitivity: High.
	 Patches and bands of remnant native pinewoods and broadleaf woodland at the base of mountains. Little settlement, few roads or other structures, and little evidence of historic or current land use. Mountain scale and height emphasised by the contrast with surrounding low moorlands and sea, and by reference to the few man-made features present. Wild character derived from the natural, rugged and remote landscape." 	
LCT 329: Rounded Mountain Massif	 The key characteristics of the Rounded Mountain Massif LCT are noted as follows: "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. 	 Susceptibility: High. Due to the wild and undisturbed nature of the landscape Value: High. LCT is overlapped by the SLA17: Ben Wyvis and WLA29: Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis designation/classification.



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Landscape Character Type	Key Characteristics	Sensitivity to the Proposed Development
	 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 a significant extent of the area." 	– Sensitivity: High.
LCT 330: Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross and Cromarty	 The key characteristics of the Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross and Cromarty are noted as follows: "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 and Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross & Cromarty 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. 	 Susceptibility: High. Due to the scenic and wild and generally undeveloped nature of the landscape. Value: High. Located within WLA: 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg- Ben Wyvis classification and SLA:18 Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie designation and recognised for its wild and scenic qualities. Additionally, one of the units of this LCT extends within the Dornoch Firth NSA. Sensitivity: High.
LCT 332: High Rocky Moorland and Plateau – Ross and Cromarty	 Large, remote interior areas of vast scale with wildness characteristics." The key characteristics of the High Rocky Moorland and Plateau – Ross and Cromarty are noted as follows: "High level, undulating, level or slightly inclined plateaux, forming a raised plinth from which adjoining type Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross & Cromarty rises. Mainly rough, patchy texture on the plateaux from numerous strewn boulders, lochans and peat bogs giving a random, raw and unmanaged appearance. Mainly low moorland vegetation, with a few remnants of broadleaf woodlands and Caledonian pine forests and small coniferous forests at lower margins. Modern settlements are absent, man-made structures are relatively scarce, but there is evidence for past land-use, from prehistory onwards. Plateaux are mainly visible from higher ground. The plateaux form a visual and physical buffer between rugged mountains and adjoining more settled landscapes. Views are expansive and open within the plateaux and from the edges. Rugged, remote and natural giving a sense of wild landscape character." 	 Susceptibility: High. Due to the expansive views available and the undeveloped nature of the LCT. Value: High. LCT is overlapped by the WLA29: Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis classification. Sensitivity: High.



Table 1.3: Residual Effects on Landscape Character Types Assessment

	Sensitivity and Magnitude of Impact	Residual Effects on Landscape Character
LCT135: Rounded Hills –	Sensitivity: High to medium	The Proposed Development is located within this LCT and would have direct physical effects on this LCT.
Caithness and Sutherland Refer to Figures 4.3 and 4.4 (EIA Report Volume 3a).		Significant 'En Solo', and In-Addition significant effects would be localised to the Site and areas within proximity, during operation including the area to the west of Strath Cuileannach, and the summit of Beinn an Eoin and would primarily relate to the introduction of a new prominent development within a small-scale landscape. See assessment viewpoints 10, 14, 15 and 19 (Figures 4.22, 4.26, 4.27, and 4.31 (EIA Report Volume 3b)).
		Wind energy is an established land use within certain areas of the LCT which lowers the susceptibility of the receptor to this type of development. There would be higher susceptibility within the more remote and upland areas, that are relatively undeveloped. The convex character of the rounded hillside topography limits longer-distance views. The Proposed Development is therefore unlikely to influence the overall key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent especially considering its geographic extent.
		Effects would range from None (not significant) to Major (significant) within the Site and specific locations within 10 km.
	Sensitivity: High	The Proposed Development is located outwith the LCT and would have no direct physical effect.
Refer to Figures 4.3 and 4.4 (EIA Report Volume 3a).	Magnitude of Impact: Moderate with localised Substantial Magnitude of Impact at Carn a Choin Deirg (under summit)	Significant 'En Solo', and In-Addition significant effects would be localised and relate to panoramic views from the under summit on Carn a Choin Deirg where the Proposed Development is prominent in views. The key characteristics of this LCT which relate to its undeveloped and remote nature would be susceptible to urbanising influences from the type of development proposed, which could be seen to be anomalous. These effects would relate to specific locations within the LCT. Overall the Proposed Development is therefore unlikely to influence the key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent. See viewpoints 6, 13, 17, and 23 (Figures 4.18, 4.25, 4.29, and 4.35 (EIA Report Volume 3b)).
		Overall effects would range from None (not significant) up to Major/Moderate (significant)
LCT 142: Strath – Caithness	Sensitivity: High	The Proposed Development is located partially within the LCT.
and Sutherland Refer to Figures 4.3 and 4.4 (EIA Report Volume 3a).	Substantial	En Solo' and In-Addition and In-Combination significant effects would be localised to areas located within the Site or areas adjacent and along Strath Oykel. They would relate primarily to proximity and the introduction of a new and prominent development on the sensitive skyline of the strath. See viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 16, 20 and 24 (Figures 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.28, 4.32 and 4.36 (EIA Report Volume 3b)).
		Effects would range from None (not significant) beyond 10 km to the north and southeast up to Major (significant) from areas within 5 km that overlook the Proposed Development from Oykel Bridge, Strath Oykel and Strath Cuileannach and from where the eastern access option extends into the LCT. Given the geographical extent of the LCT this is unlikely to influence the key characteristics overall to a significant extent, although the concentration of effects along the length of a narrow extension of this LCT would emphasise the effects within the immediate context of the Strath.
		Effects would range from None (not significant) up to Major (significant)
LCT 328: Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross and Cromarty	Sensitivity: High	The Proposed Development is located outwith the LCT and would have no direct physical effect.
Refer to Figures 4.3 and 4.4	Magnitude of Impact: Up to Slight	No 'En Solo' or In-Addition significant effects have been identified for this LCT. There would be potential for In-Combination significant effects in consideration of in-scoping schemes, but these wind farms have a high degree of uncertainty and may not be brought forward. See viewpoints 1 and 4 (Figures 4.13 , and 4.16 (EIA Report Volume 3b)).
(EIA Report Volume 3a).		The key characteristics of this LCT, which relate to its undeveloped and remote nature, would be susceptible to urbanising influences from the type of development proposed, which could be seen to be anomalous. These effects would be highly localised and relate to views from summits such as Glas Mheall Mor and Cul More which are located over 27 km from the Site and have a developed context that includes operational wind farms such as Achany, Rosehall and Gordonbush. The Proposed Development does not influence the key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent. Effects would range from None (not significant) up to Moderate (not significant)



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	Sensitivity and Magnitude of Impact	Residual Effects on Landscape Character
LCT 329: Rounded Mountain Massif Refer to Figures 4.3 and 4.4 (EIA Report Volume 3a).	Magnitude of Impact: Up to	The Proposed Development is located outwith the LCT and would have no direct physical effect. No 'En Solo' or In-Addition significant effects have been identified for this LCT. There would be potential for In-Combination significant effects in consideration of in-scoping schemes, but these wind farms have a high degree of uncertainty and may not be brought forward. See viewpoint 12 (Figure 4.24 (EIA Report Volume 3b). Effects would be localised to Ben Wyvis and would relate to influences on the perceptual experience of the wild and undisturbed nature of the landscape on panoramic and long-distance views. The Proposed Development would intensify indirect effects on the degree of remoteness; however, views already have a developed context, and the Proposed Development would not introduce a wholly new feature to views. The Proposed Development does not influence the key characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent. Effects would range from None (not significant) up to Moderate/Minor (not significant).
	Sensitivity: High Magnitude of Impact: Up to Negligible	The Proposed Development is located outwith the LCT and would have no direct physical effect. There is limited visibility from this LCT, and no significant En Solo, In-Addition or In-Combination effects have been identified. Low level visual effects would be localised and relate to intermittent views from higher ground to the west near Cnoc Damh and summits south of the Dornoch Firth near Cnoc Muigh-bhlaraidh and Beinn Tharsuinn. The key characteristics of this LCT relate to its topography, large-scale and the physical elements that make up the landscape. These features would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. There is some potential for an influence on the perceptual qualities in relation to wildness, but wind energy and transmission is an established land use within certain areas of the LCT, particularly in views to the Site from the southeast and the Proposed Development is therefore unlikely to influence the characteristics of this LCT to a significant extent. Effects would range from None (not significant) up to Moderate/Minor (not significant).
Moorland and Plateau – Ross and Cromarty	Sensitivity: High Magnitude of Impact: Up to Negligible	The Proposed Development is located outwith the LCT and would have no direct physical effect. There is limited visibility from this LCT, and no significant En Solo, In-Addition or In-Combination effects have been identified. The key characteristics of this LCT relate to its rugged and remote nature with limited contemporary influences. These qualities would be susceptible to urbanising influences from the type of development proposed, which could be seen to be anomalous. These effects would be highly localised and relate to specific locations on the edges of the LCT with open and expansive views to the east from near Rhiddoroch Forest and from the east facing slopes of Beinn Eilideach. Views to Loch Broom and the coastline would be unaffected. Effects would range from None (not significant) up to Moderate/Minor (not significant).

