

Creag Dhubh to Dalmally 275kV Connection Environmental Impact Assessment Volume 4 | Appendix 8.7

Wild Land Impact Assessment

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CONTENTS

Technical Appendix 8.7: Wild Land Impact Assessment.....	2
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Technical Appendix 8.7: Wild Land Impact Assessment

Methodology

- 1.1.1 The methodology utilised for the Wild Land Impact Assessment (WLIA) follows NatureScot's Wild Land Assessment Guidance¹ hereafter referred to as the Guidance.
- 1.1.2 The WLIA comprises the following steps:
- Step 1 – Definition of the study area and scope of the assessment: Comprising the identification of a study area appropriate to the scale of development and extent of likely significant effects on the WLA.
 - Step 2 – Verify the WLA baseline: Confirmation of the wild land qualities of the study area, any relevant or substantial changes that have occurred since the description was prepared, and the nature of their contribution to the WLA. The assessment will identify which qualities could be susceptible to the Proposed Development.
 - Step 3 – Assess the sensitivity of the qualities of the WLA within the study area, assuming a high value for the included area of landscape. The wild land qualities of the WLA, including the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to those qualities, will be identified that are most sensitive to the type and scale of change proposed.
 - Step 4 – Assess the magnitude of the impact²: Given the size or scale of change, extent and duration, the effects on individual qualities and/ or combinations of qualities will be described, drawing out which physical attributes and perceptual responses will be affected and how and to what degree, and the potential for mitigation.
 - Step 5 – Judgement of the significance of effect: The overall significance of residual effects on the wild land qualities of the WLA will be outlined, taking into account mitigation.

Step 1 Defining the Study Area

- 1.1.3 The study area for the WLIA reflects the extent of likely significant effects, including any cumulative effects, and along with the following:
- The scale of development and extent of effects;
 - The extent of visibility;
 - Routes and movement through the WLA;
 - The wild land qualities likely to be affected will be the focus of the assessment; and
 - The potential for significant cumulative effects in respect of other developments.
- 1.1.4 Based on the analysis of the viewshed for the Proposed Development (as illustrated in EIAR Volume 3a: Figure 8.4) effects on the Ben Lui WLA (No.6) and the Loch Etive Mountains WLA (No. 9) have been addressed:

Step 2 Establishing the Baseline

- 1.1.5 The baseline appraisal:
- Establishes and describes the extent to which physical and perceptual attributes of wild land are present; and
 - Describes the character, sensitivity and condition of the area affected and its contribution to the wild land areas as a whole.

¹ NatureScot (2020) Assessing the Impacts on Wild Land Areas – Technical Guidance

² Note: The NatureScot WLIA Technical Guidance uses the term 'Magnitude of Effects'. However, to ensure alignment with terminology used in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) and to avoid confusion when assessing the significance of the effect, the term 'Magnitude of Impact' has been used in this assessment.

- 1.1.6 The WLIA considers the baseline context of the WLA, not just areas predicted to fall within the viewshed of the Proposed Development and will consider the effects on the experience of receptors processing into and out of the WLA, as well as to key locations in the WLA.
- 1.1.7 The principal sources of information used were NatureScot's Wild Land Mapping and the published Wild Land Descriptions³. The findings of these publications were verified using Ordnance Survey data/ mapping, aerial photography review and by field survey. Where any relevant or substantial changes to the WLA description were identified (where they materially affect the wild land qualities), these were included in the baseline description.
- 1.1.8 NatureScot's advice to Government in 2014⁴, acknowledges that wildness is a subjective matter that requires informed judgements. This is because people respond differently according to their individual experience and expectations. For some, Scotland's wild landscapes are the setting for their home and workplace; for others, they are places that they visit. But there is sufficient commonality in appreciation to identify a set of attributes and responses that can be assessed if presented in a systematic, transparent and consistent way.
- 1.1.9 The Guidance defines physical and perceptual attributes of Wild Land as comprising:
- A high degree of perceived naturalness;
 - A lack of modern human artefacts or structures;
 - Little evidence of contemporary land uses;
 - Landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and
 - Remoteness and/ or inaccessibility.
- 1.1.10 The perceptual responses evoked by these physical attributes include:
- A sense of sanctuary or solitude;
 - Risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety;
 - Perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and
 - Fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.
- 1.1.11 The extent to which physical attributes and perceptual responses are evident in the field is recorded as high, medium, low or negligible as set out in Table 1 of the Guidance. It is noted that, as the Proposed Development is located outwith the WLAs, the focus of the WLIA is on indirect effects on key wild land qualities.

Step 3 Sensitivity of WLA Qualities

- 1.1.12 Whilst WLAs are assumed to have a high value, their susceptibility to different forms of development vary according to the particular wild land qualities, to what extent they are intact and the scale and likely impact of different development types on such qualities.
- 1.1.13 The sensitivity of the WLA qualities to different types and scales of development was informed by NatureScot's WLA descriptions and project specific fieldwork and is classified as High, Medium or Low, as described below.

Step 4 Magnitude of Impact on Wild Land Areas

- 1.1.14 Impacts on wild land qualities are expressed as follows:
- Substantial: Total Loss or considerable alteration to attributes, assessed on a case by case basis;
 - Moderate: Partial loss or alteration to attributes;

³ Available at <https://www.nature.scot/wild-land-area-descriptions>

⁴ SNH (2014) Advice to Government – Core Areas of Wild Land 2013 Map, available at <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape-change/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land>

- Slight: Minor loss or alteration to attributes resulting in a change to the baseline;
- Negligible: Very minor loss or alteration to baseline attributes; and
- None: No loss or alteration to baseline attributes.

Step 5 Judging Significance of Effects

1.1.15 Professional judgement has been applied to the findings of the baseline and predicted effects arising from the Proposed Development to assess whether effects on the physical attributes and perceptions of each of the WLAs would be significant. As discussed in **EIAR Volume 2: Chapter 8: LVIA**, residual effects are ascertained by means of a comparison of Sensitivity and Magnitude of Impact, as indicated in Table 8.7.1, below. The judgement also takes into account the mitigation presented in **Section 8.5 of Chapter 8: LVIA (EIAR Volume 2)** and the overall effect of the development on the special qualities of the WLA. It is important to note that the matrix was not applied prescriptively or arithmetically, but rather, as a starting point from where professional judgement was brought to bear.

1.1.16 A summary of the residual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development is presented below.

Table 5.5.1 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

Illustrative Materials

1.1.17 **EIAR Volume 3a: Figure 8.4b**, presents a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) drawing for the Proposed Development and indicates the location and extent of the Merrick WLA. Viewpoint 2 from the LVIA is also relevant to the WLIA (the viewpoints are presented in **EIAR Volume 3b: Figures 8.8a to 8.8s**) and has been used to inform the assessment.

1.1.18 It should be noted, however, that this viewpoint represents a worst case in respect of likely residual effects, and not necessarily the general effect on the WLA. Consequently, effects on wild land qualities at these viewpoints shouldn't be extrapolated across the wider WLA.

1.1.19 **Table 8.7.2** presents the results of the WLIA.

Conclusions and Summary of Effects

Ben Lui Wild Land Area

1.1.20 In summary:

- The Proposed Development is not located within, or adjacent to, the boundary of the WLA;
- Within the WLA boundary, the Proposed Development would only be visible from some site facing summits and elevated slopes at a distance of over 2.5 km to the north west.
- The proposed development would relate to existing areas of development which include forestry activities, road and rail infrastructure, electricity transmission infrastructure and settlement;
- From within the WLA, the proposed development would be viewed from above, within the context of existing human development which is characteristic of the Loch Awe landscape;
- The proposed development would not impact upon or obstruct the intervisibility between WLA's, or on views from the Ben Lui WLA to the mountains of Ben Cruachan, Ben Challum or Ben More;
- The proposed development is not of a size or scale where it would influence the perceived extent of the WLA any further.

1.1.21 In this context, the proposed development is not expected to constitute a significant effect on the wild land characteristics of the Ben Lui WLA.

Loch Etive Mountains Wild Land Area

1.1.22 In summary:

- The Proposed Development is not located within, or adjacent to, the boundary of the WLA;
- Within the WLA boundary, the Proposed Development would be visible from some site facing summits and elevated slopes at a distance of over 4 km to the south east;
- The proposed development would appear as a linear feature within a settled valley landscape. It would not impede or restrict intervisibility between mountain tops or hill ranges;
- The proposed development would not be visible from within the *remote*, large scale and *arresting* glens that form part of the WLA. Where visibility from within glens is available, these glens are settled with views of farmhouses, access tracks and existing transmission development;
- The proposed development would not impact upon the experience of the interior of the WLA;
- The proposed development would not obstruct, reduce or impact upon the perceived *awe-inspiring* qualities of the landform in views from outwith the classified area such as from the A819/ A85 or the West Highland Railway Line;

1.1.23 In this context, the proposed development is not expected to constitute a significant effect on the wild land characteristics of the Loch Etive Mountains WLA.

Table 8.7.2: Effects on Ben Lui Wild Land Area (WLA 6)

Step One (Study Area)	Step Two (Baseline Aspects) ⁵	Step Three (Sensitivity of Study Area to the type of Development Proposed)	Step Four (Assessment of Magnitude of Impacts)	Step Five (Residual Effects and Significance)
The study area for the WLIA comprises the full WLA (including areas outwith the LVIA study area).	"Contrast between the more massive and remote hills in the south west and the arresting, more visible and popular hills to the north east."	High. Development of the type proposed has the potential to detract from the <i>perceived remoteness</i> of the south western part of the WLA, introducing further modern human artefacts/ land use into the landscape.	Negligible. The Proposed Development is located outwith the WLA, approximately 2.5 km north west of the WLA boundary at its closest point, and approximately 5.8 km from the nearest major summit (Beinn a'Chliebh). The proposed development is not visible from the north eastern part of the WLA. The proposed development is located on lower lying ground to the east of Loch Awe and its location would relate to the A85 and A198 corridors. The OHL is visually separate from the elevated moorland hills and <i>arresting</i> mountains which form the south western portion of the WLA. The location of the alignment means it would not be skylined and would recede into the landscape when viewed at distance. The proposed development would not impede on the <i>awe-inspiring</i> views to Ben Lui, Ben Oss, Bein Dhubchraig, nor would it impact upon the <i>imposing</i> nature of Ben Lui in views from outwith the WLA. The proposed development would relate to the horizontal nature of the moorland along which it routes, and to existing infrastructure (roads, existing transmission lines) which are present in the landscape surrounding loch Awe. The proposed development would not alter the current inaccessibility of the south western part of the WLA and would not impact upon the <i>sense of solitude</i> experienced from within the WLA.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>
	"Rugged and highly natural mountains, penetrated by steep-sided glens that contain well-used routes and provide arresting views"	High. Development of the type proposed could increase the influence of human artefacts and contemporary land uses which may have a localised effect on the <i>perceived sense of naturalness, sanctuary and remoteness</i> experienced in parts of the WLA	Negligible. The proposed development would relate to existing areas of development which include forestry activities, road and rail infrastructure, electricity transmission infrastructure and settlement. The proposed development would be sited away from elevated upland landscape, and would not influence the <i>perceived naturalness</i> of the WLA. Where visible from elevated part of the WLA, the proposed development would align with the 'grain' of the landscape. It would form a minor element in views from within the WLA, seen in an existing context of human settlement and intervention.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>
	"A landscape that is generally well-defined by surrounding human elements in views from higher slopes"	Medium. The proposed development could affect the <i>sense of sanctuary</i> and <i>sense of remoteness</i> of the WLA when visible from within the classified area.	Negligible. From within the WLA, the proposed development would be viewed from above, within the context of existing human development which is characteristic of the Loch Awe landscape. The proposed development would not impact upon or obstruct the intervisibility between WLA's, or on views from the Ben Lui WLA to the mountains of Ben Cruachan, Ben Challum or Ben More. The proposed development is not of a size or scale where it would influence the perceived extent of the WLA any further.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>
	"Few human artefacts within much of the upland area, in contrast to some of the glens where hydro development is a recurring feature"	High. The proposed development could form an obvious human artefact which could influence the <i>sense of sanctuary</i> within the WLA, particularly when experienced at close range.	Negligible. The proposed development is not located within the WLA. While the proposed development would increase the level of infrastructure in views from elevated parts of the WLA, it would be viewed in the context of existing linear development (A85/ A819/ west highland railway line and Stronmilchan – Cruachan and Dalmally – Inverarnan transmission lines) and it is considered unlikely that the proposed development would influence the <i>perceived sense of sanctuary</i> within the WLA boundary.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>

⁵ Taken from WLA description available at <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2021-06/Wild%20land%20Description%20Ben-Lui-January-2017-06.pdf>

Table 8.7.3: Effects on Loch Etive Mountains Wild Land Area (WLA 9)

Step One (Study Area)	Step Two (Baseline Aspects) ⁶	Step Three (Sensitivity of Study Area to the type of Development Proposed)	Step Four (Assessment of Magnitude of Impacts)	Step Five (Residual Effects and Significance)
The study area for the WLIA comprises the southernmost portion of the WLA as it lies within the study area for the LVIA of the Proposed Development. This includes the area extending south from Beinn Mhic Mhonaigh, Meall Copagach, the headwaters and upper extent of Glen Noe and Ben Cruachan.	"Arresting, steep, high mountains with precipitous rocky tops and ridges that offer panoramic views of elevated tops continuing far into the distance"	High. Development of the type proposed has the potential to reduce the perception of <i>high risk</i> and <i>naturalness</i> within the mountain landscape	Negligible. These features are less evident in the very south of the WLA, as it lies within the study area, although Ben Cruachan and its associated summits provide views east across to the Ben Lui WLA and to the north across the wider Loch Etive Mountains WLA. The proposed development would appear as a minor linear feature within a settled valley landscape. It would not impede or restrict intervisibility between mountain tops or hill ranges.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>
	"A series of deep glens carved through the mountains, with arresting side slopes and spectacular geological features that contribute to a strong sense of naturalness"	High. Development of the type proposed has the potential to reduce the perception of <i>naturalness</i> within the glen landscapes, by introducing further <i>human artefacts</i> of a large scale	Negligible. The proposed development is not visible from within the <i>remote</i> , large scale and <i>arresting</i> glens that form part of the WLA. Where visibility is present, these glens are settled with views of farmhouses, access tracks and existing transmission development (i.e Dalmally substation, Stronmilchan – Cruachan and Dalmally – Inverarnan transmission lines). The proposed development would be set behind these features, in more distant views within a settled landscape.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>
	"A high number of visitors that seek different wild land qualities and are able to experience a wide range of remoteness, risk and physical challenge"	High. Development of the type proposed has the potential to reduce the qualities of <i>sanctuary and solitude</i> found within parts of the WLA, by introducing large scale infrastructure into an area perceived to be highly <i>remote</i>	Negligible. The proposed development would not impact upon the experience of the interior of the WLA. The proposed development would sit within the context of existing communications infrastructure located within the area surrounding Loch Awe. The proposed development would not be located in views from the A85/ A819 towards the WLA and therefore would not obstruct, reduce or impact upon the perceived <i>awe inspiring</i> qualities of the landform in views from outwith the classified area.	Moderate/ Minor <i>Not significant</i>

⁶ Taken from WLA description available at <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2021-09/Wild%20land%20Description%20Loch-Etive-mountains-July-2016-09.pdf>