

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 7.1: REVIEW OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL'S ONSHORE WIND ENERGY SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

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1. REVIEW OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL'S ONSHORE WIND ENERGY SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) details The Highland Council (THC) policy and guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual amenity, ten criteria are identified in the OWESG to be used by THC as a framework and focus for assessing wind energy development proposals. These criteria are specific to wind energy development and are therefore not directly relevant to the Proposed Development, and therefore are not detailed in this appendix. They have nevertheless been considered through the design and assessment process as informative background for landscape and visual considerations, in highlighting key constraints and sensitivities to development.
- 1.1.2 Section 5.2 of the OWESG includes the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Study which identifies Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. These aspects are considered in this appendix in relation to the Proposed Development, as requested by THC in their pre-application advice.

1.2 Landscape Character

- 1.2.1 The OWESG splits the wider Loch Ness area into 19 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Within the study area for the Proposed Development the LCAs are broadly consistent with the NatureScot LCTs which have been considered for the landscape assessment. Five of the LCAs cover the five LCTs included in the assessment and three further LCA fall within areas scoped out of the landscape assessment. Those which reflect the area covered by the assessment are listed in Table 1, along with corresponding LCTs:

Table 1.1: Comparison of OWESG LCAs and LCTs included in the Assessment

OWESG LCA	LCT
LN5 – Ridge between Fort Augustus and Glen Moriston, including Beinn Loinne and slopes above Tomcrasky, Rugged Massif	LCT 220 – Rugged Massif - Inverness
LN11 – Rocky Moorland, High ground around north and west of Glen Garry	LCT 235 – Rocky Moorland - Lochaber
LN13 – Sweeping Interlocking Peaks, Hills forming enclosure to north of Loch Lochy	LCT 239 – Interlocking Sweeping Peaks - Lochaber
LN19 - Area directly around Loch Ness, Broad Steep-Sided Glen	LCT 225 – Broad Steep-Sided Glen
LN20 - Great Glen around Loch Oich, Broad Forested Strath	LCT 237 – Broad Forested Strath

- 1.2.2 The assessment of the above LCTs has considered the highlighted sensitivities of the LCAs and has identified that there would be unlikely to be any significant effects to the character and role of these areas during either construction or operation of the Proposed Development.

1.3 Key Views

- 1.3.1 Key Views in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study are detailed in the OWESG Table 5.2.1. Of those listed, only one would potentially fall within the study area for the Proposed Development:
- A87 Viewpoint above Loch Garry.

1.3.2 Visual effects on travellers on the A87 have been included in the LVIA as Route R2. The assessment has established that this effect would be Minor Adverse (not significant) during construction and operation.

1.4 Key Routes

1.4.1 Key Routes in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study are detailed in the OWESG Table 5.2.2. Of those listed, the following fall within the LVIA study area:

- A82 T;
- B862 Stratherrick
- A87 above Loch Garry;
- Great Glen Way;
- Great Glen Canoe Trail; and
- Caledonian Canal.

1.4.2 All of these routes are considered in the detailed visual assessment. The A82 is considered in the visual assessment as Route R1, the A87 as Route R2 and the B862 as Route R3. The Great Glen Way, Great Glen Canoe Trail and Caledonian Canal are all considered collectively as Route R5 (Recreational Routes through the Great Glen) because the visual effects for all these routes would be similar.

1.4.3 The visual effects for these routes resulting from the Proposed Development was identified as being either Minor Adverse (Route R2 and Route R3) or Negligible (Route R1 and Route R5) during both construction and operation, and therefore not significant.

1.5 Gateways

1.5.1 The OWESG identifies particular 'gateway' locations for each LCA. The following have been identified as potentially relevant to the Proposed Development:

- Fort Augustus - arrival at Loch Ness from south;
- Invergarry - transition into great glen from Glen Garry.

1.5.2 The Proposed Development is considered unlikely to affect the importance of either of these gateway locations. On arrival to Fort August and Loch Ness from the south, the Proposed Development would be to the rear of the focus of the view – Loch Ness, and would be of very limited perceptibility. Travellers towards the Great Glen from Invergarry would pass under the Proposed Development but this would be a very brief and passing experience. It is unlikely that this would affect any sense of arrival to the Great Glen which is likely to be experienced further to the east. This section of the glen is already crossed by an existing steel lattice OHL and there would be very little perceptibility of the Proposed Development from this part of Glengarry and the Great Glen.

1.6 Conclusion

1.6.1 A review of the Proposed Development in relation to the sensitivities highlighted in the OWESG Loch Ness Sensitivity Study has concluded that the Proposed Development would not lead to any significant adverse effects on any of the key sensitivities identified, including Key Views, Key Routes or Gateways.