

Coille Beith Wind Farm

Technical Appendix 4.6: Wild Land Impact Assessment

June 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 Policy 4, paragraph (g) of the adopted National Policy Framework¹ (NPF4) for Scotland states that:
- “Development proposals in areas identified as wild land in the NatureScot Wild Land Areas Map² will only be supported where the proposal:*
- *Will support meeting renewable energy targets; or*
 - *Is for small scale development linked to rural business or croft, or is required to support fragile community in a rural area.*
- All such proposals must be accompanied by a wild land impact assessment which sets out how to design, site, and/or incorporate other mitigation measure to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of the wild land, as well as any management and monitoring arrangements where appropriate”*
- 1.1.2 The Proposed Development is located outwith a defined Wild Land Area (WLA) and so such policy provision does not apply. NPF4 in relation with the effects of development outwith WLAs clearly states that:
- “Buffer zones around wild land areas will not be applied, and effects of development outwith wild land areas will not be a significant consideration.” (“Part 2 – National Planning Policy - National Planning Framework 4 - gov ...”)*
- 1.1.3 NatureScot confirmed in July 2024 that the Proposed Development did not meet their threshold for national landscape concerns but The Highland Council stated in September 2024 that impacts on local and nationally designated landscapes and Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) should be addressed,
- 1.1.4 Notwithstanding the policy position and the consequent reduced weight given to effects resulting from developments outwith the WLA classification, a Wild Land Impact Assessment (WLIA) has been prepared in relation to the closest WLA (29: Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis) as a precautionary measure. Impacts on the National Scenic Area (NSA) Assynt Coigach and Special Landscape Area (SLA) Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie are assessed separately in **Technical Appendix 4.2** (EIA Report Volume 4).

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The methodology used for the WLIA follows NatureScot’s Wild Land Assessment Guidance³ (hereafter referred to as ‘the Guidance’). The methodology follows the approach to assessment described below:
- **Step 1** – Definition of the Study Area and scope of the assessment. This comprises the identification of a Study Area that is appropriate to the scale of the Proposed Development and the geographical extent of potential significant effects on the WLA. The entirety of the WLA was considered in this assessment.
 - **Step 2** – Verification of the WLA, and confirmation of the wild land qualities (WLQs) of the Study Area to identify any changes that have occurred since the description was prepared, and the nature of their contribution to the integrity of the WLA. The assessment will identify any qualities that could be susceptible to degradation from the Proposed Development.
 - **Step 3** – Assessment of the sensitivity of the wild land qualities of the WLA within the Study Area, assuming a high value. The wild land qualities of the WLA, including the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to those qualities, are identified in terms of their sensitivity to the type and scale of change proposed.
 - **Step 4** – Assess and describe the magnitude of impact considering the size or scale, extent, and duration of the Proposed Development, on the effects on specific valued qualities and/or combination of qualities. This evaluates which physical attributes and perceptual responses may be affected and to what degree, and the potential for mitigation.
 - **Step 5** – Judgement of the significance of effect i.e. the overall significance of residual effect, considering mitigation, if applicable.

¹ Scottish Government 2025, National Planning Framework 4, [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/> [Accessed 8 May 2025].

² NatureScot Core Areas of Wild Land Map – NatureScot Advice to Government (2014). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land> [Accessed April 2025]

³ NatureScot (2020) Assessing the Impacts on Wild Land Area – Technical Guidance. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/assessing-impacts-wild-land-areas-technical-guidance> [Accessed April 2025]

2.2 Step 2: Establishing the Baseline

2.2.1 The baseline appraisal:

- Establishes and describes the baseline status of the physical and perceptual attributes that are present in the WLA; and
- Describes the character, sensitivity, and overall condition of the area affected and its contribution to the perception of wildness in the WLA as a whole.

2.2.2 The primary sources of information used in the assessment included NatureScot's Wild Land mapping and the published Wild Land Description for WLA 29. The findings of these publications were verified using OS data/ mapping, aerial and site photography, and by field survey. Where any relevant or additional information was identified that affected the wild land qualities this was added to the baseline description.

2.2.3 NatureScot's advice to the Scottish Government in 2014 accepted that the perception of wildness is a subjective matter. People respond differently according to their own individual experiences and expectations. There is sufficient commonality in aspects that are appreciated as features of 'wildness' to set a series of attributes and criteria that can be assessed in a systematic, and transparent way to provide a consistency of approach.

2.2.4 The following criteria are defined in the Guidance in relation to the qualities of Wild Land:

- A high degree of perceived naturalness;
- A lack of modern human artefacts or structures;
- Little evidence of contemporary land uses;
- Landform that is rugged or otherwise physically challenging;
- Remoteness and/ or inaccessibility; and
- Perceptual responses to these physical attributes include:
 - A sense of sanctuary or solitude;
 - A degree of risk, or for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety;
 - Perceptual responses that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and
 - Personal fulfilment from the physical challenge required to reach into these places.

2.2.5 The extent to which these physical and perceptual responses are evident in the WLA is recorded as high, medium, low, or negligible as set out in Table 1 of the Guidance. As the Proposed Development is located outwith the WLA classification, the focus of the WLIA is on the indirect effects on wild land qualities.

2.3 Step 3: Sensitivity of WLA Qualities

2.3.1 WLAs are assumed to have a high value, but their susceptibility to different types of development can vary according to the specific wild land qualities within the classification and to what extent they are intact, and the scale and likely impact of the development proposed.

2.3.2 The sensitivity of the WLA qualities was informed by the NatureScot's WLA description and fieldwork to capture assessment photography for Viewpoints 5, 6, 12, 13, 17 and 23 (refer to **Figures 4.17, 4.18, 4.24, 4.25, 4.29 and 4.35**, EIA Report Volume 3b) within WLA 29 during 2024 and 2025. Sensitivity is classified as high, medium, or low as described in **Table 2.1**.

2.4 Step 4: Magnitude of Impact on WLA

2.4.1 The level of impacts on wild land qualities are graded as follows:

- **Substantial:** Total loss or considerable alteration to key attributes, assessed on a site specific case-by-case basis;
- **Moderate:** Partial loss or partial alteration to attributes;
- **Slight:** Minor or modest loss or alteration to baseline key attributes;
- **Negligible:** Very minor loss or very minor alteration to baseline attributes; and
- **None:** No discernible loss or no discernible alteration to baseline key attributes.

2.5 Step 5: Judging Significance of Effects

2.5.1 Professional judgement has been applied to the findings of the baseline appraisal and predicted effects arising from the Proposed Development using the criteria set out, to assess whether the identified effects on the physical attributes and perceived qualities of the WLA would be significant. As described in

Chapter 4 (EIA Report Volume 2), residual effects are determined by means of a comparison of sensitivity and magnitude of impact, as indicated in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Residual Effects

	Magnitude of Impact				
Sensitivity	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	None
High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	None
Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	None
Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ None	None

2.5.2 The judgement of the level of effect considers the mitigation presented in **Chapter 4** (EIA Report Volume 2) and the overall effect of the type of development proposed on the wild land qualities of the WLA. The matrix was not applied prescriptively or arithmetically, but rather as a starting point from where professional judgement was brought to bear.

2.5.3 A summary of the residual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development is presented in **Table 5.1**.

3. Illustrative Materials

3.1.1 **Figure 4.6.1** presents a zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) for the Proposed Development and illustrates the location and geographical extent of the WLA 29.

3.1.2 **Figure 4.6.2** illustrates the relative wildness within the classification, based on Guidance criteria listed in **Section 2.2**. Relative wildness above 84 to 256 denotes the areas with the highest levels of wildness.

3.1.3 Assessment viewpoint photography in **Figures 4.17, 4.18, 4.24, 4.25, 4.29 and 4.35** (EIA Report Volume 3b) has been used to inform the assessment. It should be noted that these viewpoints represent a 'worst case' in respect of visibility and the likely residual effects, and are not representative of the general effects on views from the WLA. Visibility would in fact be limited and restricted to areas on the margins of the classification. This was confirmed during field reconnaissance.

4. Wild Land Baseline Qualities

4.1.1 The description for WLA: 29⁴ sets out four Wild Land Qualities as follows:

- WLQ 1 – “A range of awe-inspiring, massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas”;
- WLQ 2 – “Along and deep penetrating glens with steep, arresting side slopes that limit views, some containing access routes and clearly influenced by estate management”;
- WLQ 3 – “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”; and
- WLQ 4 – “Rocky hills, moorland 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”.

4.1.2 The site assessment for the WLA description was carried out in May and June 2014, and the landscape and the land use has evolved. The strength of the attributes and their contribution to WLQs has changed and wind farm development is an established land use in the areas adjoining to the northeast, southeast and south.

4.1.3 As the Proposed Development is located outwith the designation it would not affect any physical attributes of the WLA, but could influence views to and from the classification and perceptual qualities in respect of sanctuary and solitude. Six assessment viewpoints (5, 6, 12, 13, 17, and 23) are located within the WLA 29 classification, refer to **Figures 4.17, 4.18, 4.24, 4.25, 4.29, and 4.35** (EIA Report Volume 3b). The landscape and visual baseline and predicted effects for each viewpoint is described in **Technical Appendix 4.3** (EIA Report Volume 4).

4.1.4 The potential for these four WLQs to be influenced by the Proposed Development is described in **Table 5.1**. The WLQs that relate to perceptual responses are considered to be WLQ1 and WLQ 3.

⁴ NatureScot Description for WLA 29: Rhidorroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis (2014). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/wild-land-areas-map-and-descriptions-2014> [Accessed April 2025]

5. Assessment of Effects and Conclusions

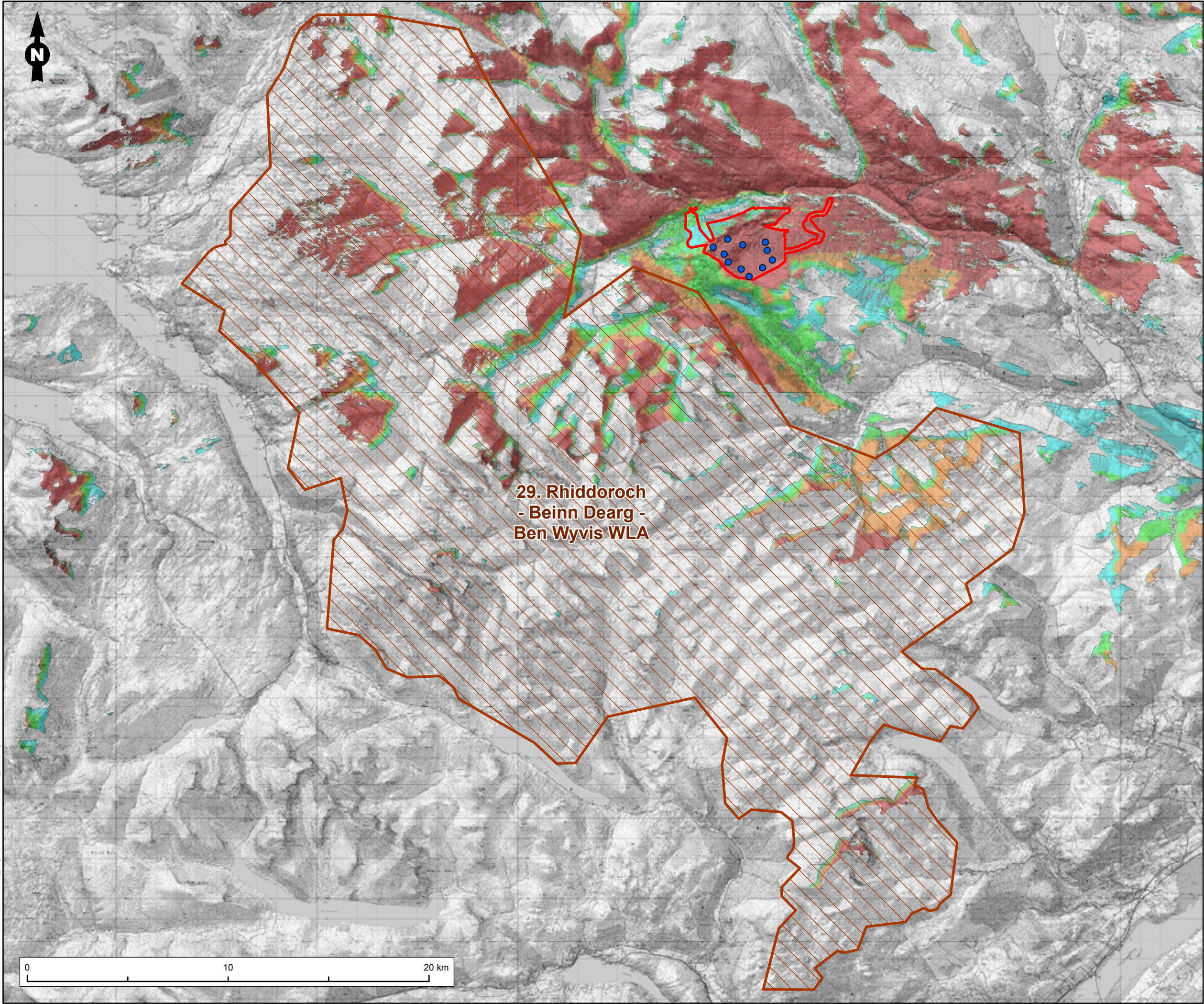
- 5.1.1 Although the Proposed Development is outwith of a WLA classification, and NPF4 is very clear that a WLA is therefore not required, a WLA has been assessed as a precautionary measure and to inform design measures.
- 5.1.2 **Figure 4.6.1** presents ZTV mapping for the Proposed Development. Visibility is shown to be limited and, in most cases, restricted to north or northeast facing summits and elevations with views directed over the outer margins of the classification to the wider landscape beyond. Such visibility is relatively localised and does not affect the majority of the WLA. Moreover, visibility is not in itself an indicator of the level of effects on the specific wild land qualities⁵ of the WLA. Considering the effects of the Proposed Development on its own, and the in-addition and in-combination cumulative effects (Scenario 1 and 2) there would be limited potential for significant effects on the WLA, although some significant visual effects would be possible from certain viewpoint locations.
- 5.1.3 The design evolution of the Proposed Development has considered effects on views and landscape character, including within the WLA. Visibility would be restricted to views from the northern margins of the classification that already includes views of forestry, and operational wind energy development (particularly views of Rosehall and Achany wind farms) and are ascribed a lower relative wildness rating. The Proposed Development would be located adjacent to a number of consented wind farms (Strath Oykel and Meall Buidhe) and backdropped by landform and the consented Achany wind farm extension. Based on the assessment findings set out in **Table 5.1**, the summary concludes the following:
- The Proposed Development is not located within, WLA 29: Rhiddoroch – Bein Dearg – Ben Wyvis and therefore there can be no physical or direct landscape impacts on the area within the WLA. There is potential for indirect effects on views to and from the WLA and influences on perceptual qualities particularly WLQs 1 and 3 for which it has been classified;
 - **Figure 4.6.2** presents the relative wildness within the WLA 29 classification. It is clear that the areas with the greatest potential visibility with the Proposed Development are located within the outer margins which have fewer wild land qualities (a rating of less than 84). The higher levels above 84 to 256 denote the areas with least evidence of human influences and the greatest perceptual qualities in relation to wild land landscape characteristics;
 - The Proposed Development would be visible in some views to the WLA from the A837 to the north of the classification where “...the outward slopes form a fairly simple visual backdrop” but the “...interior mountains and plateaus are less easy to see due to screening by the intervening landform.” Visibility to the inner core and the south of the WLA where WLQs are most pronounced are limited;
 - The Proposed Development would be backclothed by landform in most elevated views from the summits of Bodach Mor, Carn Salachaidh, Ben Wyvis, Diebdale Ridge, and Seana Braigh, and would appear as a small component of a panoramic view that already contains operational wind energy developments, such as Rosehall, Achany, Kilbraur, and Gordonbush wind farms;
 - The Proposed Development would not affect views from the WLA to the Assynt Coigach coastline in the northwest or the largely uninhabited, and wild inner-core areas of the WLA to the south;
- 5.1.4 Based on the preceding analysis and the assessment findings in **Table 5.1**, no significant In-Addition effects are predicted on the WLA key attributes or characteristics and consequently, there would be no significant effects on the integrity of the WLA. The magnitude of impact on the WLA qualities would vary from Negligible to Slight. The sensitivity of the WLQs is High to Medium resulting in up to a **Moderate** (not significant) adverse residual effect.
- 5.1.5 In the assessment of potential cumulative landscape and visual effects further 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. The cumulative assessment methodology is described in **Chapter 4** (EIA Report Volume 2) and is divided into three scenarios.
- 5.1.6 The potential residual cumulative effects in relation to the operation of the Proposed Development in conjunction with other existing (operational), (consented but not yet built), in-planning and in-scoping (should they progress into operational assets) are assessed for the six assessment viewpoints within the WLA 29. See **Technical Appendix 4.3** (EIA Report Volume 4).
- Significant In-Addition effects would be limited to Bodach Mor (Viewpoint 5) and Carn a Choin Deirg below summit (Viewpoint 23) and relate to localised effects from elevated areas in proximity (less than 10 km) to the Proposed Development. The remaining four viewpoints only have In-Combination significant effects.

⁵ NatureScot Wildness in Scotland’s Countryside: Policy Statement N0. 02/03. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land> [Accessed April 2025]

Table 5.1: Predicted Residual Effects on the WLQs of WLA:29

Step 1 (Study Area)	Step 2 (Baseline Aspects)	Step 3 (Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed)	Step 4 (Assessment of Magnitude of Impacts)	Step 5 (Residual Effects and Significance Rating)
<p>The Study Area for the WLIA comprises the entirety of the WLA 29: Rhiddoroch – Bein Dearg – Ben Wyvis. This includes the summits of Bodach Mor, Carn Salachaidh, Ben Wyvis, Diebidale Ridge and Seana Braigh.</p> <p>Assessment viewpoints 5, 6, 12, 13, 17 and 23 are located within WLA 29. Refer to Figures 4.17, 4.18, 4.24, 4.25, 4.29, and 4.35 (EIA Report Volume 3b).</p>	<p><i>“A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas”</i> <i>“Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis - NatureScot”</i></p>	<p>High</p> <p>This is based on the high value assumed for the WLA and its susceptibility to the type of development proposed.</p> <p>The key issue in respect of this aspect is the potential effect of any large scale developments on the expansive panoramic views from this WLA.</p>	<p>Negligible to Slight</p> <p>The Proposed Development would be situated outwith the classification, within and alongside a cluster of existing operational wind farm development. The individual contribution of the Proposed Development to visible wind energy from the summits would be minimal.</p> <p>Figure 4.6.1 illustrates that the extent of visibility would be limited and confined to views to the north and northeast contained by <i>“a complex composition of high and steep mountains within the central section, and then into simpler rounded hills and plateau in the south.”</i></p> <p>Intervisibility to and from outside the classification to the area with the most intact WLQs is restricted <i>“...interior mountains and plateaus are less easy to see due to screening by the intervening landform.”</i></p> <p>Views to <i>“A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges...”</i> would primarily relate to views to the west and south with less human influence and away from the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>Indirect, Moderate adverse effects (not significant).</p> <p>The views to the interior and the south and west have more potential to inspire awe. The panoramic views towards the Proposed Development are located within the outer margins of the classification which are less susceptible to human influence.</p> <p>The Proposed Development would not affect views from the WLA to the Assynt Coigach coastline in the northwest or the largely uninhabited, and wild inner-core areas of the WLA to the south.</p>
	<p><i>“Long and deep penetrating glens with steep, arresting side slopes that limit views, some containing access routes and clearly influenced by estate management”</i></p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Despite the high value assumed for the WLA its susceptibility to the type of development proposed is considered to be Medium.</p>	<p>Negligible</p> <p>Figure 4.6.1 demonstrates that visibility would not penetrate the wilder inner core of the WLA and associated glens to the south such as Glen Achall and Glen Diebidale.</p>	<p>Indirect Minor adverse effects (not significant).</p> <p>The Proposed Development is not located within the classification and would not have the potential to directly affect the physical constituents of the WLA.</p>

Step 1 (Study Area)	Step 2 (Baseline Aspects)	Step 3 (Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed)	Step 4 (Assessment of Magnitude of Impacts)	Step 5 (Residual Effects and Significance Rating)
		<p>Views out of the glens are constrained, limiting views out of the classification and restricting indirect effects from adjoining areas.</p> <p>The presence of estate buildings, tracks and forestry on the edges of the classification mean that the margins of the classification contain some human influences. This denotes a lower sensitivity to other man-made features and influences from within the margins of the classification.</p>		
	<i>"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"</i>	<p>High</p> <p>This is based on the high value assumed for the WLA and its susceptibility to the type of development proposed.</p> <p>The inner core of the classification contains few contemporary influences, and the type of development proposed has the potential to diminish the sense of remoteness and sanctuary.</p>	<p>Negligible</p> <p>Visibility from the inner core of the WLA is restricted as "...interior mountains and plateaus are less easy to see due to screening by the intervening landform".</p> <p>As the Proposed Development is not located within the narrow corridor or transitional area between WLA (i.e. between WLA: 32 Interpolly – Glencanisp or WLA34: Reay-Cassley) to the north it has limited potential to influence close views into neighbouring WLA.</p>	<p>Indirect Moderate/ Minor adverse effects (not significant)</p> <p>The closest views to adjoining WLAs would extend to the west and northwest towards WLAs 28, 32 and 34 from the western and most northern extent of the designation; the opposite direction to the views to the Proposed Development.</p> <p>As demonstrated in Figure 4.6.2 the relative wildness within the WLA 29 classification is most intact within the interior of the classification.</p>
	<i>"Rocky hills, crocan 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"</i>	<p>High</p> <p>This is based on the high value assumed for the WLA and its susceptibility to the type of development proposed.</p> <p>The type of development proposed could influence the perceptual qualities of the simple and expansive landscape character and diminish the strong sense of solitude.</p>	<p>Negligible</p> <p>Some limited visibility is shown on Figure 4.6.1 from north and northeast facing summits and higher elevations, but any views would be intermittent in nature and filtered by intervening landform.</p>	<p>Indirect Moderate/ Minor adverse effects (not significant)</p> <p>The Proposed Development is not located within the classification and would not have the potential to directly affect the physical constituents of the WLA.</p>



Legend

Site Boundary

Proposed Turbine

Wild Land Areas 2014 (WLA)

No of Turbines Theoretically Visible at Blade Tip Level (200 m)

1 - 3

4 - 6

7 - 9

10 - 11

DISCLAIMER

1. The ZTV analysis does not take into account the screening effect of vegetation, buildings and other surface features.

2. Predicted visibility based on a viewer eye height 2 m above ground.

3. Visibility calculated using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 DTM on a 5 m Grid.

4. Effect of earth curvature and light refraction is included.

Figure Title

Wild Land Area and ZTV

Project Name

Coille Beith Wind Farm

Project No./Fility ID

1620016742 / REH2024N00315

Date	Figure No.	Revision
May 2025	4.6.1	1.0

Prepared By	Scale
RD	1:180,000 @A3

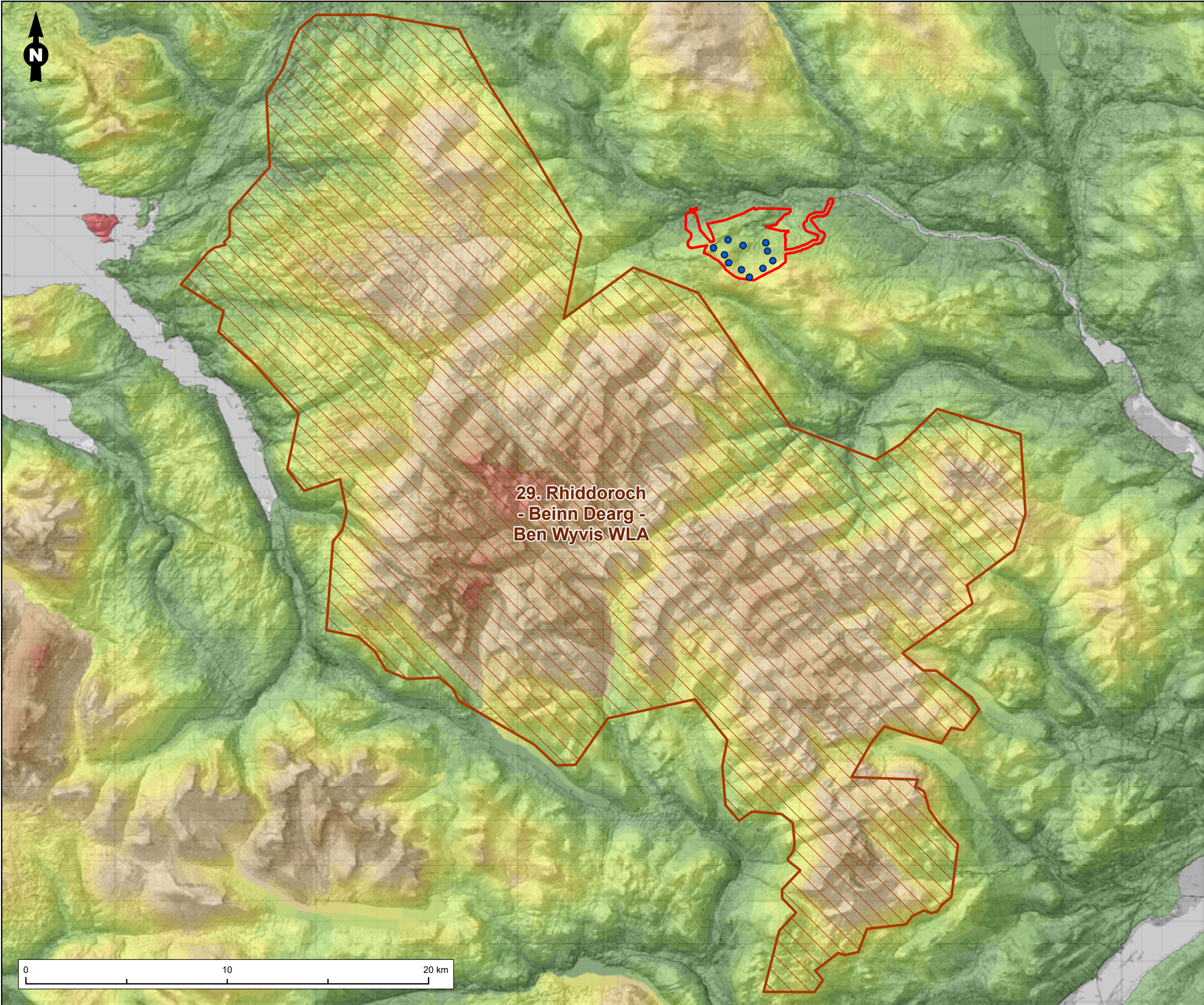
Client

Statkraft

Statkraft

RAMBOLL

1620016742-RAM-MA-IA-00080_FigTA4.6.1WLAandZTV_03.pagx



Legend

Site Boundary

Proposed Turbine

Wild Land Areas 2014 (WLA)

Relative Wildness 2014

1 - 14 (Low Level of Wildness)

15 - 32

33 - 50

51 - 67

68 - 84

85 - 100

101 - 116

117 - 133

134 - 151

152 - 171

172 - 193

194 - 228

229 - 256 (High Level of Wildness)

Figure Title

Wild Land Area and Relative Wildness

Project Name

Coille Beith Wind Farm

Project No./Filery ID

1620016742 / REH2024N00315

Date

May 2025

Figure No.

4.6.2

Revision

1.0

Prepared By

RD

Scale

1:180,000 @A3

Client

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Statkraft

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1620016742-RAM-MA-IA-00081_FigTA4.6.2WLAandWilderness_03.pagx