

# Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Beinneun 2 Wind Farm

Volume 3

Technical Appendix A5.5: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

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# Beinneun 2 Wind Farm EIA Report Technical Appendix A5.5: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

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## Introduction

1. This Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has been in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (15 March 2019). The TGN states that:  
*"The purpose of carrying out a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) is to form a judgement, to assist decision makers, on whether a proposed development is likely to change the visual amenity of a residential property to such an extent that it becomes a matter of 'Residential Amenity'."*
2. And further that:  
*"Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has 'a right to a view.' ...  
It is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. In itself this does not necessarily cause particular planning concern. However, there are situations where the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before."*
3. This assessment considers only what the resident may see from a property. Views or 'visual amenity' are just one component of residential amenity and the two should not be confused. The latter is a planning matter and may also include aspects such as noise, air quality, traffic, etc., in addition to residential visual amenity. This RVAA considers the visual amenity aspects of residential amenity. Where necessary, other aspects are considered in the relevant chapters of the EIA Report and it is for decision makers to weigh all these aspects, and documents/assessments relating to them, in determining the acceptability of a proposal.
4. Overall residential amenity is discussed within the planning statement accompanying the application for the Development.
5. This assessment, and the process of RVAA, seeks to identify where effects on residential visual amenity are of such a nature or magnitude that they may need to be considered in the overall balance of 'Residential Amenity' or 'Living Conditions'. The point at which this happens is referred to as the Residential Visual Amenity (RVA) Threshold.

## Methodology

### Study Area

6. There are no standard criteria for defining the RVAA study area and this is determined on a case by case basis. The guidance note identifies that for large structures, such as wind turbines, a preliminary study area of 1.5-2 km radius may be appropriate to begin identifying properties for inclusion within RVAA, but for other developments the study area would be much reduced in proportion to their size. In this case, a study area of 2 km has been used, as illustrated on Figure A5.5.1, and extends slightly beyond this to encompass the entire group of properties at Ardochy, most of which share a similar outlook.
7. Properties are usually assessed individually but may be considered in groups where the outlook or views are essentially the same; for example a row of houses that all share an open outlook towards the site. Where properties are grouped for assessment, this will be clearly identified and reasons for grouping described.

## Approach

8. TGN 2/19 advocates a four-step process to RVAA with the first three falling broadly within the scope of LVIA where the magnitude and level of visual effects is assessed. It follows the same general approach as that of the LVIA and may draw on its findings, supplemented by other information (ZTVs, visualisations, fieldwork) as required. The first three steps of the process can be summarised as:
  - Preliminary review
  - Evaluation of baseline visual amenity
  - Assessment of the likely change to visual amenity
9. The fourth step involves a further assessment of the change to visual amenity of individual properties identified as *“having the greatest magnitude of change”* (i.e. Large magnitude within this assessment) and identifying whether the RVA threshold is reached. Where a magnitude of change is identified that is less than Large, this final step is not required as the effects would not reach the RVA threshold.

### *Preliminary Review and Evaluation of Baseline Visual Amenity*

10. The first step considers whether a property requires more detailed assessment or if effects are *“judged unlikely to occur or so insignificant that it is not essential to consider them further”* (GLVIA3, para. 3.19), for example, where properties are outside of the ZTV or would experience such limited views that the change to the outlook would be negligible. These properties are identified, and a brief summary is provided but no further consideration is given to these within the assessment. Properties that are financially involved with the Development are also identified at this stage as, typically, it is understood that those with such a vested interest would be content with any consequential change to their living conditions.
11. Where it is identified that notable effects may arise at a property, the existing baseline visual amenity is described. This is done ‘in the round’ and considers both views from the dwelling itself, garden areas and driveways and views experienced when arriving or leaving the property. This step is informed by desk study and field surveys from nearby publicly accessible locations.

### *Assessment of the Likely Change to Visual Amenity*

12. The changes to views and visual amenity as a result of the Development is described for each property and a judgement on the magnitude of change and level of effect<sup>1</sup> likely to be experienced is provided. This involves consideration of the following factors:
  - Distance between the property and the Development and their relative locations (e.g. up/down hill);
  - Nature of available views (e.g. panoramic, enclosed) and the effect of daily or seasonal variations;
  - Direction of view or aspect of property affected;
  - Extent to which the Development may be visible from various parts of the property (e.g. dwelling, rooms, access, garden);
  - Scale of change to views, including the proportion of view occupied by the Development;
  - Compositional changes (e.g. loss/addition of landscape features such as woodland);
  - Contrast or integration of new features with the existing views;
  - Any uncertainties inherent to the design of the Development (e.g. micro-siting allowances); and
  - Duration and nature of changes (e.g. temporary/permanent, intermittent/continuous).
13. This stage may be supported by a range of visual aids as required including maps, ZTV studies, photography and visualisations. The choice of visual aids is determined on a case by case basis and may be informed by

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<sup>1</sup> Note that in considering the level of effect, all residential receptors are treated as being of High sensitivity (high susceptibility and high value) as directed by TGN 02/19 para. 4.23

consultation. In line with best practice guidance<sup>2</sup> the type of visualisation should be proportionate to the nature of the Development and assessment stage.

### *RVAA Judgement*

14. This final stage is concerned with identifying “*whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, therefore potentially becoming a matter of Residential Amenity*”. This is the key concern of RVAA and judgements on the RVA threshold are set out clearly and unambiguously for those properties where detailed assessment has identified the property or group of properties as likely to experience the greatest magnitude of change (Large) ‘such that the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold may be engaged’<sup>3</sup>.

### Cumulative Developments

15. The RVAA is undertaken against the future baseline as set out within the LVIA and includes consideration of any pertinent consented developments unless there is clear reason to believe that they would not be built. As set out in TGN 2/19, future, unconsented cumulative development is generally not a RVAA consideration and is not included within this assessment.

### Distances/Directions

16. Where distances and directions are given within the assessment, these are distances between the nearest part of the property (including garden and driveway areas) and the nearest turbine, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Distances given are rounded to the nearest 10 m to account for the level of accuracy available in techniques used to measure (usually based on aerial photography within a GIS).

### Assessment

17. Figure A5.5.1, included within Annex B, illustrates the location of individual and groups of properties within the 2 km RVAA study area. The assessment is provided in the table below and is supported by further illustrations and visualisations for individual properties/groups, as required, in Annex A.

Property	Assessment
R1 Allt A Bheithe (1.99 km)	<p>This bungalow is set up the hillside slightly from the minor road, behind commercial buildings associated with the fish farm near the shore of Loch Garry. The main outlook from the property is to the south, looking across the loch. Rising ground, scattered trees and forestry curtail views in other directions to a greater degree and looking north, towards the Site, a forested skyline is seen over nearby scrubby grassland. Two of the proposed turbines would be seen, looking upwards from the property, rising above this skyline from the rear windows, driveway and garden areas, with their rotors (and nacelle lights at night) mostly visible but lower parts of the turbines screened by woodland. Other turbines would be screened from view.</p> <p>Changes to views would be Large/medium scale for an Intermediate extent of the property and impacts would be of Large/medium magnitude, Major and Adverse.</p> <p>The property would not experience the highest magnitude effects and there would be <b>no potential to exceed the RVA threshold</b>.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals

<sup>3</sup> TGN 02/19 – Figure 1 RVAA Process

Property	Assessment
R2 Ardochy Lodge (1.98 km) R3 Ardochy House (2.03 km) R4 Entrance House, Ardochy (2.07 km) R5 Old Orchard House (2.13 km)	<p>These properties are located between 300-700 m east of Allt A Bheith and are similarly oriented with main views looking south across Loch Garry. They sit in a more open clearing area on the hillside and, while a large area of forestry to their north has been felled, a tree belt has been retained around the clearing where the properties are situated. As illustrated by Figure A5.5.1 in Annex B, there would be some very limited blade tip visibility from the road passing these properties but none from the houses themselves. There may be potential for blade tips on one or two turbines to be seen over trees from upstairs, north facing windows at Ardochy Lodge and Ardochy House although the steeply rising ground and retained tree belt would almost entirely screen the Development from these properties and changes to views would be Negligible.</p> <p>None of these properties would experience the highest magnitude effects and there would be <b>no potential to exceed the RVA threshold</b>.</p>
R6 Daingean (1.93 km)	<p>This property is surrounded by woodland and, as illustrated by Figure A5.5.1 in Annex B, would have no visibility of the Development. Effects on this property would be Negligible with <b>no potential to exceed the RVA threshold</b>.</p>
R7 1 Achadhluachraich (1.96 km) R8 2 Achadhluachraich (1.98 km)	<p>These two properties are located at the summit of a low hill which drops away to the south, towards the A87 and Loch Garry, and to the north into a small valley which separates the properties from the open hills of the Site. 1 Achadhluachraich is a large 1.5 storey house which sits at slightly higher elevation and partly screens views towards the central part of the Site (where the closest turbines are located) from the smaller, single storey property at 2 Achadhluachraich.</p> <p>There would be open views from the rear windows of 1 Achadhluachraich, looking across the valley directly towards the closest turbine (T12) which would be seen sitting on higher ground adjacent to the existing wind turbines (see wireline in Annex A), and would appear closer and taller. Other turbines would be seen extending to either side of this, in front of the existing wind farms, and together these would occupy a large spread of northward views from the rear of the property. At night, aviation lights on the turbines would also be in open view. Views north from the rear of 2 Achadhluachraich would be more restricted, with only two windows on the north facing elevation and the adjacent house screening the view towards the nearest turbine. Both houses would also have oblique views of the more distant turbines from windows on west facing elevations although these would be filtered through the stand of trees that sits to the west of the properties, largely obscuring views in this direction when trees are in leaf, as illustrated by the photograph in Annex A.</p> <p>Changes to views would be Large scale for an Intermediate extent of these properties and impacts would be Large magnitude, Major and Adverse.</p> <p>These properties look out on the existing wind farms. The Development would add further turbines to those seen at present, which would be larger and seen at closer proximity, although their introduction would not fundamentally alter the existing outlook. The turbines would be set sufficiently far away from the houses, with the intervening valley providing a clear sense of separation, that the new turbines would not appear overbearing and <b>the RVA threshold would not be exceeded</b>.</p>

## Summary and Conclusions

- The aim of the RVAA seeks to identify where effects on residential visual amenity are of such a nature or magnitude that *“the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before.”*
- There are 8 residential properties within the RVAA study area, of which only three (Allt A Bheith and 1 and 2 Achadhluachraich) would have any notable visibility of the Development. The remaining properties would have the Development fully, or almost fully, screened primarily by nearby rising ground with additional screening provided by nearby trees and woodland. Only 1 and 2 Achadhluachraich would experience the highest



magnitude effects however the Development would not fundamentally alter the existing outlook from these properties (which look onto the existing wind farms) and the sense of separation provided by distance and the intervening valley would mean the RVA threshold would not be exceeded.

20. The assessment concludes that in no case would effects be of such nature and / or magnitude that it potentially affects living conditions at any property to the point it becomes an unattractive place to live, when judged objectively in the public interest.

## Annex A - Aerial Views and Visualisations

- R1: Allt A Bheithe – photowire
- R7/R8: 1 and 2 Achadhluachraich – aerial view
- R7: 1 Achadhluachraich – wireline
- R7: 1 Achadhluachraich – rear (north) and side (west) elevations viewed from the northwest

### Inset plans – key

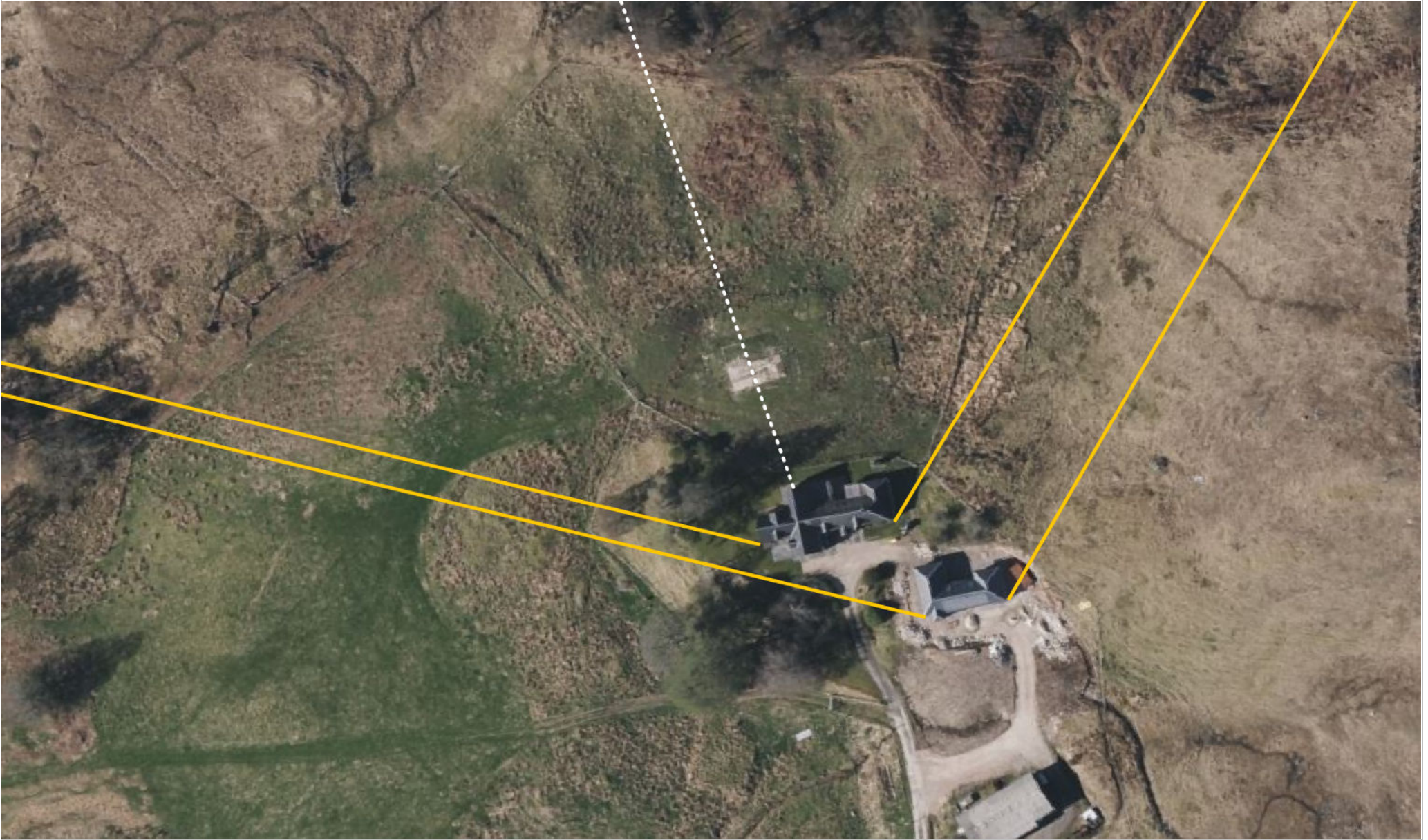
Legend	
	Extent of turbines
	Nearest turbine

R1: Alt A Bheithe – photowire



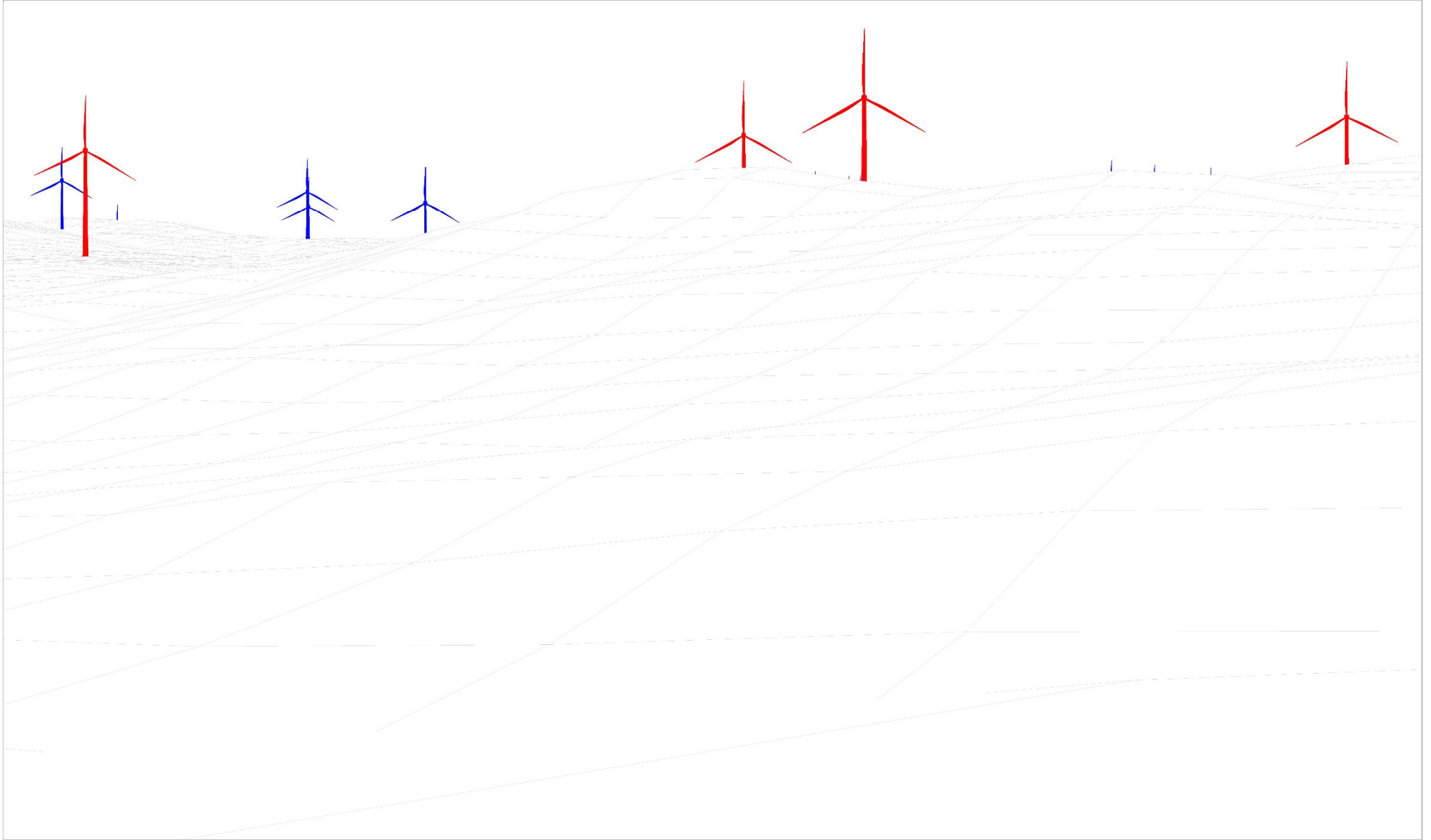
Beinneun 2 Wind Farm EIA Report Technical Appendix A5.5:  
Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

R7/R8: 1 & 2 Achadhluachraich – aerial view



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R7: 1 Achadhluachraich – wireline



R7: 1 Achadhluachraich – rear (north) and side (west) elevations viewed from the northwest



## Annex B Figures

- Figure A5.5.1 – Residential Properties

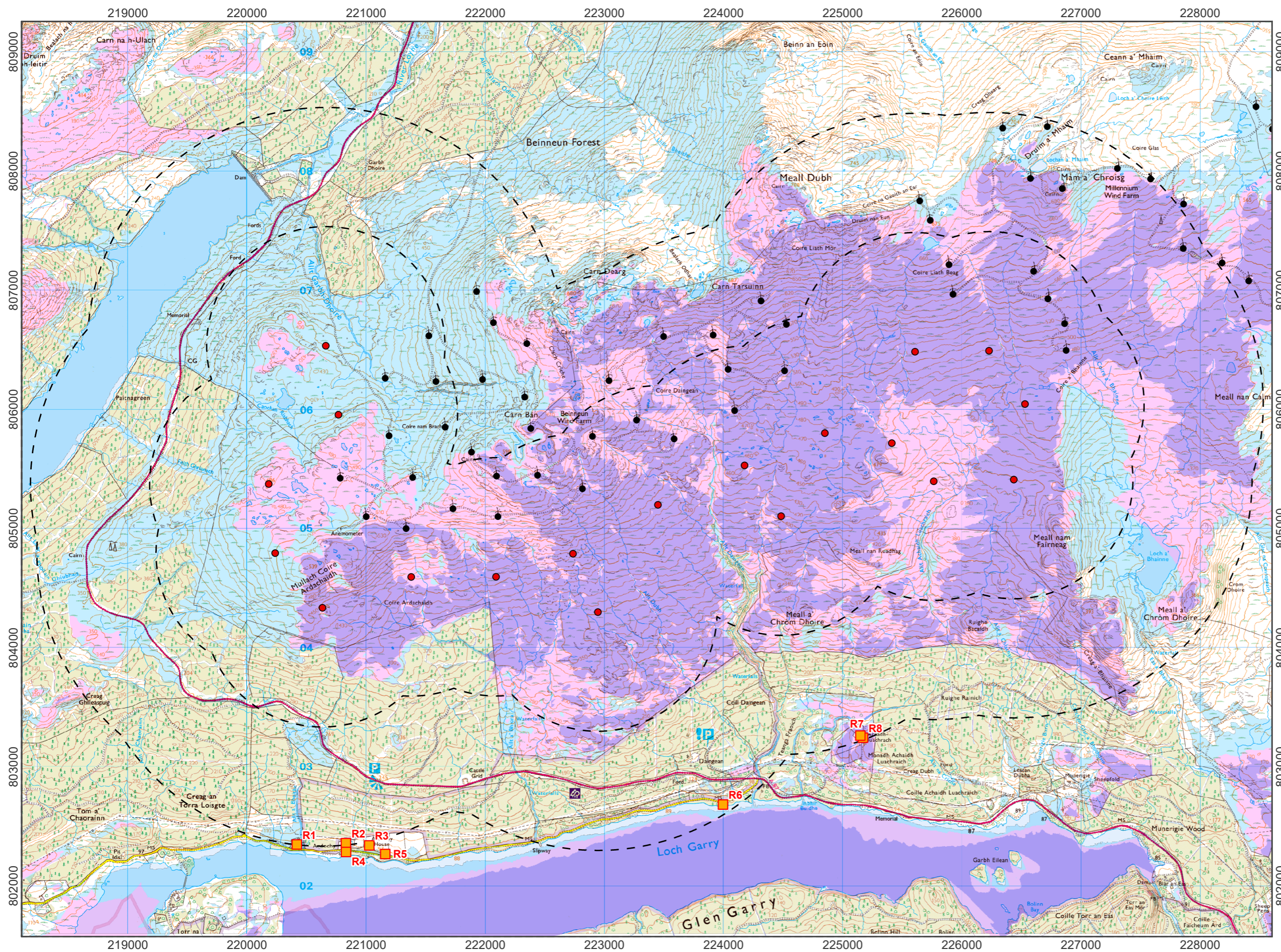
Figure A5.5.1: Residential Properties

LEGEND

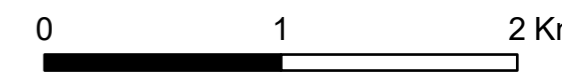
- Proposed Turbines
- [- - -] Distance from Turbines (1, 2 km)
- Operational and Consented Wind Turbines
- Residential Properties

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Blade Tip - 200 m)

- 1-6 turbines may be visible
- 7-12 turbines may be visible
- 13-19 turbines may be visible



Scale: 1:32,000 at A3



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