Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Beinneun 2 Wind Farm

Volume 3

Technical Appendix A5.2: Landscape and Visual Non-Significant Effects

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Beinneun 2 Wind Farm EIA Report
Appendix A5.2: Non-Significant Effects

Introduction

1. Effects on the receptors considered in this appendix have been assessed as being non-significant. The assessment is provided below, and effects are summarised in Chapter 5.

Landscape Character

LCT237 Rocky Moorland – Lochaber (includes Site)

2. As shown by Figure 5.4, this LCT includes the southern part of the Site and extends to the west across the southern side of Loch Loyne, and around the head of Glen Garry. The key characteristics of this landscape type are described as:
   - *"Rugged, undulating plateaux of heather moorland with a textured and crinkled skyline and no distinct summits or peaks.*
   - *Large patches of coniferous forestry.*
   - *Uniform expanses of marshy grassland, sedges and rushes, rocky outcrops and stunted trees.*
   - *Isolated, upland lochans.*
   - *Infrastructure and engineered structures associated with hydro-electricity schemes such as pylons, dams and sub-stations.*
   - *Closely related to Smooth Moorland Ridges with long views, but lacking the latter's distinctive smooth relief."*
3. This character type partly coincides with OWESG character area LN11: Rocky Moorland, High ground around north and west of Glen Garry. The OWESG notes that the "*LCT sensitivity would be relatively low due to its large scale and simplicity*", scoring the character area as 2 out of 4, where 1 is the most sensitive. This coincides with the detailed consideration undertaken in Technical Appendix A5.3, which identifies the susceptibility of the character type/area as being Medium, taking account of the higher susceptibility of the openness of the LCT and its role as part of the landscape transition within the Great Glen, and lower susceptibilities in terms of its large scale, simple landcover and the presence of existing wind farms and other infrastructure. Technical Appendix A5.3 also indicates that this largely undesignated character type/area is of Community value and Medium/low sensitivity.
4. As shown by Figure 5.5, the Development would be partly sited within this character type, and there would be extensive visibility from the open upper slopes above the forestry which descends towards Glen Garry. Most of these areas within 5 km of the proposed turbines already have close views of the operational wind farms to the north, but there are also very limited areas along the A87 corridor where the turbines would appear markedly closer because the existing turbines are less visible (as illustrated by viewpoints 1 and 3). Further visibility would arise to the west of the Site, extending across Loch Loyne and continuing across facing slopes to the west and southwest. These areas will all be closer to Bunloinn wind farm than to the Development and changes to character would be Negligible scale.
5. Permanent, Medium scale changes to character would arise for a Localised extent of the LCT (the open slopes within 5 km of the turbines). The magnitude of impact would be Medium/small and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

LCT235 Broad Forested Strath (0.7 km, S)

6. As shown by Figure 5.4, this LCT includes Loch Garry and the valley sides of Glen Garry. It is described by NatureScot as *"a gently undulating landscape with a broad mosaic of coniferous and deciduous woodland and open pasture*". The key characteristics of this landscape type are described as:

- *"Broad, low-lying straths with rolling relief and sculptural glacial landforms.*
- *Simple, large scale mosaic of forested ridges, rolling pastures and heather moorland, but dominated by swathes of forestry.*
- *A comparatively densely settled landscape with villages, houses and sporadic commercial development.*
- *Quarries hidden amongst the woodland cover.*
- *Strong communication and service corridors.*
- *Long distance views from surrounding hills over the glens, which are framed by steep glen sides.*
- *Lochs, rivers or canals on glen floor have often been engineered or substantially altered by man."*

7. This character type coincides with OWESG character area LN20: Great Glen around Loch Oich, Broad Forested Strath. The OWESG identifies this character area as being 2 out of 4, where 1 is the most sensitive. This coincides with the detailed consideration undertaken in Technical Appendix A5.3, which identifies the susceptibility of the character type/area as being Medium. Technical Appendix A5.3 also indicates that this largely undesignated character type/area is of Community value and Medium/low sensitivity.

8. Changes to character within this LCT would arise from views of the turbines from the loch and from open upper valley sides, as illustrated by viewpoints 3, 4 and 15. On the northern valley sides, there would be some locations, such as at viewpoint 3, where there would be a strong sense of proximity to the turbines and none of the operational wind farms are currently visible. There would be Large/medium scale changes to character in this Limited extent of the LCT. From within the valley and looking out from more distant upper valley sides, as illustrated by viewpoints 4 and 15, the turbines would appear as part of the existing wind farms, just slightly larger and closer. These limited changes to views would give rise to Negligible scale changes to character.

9. Permanent, Large/medium scale changes to character would arise for a very Limited extent of the LCT (the open slopes north of Loch Garry). The magnitude of impact would be Medium and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Visual Receptors

Recreational users of uplands within 5 km (east of Loch Loyne)

As shown by Figure 5.6, there are few core paths within 5 km of the Development and the only views of the Development would be from that passing east of Loch Lundie. Beyond this, access to this upland area is limited to a few other hill tracks, including one looping around north of Loch Lundie to Faichem, from the core path, and a track extending north from Munerigie which serves a number of hydroelectric schemes. The existing wind farm tracks also provide a means of recreational access in an area of otherwise very challenging terrain. People visiting this area for recreation would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Community value and High/medium sensitivity.

People choosing to walk in this area will generally have close and open views of the operational and consented wind farms, as illustrated by Figure 5.10, and may be utilising existing wind farm tracks. The most notable change to views would arise for people traversing the south and west facing slopes within and adjacent to the Site, due to the increased size and proximity of turbines, although the only ready access to these areas is on the track serving the hydro schemes and the track that provides access to the masts close to viewpoint 1 (where Bunloinn wind farm will be openly visible). From the core path east of Loch Lundie, and other tracks nearby, the proposed turbines would appear as a limited addition to the existing wind farms and the different size of the turbines would be less readily apparent, as illustrated by illustrative view C in Technical Appendix A5.4.

The increased proximity and number of larger turbines seen from the south and west facing slopes within and close to the Site would give rise to Medium scale changes to views. These would reduce to Small scale from the core path passing Loch Lundie, and tracks nearby, and would tend towards Negligible from within the existing wind farms and areas to the north of these. Taken together, these Permanent changes to views would affect a Localised extent of the

receptor group would give rise impacts of Medium/small magnitude and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

Glen Loyne (1 km, W)

There are no core paths within this area however there are a small number of rough hill tracks, mostly beyond 5 km from the Development, and forestry tracks which provide recreational access to this area. There are also some paths at the Highland Titles Nature Reserve, between the A87 and Loch Loyne. Recreational users in this area include hill walkers, visitors to the nature reserve and water users on the loch who would have a High susceptibility to views that are of Community value and High/medium sensitivity.

People visiting the nature reserve, using tracks and paths along the eastern shore of Loch Loyne and in the forestry north of the dam generally experience expansive views along the glen to the southwest, with the more enclosed views to the north and east formed by rising ground containing existing and consented turbines seen at close proximity. These people would have views similar to those illustrated by viewpoints 1, 2 and illustrative view A in Technical Appendix A5.4, although the view towards the Development would often be slightly more restricted due to being further down the hillside, and changes to views from this Limited area would be no greater than Medium scale. Moving west along the glen, the existing wind farm becomes more openly visible and the Development would be increasingly seen in the context of this as a relatively modest extension, albeit the turbines would appear markedly larger, while the consented Bunloinn turbines will generally be seen at closer proximity and will be a much more prominent feature. Small scale changes to views would occur over a Localised extent of the loch within 5 km and small areas of more open hillside on the southern side of the glen, while the changes to views across the open hills to the northern side of the glen (in close proximity to Bunloinn) and the hills and loch beyond 5 km would be Negligible.

Taken together, these Permanent changes to views would give rise to impacts of Small magnitude and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Glen Garry (1.2 km, S)

This group includes residents and visitors to Glen Garry, along with recreational users of the loch and forest/woodlands that surround it. This group would have a High susceptibility to changes in views that are of Community value and are High/medium sensitivity.

As illustrated by Figure 5.6, there would be open visibility of the development for water users on the loch however there would be limited visibility from the network of local roads, areas of settlement and from the forest to the south of the loch which have parking and walking routes for recreational visitors. There would be no visibility of the Development from the main area of settlement at Invergarry.

Where more open views are possible from small areas of settlement such as Faichem (as illustrated by the nearby viewpoint 4) and Wester Mandally (see illustrative view E in Technical Appendix A5.4), only a partial view of the Development would be possible and the turbines would be seen as a modest addition to the existing wind farms giving rise to, at most, Small scale changes to views. Views would also be infrequent for recreational users of the forested area south of the loch given the extent of tree cover, however there are some more open areas, as illustrated by viewpoint 15, and those where views open up temporarily due to felling. In these areas, the Development would be seen on the lower lying slopes in front of the existing wind farms, with the turbines appearing larger and at closer proximity, although they would not markedly increase the extent of the existing wind farms and would result in no more than Medium scale changes to views. Similar views would also occur for people on the loch, although the turbines would appear closer and as a skyline feature, amongst or alongside the existing turbines, rather than being seen on lower lying ground.

Taken together, these Permanent changes to views would arise across a Localised extent of the receptor group, accounting for the generally low number of people who would experience the open views from the loch, and result in impacts of Medium/small magnitude and effects that would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

Scottish National Trail (3.7 km, S)

As shown by Figure 5.6, this route follows a winding course through the study area. The route mostly passes through undesignated areas, and views are judged to be of Community value. Walkers following the route would have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity to changes to views.

Walkers following the route north would see intermittent views of the Development ahead of their direction of travel as they descend the hills, along General Wade's Military Road and though the Corrieyairack Pass, 10-15 km to the south-east of the Site. Effects in this stretch of the route are illustrated by viewpoint 9, where the proposed turbines would be seen as a minor addition to the operational wind farms, giving rise to Negligible scale changes to views. After descending the hills, the route runs along the Great Glen where there would be little or no visibility of the Development. As the route turns west and runs through forestry to the south of Glen Garry there would be a mix of stretches passing amongst trees where there would be no visibility, and stretches where clearings or recent felling allows more open views, as illustrated by viewpoint 15, where the Development would be openly visible and the turbines would be seen as closer and larger than the operational wind farms giving rise to Medium scale changes to views. Beyond viewpoint 15, the turbines would be behind the direction of travel or not visible, until the route traverses higher ground to the west of Loch Loyne. Through this stretch of the route, the Development would be 9.5-11.5 km to the east where visible, seen beyond Bunloinn wind farm and changes to views would be Negligible scale.

Walkers passing through the study area from the north-west would see these views in reverse, with the following differences: They would see the proposed turbines in intermittent views, channelled by the landform and forestry, ahead of their direction of travel as they walk alongside the River Garry to the south of Tomdoun c. 6-8 km from the Development. Changes to views here would be Small scale; and, as they ascend the hills to the south-east of the study area, the turbines would be behind their direction of travel.

Considering these changes to views together, there would be Permanent, Medium to Small changes for a Limited extent of the route and impacts would be of Small magnitude. Effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Designated Landscapes

Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA (6 km, SE)

As illustrated by Figure 5.2, this SLA encompasses the two lochs and the hillsides that form their immediate surroundings. To the eastern side of the lochs and the northern end of the SLA the boundary is tightly defined, extending no more than 1-2 km from the waterbodies, while to the southwest it expands out to encompass a group of higher hills set further back from Loch Lochy. The overview for this SLA provided within 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' states:

> *"This area is dominated by the strong linear form of the Great Glen fault line with Loch Oich and Loch Lochy occupying the deep, v shaped glen. The lochs are bounded by steep slopes which rise to prominent and striking combinations of peaks and north-east to south-west orientated ridges, these hills contain views within the narrow corridor of the Great Glen.*
>
> *Both lochs, together with Loch Ness and the linking sections of the Caledonian Canal, form part of the "grand processional way" along the Great Glen and which is perhaps best experienced travelling by boat.*
>
> *Views over gentle pastures along the loch shores across clear, reflective water towards wooded banks and rolling hills opposite are often obscured in part by hovering layers of low cloud or diffused by mist."*

Special Qualities of Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA

Quality	Susceptibility	Effects
The Great Glen – scale, striking linearity, long narrow lochs	Medium – wind turbines seen outside of the area may alter perceptions of scale but would not influence the strong linearity of the lochs and landform.	Negligible – there would be no visibility of the Development from the lochs or any of the key routes or landmark features identified within the bottom of the glen. As illustrated by viewpoint 7 and illustrative view F in Technical Appendix A5.4, the turbines would be seen as a distant feature, slightly extending an existing wind farm group, from more elevated

Quality	Susceptibility	Effects
		hilltops (also see below) in the northwest of the SLA and from lower, facing slopes in the northeast. Distant views of the turbines would not alter perceptions of scale within or looking across the SLA.
Classic Highland Scenery, Distinctive Mountain-top Views	High – wind turbines may distract from appreciation of other landscape features and may be perceived as detracting features.	Small/negligible scale for a Limited extent – as noted above, there would be no views from lower lying locations. There would be visibility of the Development from some, but not all, of the mountaintop locations to the north of Loch Lochy. Of the two summits specifically noted in the description of this special quality – Meall Dubh and Meall na Teanga – only the latter would have visibility of a small number of blade tips, where there is already wider visibility of operational and consented wind farms as illustrated by Figure 5.10. This visibility of the Development, away to the north alongside the existing wind farm cluster, would not influence the views from hill summits across or along the Great Glen which look away from the Site. During periods when *"when mists and trails of low cloud roll in from the south west"* and make views *"more atmospheric"*, the Development is unlikely to be visible.
Intimate Drama	Medium – views of turbines may influence the sense of drama arising from the contrast between the intimate valley and surrounding uplands.	Negligible – the Development would not be visible from the bottom of the glen where intimate scale features and landmarks are experienced.

10. The special qualities identified for this SLA are generally less able to be readily appreciated at night and none relate to darkness, tranquillity or the absence of development or human activity. As such, the proposed aviation lights would not give rise to any notable additional impacts during the hours of darkness.

11. Based on the detailed considerations set out above, the susceptibility of the special qualities of the SLA is judged to be High/medium. Taking account of the Regional value of the SLA, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium. Considering the Permanent effects described above together, the magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.