

CHAPTER 14 – RECREATION AND TOURISM

14 RECREATION AND TOURISM.....	14-2
14.1 Introduction	14-2
14.2 Scope of Assessment and Methodology.....	14-2
14.3 Baseline Conditions	14-10
14.4 Assessment of Likely Significance of Effects.....	14-20
14.5 Additional Mitigation	14-31
14.6 Residual Effects.....	14-31
14.7 Assessment of Cumulative Effects	14-32
14.8 Summary and Conclusions	14-34

Figures (Volume 3 of this EIA Report)

Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities

Figure 14.2: Public Access Routes

Visualisations (Volume 4 of this EIA Report)

No visualisations are associated with this chapter.

Appendices (Volume 5 of this EIA Report)

Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment

Appendix 14.2: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan

- Figure 14.2.1: Outdoor Access Management Plan

14 RECREATION AND TOURISM

14.1 Introduction

- 14.1.1 This Chapter assesses the potential effects on recreation and tourism resulting from the Proposed Development. This Chapter (and its associated Figures and Appendices) is not intended to be read as a standalone assessment and reference should be made to the introductory chapters of this EIA Report (Chapters 1-6) and other environmental topics, including **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**, **Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration** as well as **Chapter 13: Transport**. The Chapter should also be read alongside **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** and **Appendix 14.2: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**.
- 14.1.2 A separate Socio-Economic Report accompanies the application for consent and therefore socio-economic considerations and tourism economy are not discussed in this Chapter.

14.2 Scope of Assessment and Methodology

Scope of the Assessment

- 14.2.1 The scope of this assessment has been established through a scoping process. Further information can be found in **Table 14.1** and **Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation**. This section sets out the scope of the assessment.

Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.2.2 The following aspects have been considered for the recreational and tourist facilities and activities element of the assessment:
- temporary and permanent land-take which could lead to a complete or partial loss of a recreational or tourist facility and activity and / or land associated with a recreational or tourist facility and activity;
 - changes to amenity experienced by recreational users and tourists using a recreational or tourist facility and activity during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development; and
 - temporary adverse effects on access to recreational or tourist facilities and activities during the construction of the Proposed Development arising from increased traffic movements on the local road network as well as vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist diversions that could be implemented.

Public Access

- 14.2.3 The following aspects have been considered for the public access element of the assessment:
- temporary and / or permanent diversions of public access routes; and
 - changes to amenity experienced by users of public access routes during both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development.

Tourist Events

- 14.2.4 The following aspect has been considered for the tourist events element of the assessment:
- temporary adverse effects on access to tourist events during the construction of the Proposed Development, as a result of increased traffic movements on the local road network as well as vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist diversions that could be implemented.

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.2.5 The following aspect has been considered for the tourist accommodation element of the assessment:
- changes in the availability of tourist accommodation due to the influx of construction workers during the construction of the Proposed Development.

Consultation

- 14.2.6 **Table 14.1** sets out consultation undertaken specifically to support the recreation and tourism assessment. Full details of the EIA Scoping consultation process and responses are included in **Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation** and associated appendices, with specific responses relating to recreation and tourism summarised in **Table 14.1**.

Table 14.1: Consultation Responses

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
The Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council	Meeting – 30 January 2025	A meeting was held with The Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council Access Officers. The Access Officers were content with the assessment approach and proposed public access mitigation.	The proposed public access mitigation has been outlined in Appendix 14.2: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan .
Moray Council	Email – 11 February 2025	As the Moray Council Access Officer was not able to attend a meeting, an email was sent which included presentation slides and meeting notes for The Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council Access Officer meeting. The Moray Council Access Officer was content with the assessment approach and proposed public access mitigation	The proposed public access mitigation has been outlined in Appendix 14.2: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan .
Moray Council	Email – 12 March 2025	Email sent to Moray Access Officer confirming that the Speyside Way would be considered within the landscape and visual assessment as well as details on the Applicant's Community Benefit Fund.	N/A
The Highland Council	EIA Scoping Response	The scope of the recreation and tourist assets should at least cover a study area of 5 km.	A 5 km study area for the recreation and tourism assessment has been applied, as set out in paragraph 14.2.7 .
The Highland Council	EIA Scoping Response	All the impacts on outdoor access should be brought together in a comprehensive assessment of the proposal's visual and physical impacts on outdoor access during the preparatory, construction, operational and post-operational phases.	The potential physical and visual impacts on and mitigation for public access have been considered within the 'Public Access' assessment set out in Sections 14.4 and 14.6 of this Chapter.
The Highland Council	EIA Scoping Response	The potential impact on and mitigation for public access should be assessed incorporating core paths, public rights of way, long-distance routes, other paths, and wider access rights across the site.	The assessment of impacts on public access has included core paths, public rights of way, long-distance routes, other paths, and wider access rights across the site.

Organisation	Type of Consultation	Response	How response has been considered
The Highland Council	EIA Scoping Response	Guidance on assessing public access impacts, as part of an EIA, is within Appendix 6 of NatureScot's Handbook on EIA ¹ .	Appendix 6 of NatureScot's EIA Handbook has been considered as part of the assessment, as set out in paragraph 14.2.10 of this Chapter.
The British Horse Society	EIA Scoping Response	Equestrian use should be included when planning and designing the development.	The potential physical and visual impacts on and mitigation for public access, including recreational routes used for horse riding, have been considered within the 'Public Access' assessment set out in Sections 14.4 and 14.6 of this Chapter.
The Highland Council	Pre-application Consultation	Scotway's publication "Hill Tracks" is insufficient as far as providing information on recorded public rights of way. That information should be gained from ScotWays via their Catalogue of Rights of Way (CRoW)	ScotWays' CRoW data has been obtained for the study area, as detailed in paragraph 14.2.9 of this Chapter.

Study Area

- 14.2.7 There are no recognised standards or methodologies for assessing recreation and tourism effects of overhead line (OHL) developments. Guidance, including that from NatureScot, does not specify the size of the study area that should be used to assess indirect effects. Therefore, the study areas applied for the assessment have been defined based on professional judgement as well as consultation feedback presented in the EIA Scoping Report. The study area has increased since the EIA Scoping Report based on consultation feedback, as set out in **Table 14.1**. The study area used for the assessment of recreation and tourist facilities and activities as well as public access, as presented in this Chapter, was 5 km from the Proposed OHL Alignment. The study area is split into three sections: The Highland Council, Moray Council and Aberdeenshire Council.
- 14.2.8 A study area of 5 km from the Proposed OHL Alignment, plus other key settlement areas (outside of the 5 km) that are considered to provide suitable amenities for construction workers has been used for tourist accommodation. This approach is based on professional judgement and experience of accommodating construction workers on similar projects.

Determining Baseline

- 14.2.9 A desk-based baseline data collection exercise has been undertaken, which included a review of available information in order to determine baseline conditions. The following data sources have been used to collate the baseline. This list should be read in conjunction with the Limitations and Assumptions presented in **paragraph 14.2.24**:
- AddressBase data;
 - Ordnance Survey Mapping;
 - ScotWays' CRoW data;
 - Scotland's Great Trails website²;

¹ NatureScot (2018). Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/environmental-assessment/environmental-impact-assessment>

² Scotland's Great Trails (2025). Scotland's Great Trails. Available at: <https://www.scotlandsgreattrails.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025).

- Sustrans website³;
- National Records of Scotland⁴;
- Scottish Canals⁵;
- VisitScotland⁶;
- Visit Inverness⁷;
- Booking.com⁸
- TripAdvisor⁹
- Forestry and Land Scotland¹⁰
- Woodland Trust¹¹
- tourist attraction websites such as the Loch Ness Centre¹², North Coast 500¹³ and Malt Whisky Trail¹⁴;
- recreation websites such as Inverness Golf Club¹⁵, Gordon Castle¹⁶, Benriach Distillery¹⁷ and angling websites¹⁸;
- recreational trail websites such as Great Glen Way¹⁹, The Caledonia Way²⁰, The Dava Way²¹, Speyside Way²² and Formartine and Buchan Way²³; and
- event websites such as Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival²⁴, Scottish National Whisky Festival²⁵, City of Inverness Highland Games²⁶, Loch Ness Marathon²⁷, Black Isle Show²⁸ and Keith Country Show²⁹.

Methodology for the Assessment of Impacts

14.2.10 There is no established guidance for conducting a recreation and tourism assessment as part of the EIA process. The assessment methodology is based upon professional judgement and where relevant draws on Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA 112 Population and Human Health³⁰ and Appendix 6 of the NatureScot EIA Handbook³¹, which covers guidance on outdoor access impact assessment.

³ Sustrans (2025). The National Cycle Network. Available at: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network/> (Accessed 28th February 2025).

⁴ National Records of Scotland (2025). Projected Population of Scotland: 2022-based. Available at: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/projected-population-of-scotland-2022-based/> (Accessed 28th February 2025).

⁵ Scottish Canals (2025). Visit the Caledonian Canal Available at: <https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/visit/canals/visit-the-caledonian-canal> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

⁶ Visit Scotland (2025). Welcome to Scotland. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

⁷ Visit Inverness (2025). Loch Ness Activities. Available at: <https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/blog/LochNessActivities> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

⁸ Booking.com (2025). Find your next stay. Available at: <https://www.booking.com/> (Accessed 20 Aug 2025)

⁹ TripAdvisor (2025). Hotels. Available at: <https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/> (Accessed 20 Aug 2025)

¹⁰ Forestry and Land Scotland (2025). Destinations Search. Available at: <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/destinations-search> (Accessed 20 August 2025)

¹¹ Woodland Trust (2025). Woodland Trust Woods. Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/woodland-trust-woods/> (Accessed 20 August 2025).

¹² The Loch Ness Centre (2025). The Loch Ness Centre. Available at: <https://lochness.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹³ North Coast 500 (2025). NC500: The Ultimate Road Trip. Available at: <https://www.northcoast500.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹⁴ The Malt Whisky Trail (2025). The Malt Whisky Trail. Available at: <https://maltwhiskytrail.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹⁵ Inverness Golf Club (2025). Inverness Golf Club. Available at: <https://www.invernessgolfclub.co.uk/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹⁶ Gordon Castle (2025). Gordon Castle. Available at: <https://www.gordoncastle.co.uk/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹⁷ Benriach Distillery (2025). Benriach Distillery. Available at: <https://www.benriachdistillery.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹⁸ Forres Angling Association (2025). River Findhorn Salmon Fishing Available at: <https://www.forresangling.co.uk/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

¹⁹ Highland Government (2025). Great Glen Way. Available at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/greatglenway/info/3/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

²⁰ Sustrans (2025). The Caledonia Way. Available at: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-other-routes/the-caledonia-way/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

²¹ The Dava Way (2025). The Dava Way. Available at: <https://davaway.org.uk/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

²² Speyside Way (2025). Speyside Way. Available at: <https://www.speysideway.co.uk/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

²³ Aberdeenshire Council (2025). Formartine and Buchan Way. [online]. Available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/paths-and-outdoor-access/long-distance-routes/formartine-and-buchan-way/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

²⁴ Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival (2025). Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival Available at: <https://tartanheartfestival.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

²⁵ Scottish National Whisky Festival (2025). Scottish National Whisky Festival. Available at: <https://www.scottishnationalwhiskyfestival.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

²⁶ City of Inverness Highland Games (2025). City of Inverness Highland Games. Available at: <https://invernesshighlandgames.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

²⁷ Loch Ness Marathon (2025). Loch Ness Marathon and Festival of Running. Available at: <https://lochnessmarathon.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

²⁸ Black Isle Show (2025). Black Isle Show Available at: <https://blackisleshow.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

²⁹ Keith Show (2025). Keith Country Show. Available at: <http://www.keithshow.org.uk/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

³⁰ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (2020). LA112 Population and Human Health. Available at: <https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmrbs/search/1e13d6ac-755e-4d60-9735-f976bf64580a>

³¹ NatureScot (2018). Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/environmental-assessment/environmental-impact-assessment>

Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.2.11 Key recreational and tourist facilities and activities within the study area have been identified using AddressBase data and publicly available sources. A qualitative assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on recreational and tourist facilities and activities as well as land associated with recreational and tourist facilities and activities within the study area has been undertaken. The assessment considered changes in the availability, accessibility and amenity on these facilities and activities taking into account guidance from Appendix 6 of the NatureScot Handbook on EIA. Changes in availability would be due to a loss or partial loss of a resource and / or land associated with a resource. For the purposes of the assessment, the loss of a resource and / or land associated with a resource has been considered as a permanent, long-term construction effect. Amenity has been considered as a combination of visual amenity, air quality and noise levels experienced by recreational users.
- 14.2.12 The assessment of recreational and tourist facilities and activities has been combined as a number of recreational facilities and activities are also classified as tourist facilities and activities. The assessment has been informed by the assessments presented in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**, **Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration** as well as **Chapter 13: Transport**.

Public Access

- 14.2.13 The assessment has also considered whether the Proposed Development would lead to any temporary and permanent diversions of public access routes. The assessment considered changes to access for public access routes during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development, taking into account guidance from Appendix 6 of the NatureScot Handbook on EIA. Loss of amenity for public access routes has also been considered for both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. As detailed above, amenity has been considered to be a combination of visual amenity, air quality and noise levels experienced by users of public access routes.
- 14.2.14 The assessment has been informed by the assessments presented in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**, **Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration** as well as **Chapter 13: Transport**.

Tourist Events

- 14.2.15 A qualitative assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on access to tourist events has been undertaken. The assessment considered changes in access due to increased traffic movements on the local road network as well as vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist diversions that could be implemented as part of the Proposed Development. The assessment also considering the type and size of event, distance from Proposed Development LoD and anticipated customer base.

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.2.16 The changes to the availability of tourist accommodation due to an influx of construction workers in the vicinity of the Proposed Development has also been considered. A qualitative assessment has been undertaken considering the anticipated number of construction workers and where the construction workers would likely to reside. Tourist accommodation within the study area has been identified through publicly accessible sources and reputable online platforms (e.g., VisitScotland, Booking.com, TripAdvisor) and has also been informed by information provided by the Applicant's Principal Contractor. To evaluate the potential worst-case scenario, the assessment compares the current availability of tourist accommodation during the peak tourist season with the anticipated demand from construction workers at the height of the construction programme. This evaluation incorporates assumptions provided by the Principal Contractor regarding housing the construction workforce.

Sensitive Receptors

- 14.2.17 The tourism and recreation sensitivity receptors within the study area are:
- recreational users;

- tourists; and
- users of public access routes.

Issues Scoped Out

14.2.18 The following aspects have been scoped out of the recreation and tourism assessment:

- During operation, land associated with recreational facilities and activities and / or public access routes may be restricted around the towers or access roads for maintenance activities. However, this would be for a small area around the infrastructure and for a limited time and is not anticipated to lead to significant effects.
- During operation, there would be minimal traffic movements on the local road network as a result of maintenance activities. It is unlikely there would be vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist diversions associated with the maintenance activities. Therefore, significant effects are not anticipated.

14.2.19 The operation of the Proposed Development could also have an effect on the tourism economy. These effects are considered within the Socio-Economic Report.

Assessment Methodology – Significance Criteria

14.2.20 The assessment of significance has been based on the environmental value / sensitivity of a resource and the magnitude of change from baseline conditions.

14.2.21 Recreational and tourist resources have been assigned a value and / or sensitivity using the criteria set out in **Table 14.2** as a basis. The criteria have drawn on DMRB LA 112 Population and Human Health³² and have been adapted for the recreation and tourism assessment. Each receptor's value has been assigned taking account of professional judgement and past experience of similar schemes. It should be noted that some larger attractions may have the capacity to cope with change, therefore sensitivity will be considered on this basis as well.

Table 14.2: Recreation and Tourism Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	• recreational and tourist assets and land associated with assets that are of national or international status and / or have high visitor numbers; • tourist accommodation where no alternative in the local area is available; and • recreational routes frequently used by walkers and cyclists for recreational and leisure purposes (e.g. national trails).
Medium	• recreational and tourist assets and land associated with assets that are of regional status and / or have medium visitor numbers; • tourist accommodation where limited alternatives are available in the local area; and • recreational routes moderately used by walkers and cyclists for recreational and leisure purposes (e.g. regional trails).
Low	• recreational and tourist assets and land associated with assets that are of local status and / or low visitor numbers; • tourist accommodation where alternatives are available in the local area; and • locally designated recreational routes for which alternative routes can be taken.
Negligible	• recreational and tourist assets and land associated with assets that have very low visitor numbers; • tourist accommodation where numerous alternatives are available in the local area; and • recreational routes not / infrequently used by walkers and cyclists for recreational purposes.

³² Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (2020). LA112 Population and Human Health. Available at <https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmrbl/search/1e13d6ac-755e-4d60-9735-f976bf64580a>

14.2.22 The magnitude of change has been reported in line with the criteria outlined in **Table 14.3** below. The criteria have drawn on DMRB LA 112 Population and Human Health. Each receptor's value has been assigned taking account of professional judgement and past experience of similar schemes. For tourist accommodation, the magnitude of change has been determined taking into account the surrounding local context and anticipated duration of the impact.

Table 14.3: Recreation and Tourism Magnitude of Change

Magnitude of Change	Criteria
Major	Recreation and tourism: - loss of asset and / or quality and integrity of asset; severe damage to key characteristics, features or elements, e.g. direct acquisition and demolition of buildings and direct development of land to accommodate the Proposed Development; and - where up to 100% of total bedspace or rooms within the study area are likely to be taken up by temporary construction workers (due to leasing of tourist accommodation being required for construction workers). Public access: - permanent loss / severance of an existing recreational route used by walkers and cyclists.
Moderate	Recreation and tourism: - partial loss of / damage to key characteristics, features or elements, e.g. partial removal or substantial amendment to access or acquisition of land compromising viability of recreation asset; and - where up to 50% of total bedspace or rooms within the study area are likely to be taken up by temporary construction workers (due to leasing of tourist accommodation being required for construction workers). Public access: - disruption of a recreational route used by walkers and cyclists with large increase / decrease in journey length / time and / or large changes to amenity for recreational users.
Minor	Recreation and tourism: - A discernible change in attributes, quality or vulnerability; minor loss of, or alteration to, one (maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements, e.g. amendment to access or acquisition of land resulting in changes to operating conditions that do not compromise overall viability of recreation asset; and - where up to 25% of total bedspace or rooms within the study area are likely to be taken up by temporary construction workers (due to leasing of tourist accommodation being required for construction workers). Public access: - alteration of a recreational route used by walkers and cyclists but with minor increase in journey length / time and / or minor changes to amenity for recreational user.
Negligible	Recreation and tourism: - very minor loss or detrimental alteration to one or more characteristics, features or elements, e.g. acquisition of non-operational land or buildings not directly affecting the viability of recreation asset; and - where up to 10% of total bedspace or rooms within the study area are likely to be taken up by temporary construction workers (due to leasing of tourist accommodation being required for construction workers). Public access: - very minor change to recreational route used by walkers and cyclists.

14.2.23 The overall significance of effects has been determined based on the matrix shown in **Table 14.4**. Effects that are classified as moderate or above are considered to be significant and are highlighted in bold. Effects classified as minor or below are considered to be not significant.

Table 14.4: Recreation and Tourism Matrix of Significance

		Resource value and / or sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of change	Major	Major	Major or Moderate	Moderate or Minor	Minor
	Moderate	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Minor or Neutral
	Minor	Moderate or Minor	Minor	Minor or Neutral	Minor or Neutral
	Negligible	Minor	Minor or Neutral	Minor or Neutral	Neutral

Limitations and Assumptions

14.2.24 This section outlines the limitations and assumptions made in undertaking the tourism and recreation assessment reported in this chapter:

- In order to identify the recreation and tourism baseline, AddressBase data was used which was then checked and verified. However, due to the scale of the Proposed Development it is anticipated that the baseline data presented in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** is not exhaustive. Additionally, specific events that occur annually within the study area may change each year, therefore the information presented here may be subject to change.
- The recreation and tourist facilities and activities within Inverness have been captured within **Table 14.1 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. However, due to the scale of Inverness and the absence of a single source of data on tourism attractions, there may be a small number of receptors that have not been captured or which have opened or closed for business since the baseline was compiled.
- The baseline has identified tourist accommodation within the study area through published data sources and online searches. However, due to the scale of the Proposed Development and the extent of the study area, as well as the absence of a comprehensive single source of data on tourism accommodation, it is possible that a limited number of accommodation options may not have been captured, or that some establishments may have commenced or ceased operations since the baseline was established. An assumption is made to not include any luxury tourist accommodation (e.g. hotels with 5-star ratings) and to include accommodations with price per night only below £150.
- The recreation and tourism baseline has been aligned with the landscape recreational resources where appropriate. However, due to the different nature and focus of the assessments the categorisation of baseline data differs between these technical assessments in places. For example, **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual** assesses visual amenity, however the Recreation and Tourism Chapter considers how that visual amenity may affect the overall amenity of the tourist attraction.
- This Chapter has relied, in part, on data provided by third parties (e.g. National Records of Scotland and OS mapping) which are the most up-to-date, available at the time of writing.
- The recreation and tourism assessment has drawn on other environmental topic assessments including, for example, **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual** but does not report the same assessment score as these environmental topics. This is due to the different purpose of the assessments and different assessment criteria used. The recreation and tourism assessment is a holistic assessment that has focused on changes to availability, accessibility and users' overall experience of a resource.
- **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** details the public access routes and their distances from the LoD for the Proposed Towers and OHL Alignment. Where the distance is 0 m this means the routes intersect the LoD whilst the **Appendix 3.3: Outline Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)** focuses on intersection points between public access routes and the Proposed Development, meaning the public access routes and their associated distances within the tables will slightly differ.

- It should be noted that due to the large number of woodlands, plantations and forests within the 5 km study area, only those which are named and recorded on Woodland Trust³³ or the Forestry and Land Scotland³⁴ websites or are named on OS Mapping and are intersected by the Proposed Development are considered (see **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**). It is assumed that other woodland, plantations and forests would not experience recreation and tourism effects as a result of the Proposed Development. Where there are footpaths that cross these woodlands, they are considered separately from a public access perspective. Seasonality has been considered in the assessment, however due to the difficulties in separating local recreational visitors and tourists in visitor numbers, a worst-case scenario assuming peak visitor numbers has been considered for individual resources. Additionally, for seasonal activities such as fishing, when assessing the resource, a worst-case scenario of peak season has been considered.

14.3 Baseline Conditions

- 14.3.1 The main settlements within the study area include Beaully, Kirkhill, Inverness, Elgin, Keith, Huntly, Turriff, New Deer, Maud, Stuartfield and Mintlaw. The Proposed Development crosses or is in proximity to the A833, A82, A9, A939, A940, A941, A95, A96, A97, A948 and the A952 as well as various B-roads and single lane tracks. Other smaller settlements, rural communities and clusters of properties are present along the Proposed OHL Alignment.
- 14.3.2 The peak tourist season in Scotland tends to be in the summer period (July – September), however visitors arrive all year round^{35, 36}. A 2006 study commissioned by SSE as part of the Scotland-Northern Ireland Interconnector project determined that, despite fluctuations in visitor numbers throughout the study years, the OHL had an 'inconsequential' impact on the tourism industry in Ayrshire and Arran. Some businesses reported minor impacts, but they were not substantial enough to deter tourists³⁷.
- 14.3.3 In terms of perceived effects on tourism, a 2014 study conducted by the Welsh Government investigated the impact of onshore windfarms and associated infrastructure on tourism in Wales. It found that windfarm development and associated infrastructure had limited long-term impacts on the tourism sector on a national scale, and that certain visitor groups have different sensitivities to energy infrastructure (for example older groups who visit for peace and tranquillity may have a negative experience particularly during construction). Interestingly, the research also found that public perceptions of windfarms and associated grid infrastructure are not wholly negative, and that reactions may be complex and change over time³⁸.
- 14.3.4 It is understood that sports, including fishing, deer stalking, and shooting are undertaken within the study area. The fishing season varies slightly from river to river, however generally, rod fishing season starts in February (January for the River Ness) and finishes in October³⁹. In a Scottish context, shooting typically refers to the pursuit of pest species, small game, wildfowl, and game birds, whereas deer stalking is specifically focused on the management and control of deer populations. Deer stalking seasons in Scotland vary by species and sex. For females, the season runs from 21 October to 15 February for all species except roe deer, which extends until 31 March⁴⁰. While male deer of all species can now legally be culled year-round⁴¹, traditional control periods are still

³³ Woodland Trust (2025). Woodland Trust Woods. Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/woodland-trust-woods/> (Accessed 20th Aug 2025)

³⁴ Forestry and Land Scotland (2025). Forestry and Land Scotland. Available at: <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/> (Accessed 20th Aug 2025)

³⁵ Scottish Tourism Observatory (2025). Seasonality analysis of international overnight visitors to Scotland. Available at:

<https://tourismobservatory.scot/data/insights/seasonality-analysis-of-international-overnight-visitors-to-scotland/?backid=1746>

³⁶ Scottish Tourism Observatory (2025). Seasonality of domestic overnight visitors to Scotland. Available at: <https://tourismobservatory.scot/data/insights/seasonality-analysis-of-domestic-overnight-visitors-to-scotland-from-2022/?backid=1746>

³⁷ Roger Tym and Partners on behalf of SSE (2006). Scotland to Northern Ireland Interconnector Ex-post Tourism Impact Assessment. Available at:

<https://biggareconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Scotland-NI-Interconnector-Ex-post-Tourism-Impact-Assessment-November-2006.pdf>

³⁸ Welsh Government (2014) Potential Economic Impact of Wind Farms on Welsh Tourism. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/potential-economic-impact-of-wind-farms-on-welsh-tourism_0.pdf

³⁹ Fisheries Management Scotland (2025) Fishing Seasons. Available at: <https://fms.scot/fishing-and-the-law/fishing-seasons/> (Accessed 20th Aug 2025)

⁴⁰ The Deer Working Group (2019). The Management of Wild Deer in Scotland. Available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2020/02/management-wild-deer-scotland/documents/management-wild-deer-scotland-report-deer-working-group/management-wild-deer-scotland-report-deer-working-group/govscot%3Adocument/management-wild-deer-scotland-report-deer-working-group.pdf>

⁴¹ Scottish Outdoor Access Code (2025) Heading for the Scottish Hills. Available at: <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/practical-guide-all/deer-management-and-access/heading-scottish-hills> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

widely observed—typically September to October for red deer, and April to August for roe deer. Shooting seasons depend on the quarry species, however it generally from September / October to January / February⁴². The 2025 Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS) by NatureScot found that on average, 61% of adults in Scotland participated in outdoor recreation activities at least once a week. The same study also found that seasonal variation was limited, suggesting pursuits can be undertaken all year round. Walking was the most popular activity (93% of people participated in this) whilst fishing and horse riding were lower at 3% and 1% respectively⁴³.

- 14.3.5 It should also be noted that land within the study area would be accessible via the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003⁴⁴, which established statutory rights of responsible access on and over most land for the purpose of recreation. Public rights of way are also protected in Scotland under The Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967.

The Highland Council

Recreation, Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.3.6 **Table 14.1 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the recreational and tourist facilities and activities within The Highland Council study area and their assigned sensitivity. The recreational facilities and activities within the study area range from waterways used for recreational purposes, to tourist attractions such as castles and gardens to local football pitches. **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities** shows the location of these resources. In 2023, there were 2.3 million overnight stays by international and domestic visitors in the Highland region⁴⁵.
- 14.3.7 Within The Highland Council study area, a total of 71 recreational and tourist facilities and activities were identified. The majority of these were classified as an 'Indoor / Outdoor Leisure / Sporting Activity / Centre'. The recreational and tourist facilities and activities considered to be of high sensitivity were:
- Caledonian Canal (ID: H2 as seen on **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities**);
 - Loch Ness (ID: H59 as seen on **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities**); and
 - North Coast 500 Tourist Route (ID: H6 as seen on **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities**).
- 14.3.8 The Caledonian Canal is 60-miles long and cuts through the Great Glen. There are many activities undertaken along the Caledonian Canal including boating activities, fishing, canoeing The Great Glen Canoe Trail, walking along the Caledonian Canal Walk and cycling along the Caledonian towpath.
- 14.3.9 Loch Ness is a well-known loch and tourist destination. Recreational activities such as fishing, boating and cruises, canoeing and kayaking are undertaken on the loch with walking and cycling around it. The River Ness connects to Loch Ness and includes the Ness Islands, which are a popular park and garden.
- 14.3.10 There are a number of woodland areas which are used for recreation in the study area. These include Balblair Wood and The Aird. Both feature trails which are used by walkers, horse-riders and cyclists (see **paragraph 14.3.12** below for further details on Public Access). Additionally, there are outdoor recreation clubs such as the Lower Beaully Fishings private fishing syndicate and Reelig Horse Riding Centre in and around Beaully, whose members make use of the local landscape. Farm Ness is a local outdoor attraction which offers a hands-on farm experience to visitors.
- 14.3.11 The North Coast 500 (NC500) Tourist Route is a 516 miles long driving route that covers the north of Scotland⁴⁶. The NC500 starts in Inverness, travels along the west coast to Applecross and then northwards towards the settlements of Torridon and Ullapool. It then travels to some of the most northerly coastal points in Scotland,

⁴² British Association for Shooting and Conservation (2025) Shooting Seasons. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/shooting-seasons/> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁴³ NatureScot (2025) <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1361-spans-scotlands-people-and-nature-survey-202324-outdoor-recreation>

⁴⁴ UK Government (2003) Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 [online]. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents> (Accessed 25th March 2025)

⁴⁵ Visit Scotland (2023) NatureScot Research Report 1361 - SPANS Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2023/24. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/highlands> (Accessed 20th August 2025).

⁴⁶ North Coast 500 (2025). North Coast 500. Available at: <https://www.northcoast500.com/> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

passing through Caithness and by John o' Groats before heading south again through Dingwall and finally back to Inverness. Research published in 2019 found that the NC500 was associated with a 19.9% increase in visitors to free attractions and a 41.7% increase in visitors to paid attractions in the area. The route recorded a fall of 35% in visitor numbers in 2021 / 22, however in 2023, visitor numbers returned to above pre-pandemic levels⁴⁷.

Public Access

- 14.3.12 SPANS found that paths or networks of paths were used in 84% of outdoor recreation visits and a fifth of visitors used paths that are part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) for a range of activities, including hiking, cycling and horse-riding⁴⁸. **Table 14.2 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the public access baseline for The Highland Council study area. **Figure 14.2: Public Access Routes** shows the location of these public access routes. In total, there are 24 CRoW recorded public rights of ways, including three Heritage Paths and two Scottish Hill Tracks, as well as 139 Core Paths within the study area. NCN routes 78, 7 and 1 are also located within the study area⁴⁹. Of these, the following are considered to be of high sensitivity:
- Long-distance Path - IN19.57;
 - Long-distance Path - Great Glen Way Section 6 (Drumnadrochit to Inverness);
 - NCN Route 78;
 - NCN Route 7; and
 - NCN Route 1.
- 14.3.13 Two long-distance paths are also located within the study area: The Great Glen Way and the Caledonia Way. The Great Glen Way is located within the study area and is a 79-mile route made up of paths, tracks and canals, and can be travelled by foot, boat or bike. The route stretches from Fort William to Inverness⁵⁰.
- 14.3.14 The Caledonia Way is also situated within the study area and is a 234-mile long-distance cycling route that runs from Campbeltown to Inverness via the Kintyre Peninsula and the Great Glen Way. The route passes Scottish landmarks and historical sites, such as Loch Ness and Ben Nevis⁵¹.
- 14.3.15 In addition to the public access routes identified within **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** and illustrated on **Figure 14.2: Public Access Routes**, it is anticipated that there are other non-designated public access routes such as forest tracks within the study area, as well as land accessible via the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Tourist Events

- 14.3.16 **Table 14.5** sets out the tourist events that take place within The Highland Council study area. Tourist events have been included outside the 5 km study area where deemed appropriate such as events for which higher visitor numbers are anticipated. The tourist events are not detailed in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** or shown on **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities** due to the nature of this resource (i.e. a temporary, short-term event) and as they do not necessarily have a fixed location. The estimates of expected attendees have been taken from the relevant events' online websites and are based on attendees from previous years. It should be noted that these events may draw visitors from across Scotland and the UK and are annual unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁷ Press and Journal (2024). North Coast 500: Organisers on 2024 preparations, 'staycations' and expectations. Available at: <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/6427389/north-coast-500-organisers-2024-expectations-staycations-preparations/> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁴⁸ NatureScot (2025) <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1361-spans-scotlands-people-and-nature-survey-202324-outdoor-recreation>

⁴⁹ Sustrans (2025). The National Cycle Network. Available at: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

⁵⁰ Highland Government (2025). Great Glen Way. Available at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/greatglenway/info/3/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

⁵¹ Sustrans (2025). The Caledonia Way. Available at: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-other-routes/the-caledonia-way/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

Table 14.5: Tourist Events in The Highland Council Study Area

Name of Event	Type of Event	General timing of Event	Location	Approximate Distance from Proposed LoD for Towers and OHL Alignment (km)	Estimate of expected attendees (covers attendees from across the UK)
City of Inverness Highland Games	Highland games	July	Inverness	3.1	5,000 people
Loch Ness Food and Drink Festival	Food and drink	End of February / beginning of March	Inverness	5.5	3,000 people
Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival	Music and arts festival	End of July / beginning of August	Belladrum Estate in Kiltarlity	2.3	Between 20,000 and 25,000 people
Black Isle Show	Agricultural show	August	Muir of Ord	5.7	30,000 people
Loch Ness Marathon and Festival of Running	Running event	October	Loch Ness	Various locations	10,000 people
Etape Loch Ness	Cycling event	April	Loch Ness	Around Loch Ness	6,000 people
Nairn Book and Arts Festival	Book and arts festival	August	Nairn	5.5	Various small events across different venues
Nairn Highland Games	Highland games	August	Nairn	Various locations	Various small events across different venues

14.3.17 In addition to the events listed in **Table 14.5**, a number of smaller events are anticipated to be undertaken within The Highland Council study area.

Tourist Accommodation

14.3.18 This section sets out the tourist accommodation baseline for The Highland Council area. **Table 14.6** provides a summary of the accommodation options (hotels, inns, self-catering and guest houses) within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas in The Highland Council area.

Table 14.6: Hotels and Guest Houses within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas in The Highland Council Area

Grouped by Nearest Settlement	Number of Hotels/ Inns/ Guest Houses	Estimated Total Number of Rooms
Beauly	6	86
Muir of Old	4	20
Inverness, including near Inverness	31	552
Nairn	16	147
Kirkhill	1	10
Auldearn	1	14
Total	59	799

14.3.19 Data from the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey shows that annual occupancy rates for tourist accommodation in the Highlands region fluctuate based on seasonal demand and accommodation type but

consistently exceed the national average for Scotland. In 2024, the average hotel occupancy rate in the Highlands was 75.89%, compared to 63.45% across Scotland. Guesthouses and B&Bs recorded an average occupancy of 53.51% (versus 53.45% nationally), while self-catering accommodation in the Highlands achieved an average occupancy rate of 47.60%, also above the Scottish average of 39.30%⁵².

- 14.3.20 Occupancy rates across Scotland exhibit substantial seasonal variation. For example, monthly hotel room occupancy across Scotland as a whole ranged from 36.0% in January to a peak of 90.90% in August. Guest house occupancy reached 79.90% in August, dropping to 27.0% in December, while self-catering accommodation varied from 21.20% in January to 57.40% in August. The average peak room occupancy for hotels, guest houses and self-catering accommodation across Scotland during peak season (August) is 45.70% and for off-peak season (December/ January) is 28.0%. It is important to note that the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey provides monthly occupancy data only at the national level; therefore, equivalent figures are not available at the local authority level.
- 14.3.21 Independent analysis of Airbnb survey data⁵³ indicates that the Highlands region recorded approximately 3,567 short-term lets, representing the highest number among all local authorities in Scotland and accounting for nearly 20% (19.60%) of the national total. This dataset pertains exclusively to properties that were formerly, or are currently, suitable for permanent residential use, and therefore excludes bed and breakfast rooms, hotel accommodations, log cabins, glamping sites and caravan and camping sites.
- 14.3.22 The total of all explored accommodation options (hotels / inns / guest rooms / B&Bs and short-term lets) in The Highland Council area amounts to approximately 4,357 rooms. Due to the numerous accommodation options available, it is considered that the sensitivity of the tourist accommodation in this area is negligible.

Moray Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.3.23 **Table 14.3 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the recreational and tourist facilities and activities within the Moray Council study area and their assigned sensitivity. The recreational facilities and activities within the study area range from waterways used for recreational purposes (such as the River Lossie and Glenlatterach Reservoir which are both used for fishing), to distilleries and local bowling clubs. **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities** shows the location of these resources. The Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray Speyside region hosted approximately 1.35 million overnight visits by international and domestic visitors in 2023.⁵⁴
- 14.3.24 Within the Moray Council study area, a total of 62 recreational and tourist facilities and activities were identified. The majority of these were classified as an 'Indoor / Outdoor Leisure / Sporting Activity / Centre'. No recreational and tourist facilities and activities were assigned a high sensitivity.
- 14.3.25 The Malt Whisky Trail is a partnership between distilleries in the Moray area. It has not been included as a specific recreational and tourism resource within **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** as it encompasses nine whisky distilleries of which only one falls within the study area - Strathisla Distillery⁵⁵. The Strathisla Distillery is within the Moray Council study area, and has been included in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism**. It should be noted that visitors following the Malt Whisky Trail may use accommodation within the study area, however the accommodation provision is considered below.
- 14.3.26 There are a number of woodland areas that are used for recreation in the study area. These include Speymouth Forest and Balloch Wood. Both feature trails which are used by walkers, horse-riders and cyclists (see **paragraph**

⁵² VisitScotland (2023). Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey 2023. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/about-our-industry/accommodation#2024> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁵³ Data Map Scotland (2023). Airbnb Scotland Survey 2023. Available at: <https://datamap-scotland.co.uk/2024/02/airbnb-scotland-survey-2023/> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁵⁴ Visit Scotland (2023) Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and Moray Speyside. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/aberdeen-aberdeenshire> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁵⁵ The Malt Whisky Trail (2025). The Malt Whisky Trail. Available at: <https://maltwhiskytrail.com/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

14.3.27 below for further details on Public Access). Additionally, the Highland Gliding Club is located within the study area and has approximately 60 members⁵⁶. They also offer trial lessons to members of the public.

Public Access

14.3.27 SPANS found that paths or networks of paths were used in 84% of outdoor recreation visits and a fifth of visitors used paths that are part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) for a range of activities, including hiking, cycling and horse-riding⁵⁷. **Table 14.4 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the public access baseline for the Moray Council study area. **Figure 14.2: Public Access Routes** shows the location of these public access routes. There are 38 CRoW recorded public rights of ways, including seven Heritage Paths and three Scottish Hill Tracks, as well as 145 Core Paths within the study area. Of these, the following long-distance routes are considered to have high sensitivity:

- Long-distance Path – The Dava Way; and
- Long-distance Path – Speyside Way

14.3.28 The Dava Way follows the old Highland Railway line for 24 miles between Forres and Grantown-on-Spey⁵⁸. The Speyside Way follows the valley of the River Spey. The route links the Moray Firth coast with the Cairngorms National Park. The Speyside Way links with the Dava Way at Grantown and both form part of the wider Moray Way 160 km circular route⁵⁹.

14.3.29 In addition to the public access routes identified within **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**, it is anticipated that there are other non-formal public access routes such as forest tracks within the study area, as well as land accessible via the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Tourist Events

14.3.30 **Table 14.7** Table 14.5 sets out the tourist events that take place within the Moray Council study area. Tourist events have been included outside the 5 km study area where deemed appropriate, such as events for which higher visitor numbers are anticipated. The tourist events are not detailed in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** or shown on **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities** due to the nature of this resource (i.e. an event) and as they do not necessarily have a fixed location. The estimates of expected attendees have been taken from the relevant events' online websites and are based on attendees from previous years. It should be noted that these events may draw visitors from across Scotland and the UK and are annual unless otherwise stated.

Table 14.7: Tourist Events in the Moray Council Study Area

Name of Event	Type of Event	General timing of Event	Location	Approximate Distance from Proposed LoD for Towers and OHL Alignment	Estimate of expected attendees (covers attendees from across the UK)
Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival	Whisky festival	Late April or early May	Across the Moray Speyside region	N/A	Various small events across different venues
Gordon Castle Highland Games	Highland Games event	June	Gordon Castle Estate, Fochabers but also throughout	1.6	10,000 people

⁵⁶ Highland Gliding Club (2025). Available at: <https://www.highglide.co.uk/about-club/intro-page> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁵⁷ NatureScot (2025) <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1361-spans-scotlands-people-and-nature-survey-202324-outdoor-recreation>

⁵⁸ The Dava Way (2025). The Dava Way. Available at: <https://davaway.org.uk/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

⁵⁹ Speyside Way (2025). Speyside Way. Available at: <https://www.speysideway.co.uk/> (Accessed 4th March 2025)

Name of Event	Type of Event	General timing of Event	Location	Approximate Distance from Proposed LoD for Towers and OHL Alignment	Estimate of expected attendees (covers attendees from across the UK)
			Moray Speyside, Forres		
Moray Speyside Winter Festival	A winter festival	Winter	Across the Moray Speyside region	N/A	Various small events across different venues
Speyfest	Contemporary and traditional Celtic music festival	July	Fochabers	1.5	1,500 people
MacMoray	Music festival	Easter	Elgin	7	10,000 people
The Moray Way Ultras Series	Comprises five distinct running events, which span from 50 km to 100 km in length	Various	Throughout Moray	N/A	N/A
Keith Country Show	Country show	August	Keith	2.6	1,000 people
Elgin Food and Drink Festival	Food and drink festival	August	Elgin	7.4	5,000 people
Grampian Wellbeing Festival	Wellbeing festival	May	Various	N/A	Various small events across different venues

14.3.31 In addition to the events listed in **Table 14.7**, a number of smaller events are anticipated to be undertaken within the Moray Council study area.

Tourist Accommodation

14.3.32 This section sets out the tourist accommodation baseline for the Moray Council. **Table 14.8** provides a summary of the accommodation options within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas in the Moray Council Area. The accommodation options in **Table 14.8** include hotels, inns, self-catering and guest houses.

Table 14.8: Hotels and Guest Houses within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas in the Moray Council Area

Grouped by Nearest Settlement	Number of Hotels / Inns / Guest Houses	Estimated Total Number of Rooms
Brodie	4	21
Forres	10	105
Elgin	10	403
Rothies	2	15
Fochabers	2	15
Keith	4	19
Rothiemay	1	10

Grouped by Nearest Settlement	Number of Hotels / Inns / Guest Houses	Estimated Total Number of Rooms
Total	36	650

- 14.3.33 Data from the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey shows that annual occupancy rates for tourist accommodation in the Aberdeen and Grampian region (which includes the Moray area) fluctuate based on seasonal demand and accommodation type but consistently exceed the national average for Scotland in terms of hotel and guesthouses / B&Bs occupancy. In 2024, the average hotel occupancy rate in the Aberdeen and Grampian region was 69.90%, compared to 63.45% across Scotland. Guesthouses and B&Bs recorded an average occupancy of 61.35% (versus 53.45% nationally), while self-catering accommodation achieved an average occupancy rate of 24.9%, also above the Scottish average of 39.30%⁶⁰.
- 14.3.34 As mentioned in **paragraph 14.3.20**, monthly hotel room occupancy across Scotland as a whole ranged from 36.0% in January to a peak of 90.90% in August. Guest house occupancy reached 79.90% in August, dropping to 27.0% in December, while self-catering accommodation varied from 21.20% in January to 57.40% in August. It is important to note that the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey provides monthly occupancy data only at the national level; therefore, equivalent figures are not available at the local authority level.
- 14.3.35 Independent analysis of Airbnb survey data⁶¹ indicates that the Moray region recorded approximately 445 short-term lets, accounting for 2.5% of the national total. This dataset pertains exclusively to properties that were formerly, or are currently, suitable for permanent residential use, and therefore excludes bed and breakfast rooms, hotel accommodations, log cabins, glamping sites and caravan and camping sites.
- 14.3.36 The total of all explored accommodation options (hotels/ inns/ guest rooms/ B&Bs and short-term lets) in Moray Council area is approximately 1,095 rooms. Due to the numerous accommodation options available, it is considered that, the sensitivity of the tourist accommodation in this area is low.

Aberdeenshire Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.3.37 **Table 14.5 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the recreational and tourist facilities and activities within the Aberdeenshire Council study area and their assigned sensitivity. The recreational facilities and activities within the study area range from waterways used for recreational purposes, to distilleries and public parks and gardens. **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities** shows the location of these resources. The Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray Speyside region hosted approximately 1.35 million overnight visits by international and domestic visitors in 2023⁶².
- 14.3.38 Within the Aberdeenshire Council study area, a total of 65 recreational and tourist facilities and activities were identified. The majority of these were classified as an 'Indoor / Outdoor Leisure / Sporting Activity / Centre'. No recreational and tourist facilities and activities were assigned a high sensitivity.
- 14.3.39 There are a number of woodlands and forests within the study area which may be used for recreational purposes, including walking, horse riding and cycling, including Waggle Hill Wood. Additionally, there are local outdoor attractions such as Walkmill Menagerie Petting Zoo and Brucklay Park.

Public Access

- 14.3.40 SPANS found that paths or networks of paths were used in 84% of outdoor recreation visits and a fifth of visitors used paths that are part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) for a range of activities, including hiking, cycling

⁶⁰ VisitScotland (2023). Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey 2023. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/about-our-industry/accommodation#2024> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁶¹ Data Map Scotland (2023). Airbnb Scotland Survey 2023. Available at: <https://datamap-scotland.co.uk/2024/02/airbnb-scotland-survey-2023/> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁶² Visit Scotland (2023). Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/aberdeen-aberdeenshire> (Accessed 20th august 2025)

and horse-riding⁶³. **Table 14.6 of Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the public access baseline for the Aberdeenshire Council study area. **Figure 14.2: Public Access Routes** shows the location of these public access routes. There are 46 CRoW recorded public rights of ways as well as 65 Core Paths within the study area. Of these, the following are considered to have high sensitivity:

- Long-distance Path - 7LD.03EA.02 – The Formartine and Buchan Way; and
- NCN Route 1.

14.3.41 The Formartine and Buchan Way is a long-distance route that is 53-miles in length. It uses the former railway line linking from Dyce, on the edge of Aberdeen in the south, to the village of Maud where it splits into two routes; eastwards to Peterhead and northwards to Fraserburgh⁶⁴. National Cycle Network Route 1 is also located within the study area⁶⁵.

14.3.42 In addition to the public access routes identified within **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**, it is anticipated that there are other non-formal public access routes such as forest tracks within the study area, as well as land accessible vis the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Tourist Events

14.3.43 **Table 14.9** sets out the tourist events that take place within the Aberdeenshire Council study area. Tourist events have been included outside the 5 km study area where deemed appropriate, such as events for which higher visitor numbers are anticipated. The tourist events are not detailed in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** or shown on **Figure 14.1: Recreational and Tourist Facilities and Activities** due to the nature of this resource (i.e. an event) and as they do not necessarily have a fixed location. The estimates of expected attendees have been taken from the relevant events' online websites are based on attendees from previous years. It should be noted that these events are likely to attract visitors from across Scotland and the UK and are annual unless otherwise stated.

Table 14.9: Tourist Events in the Aberdeenshire Council Study Area

Name of Event	Type of Event	General timing of Event	Location	Approximate Distance from Proposed LoD for Towers and OHL Alignment	Estimate of expected attendees (covers attendees from across the UK)
Aden Music Festival	Music festival	September	Mintlaw	4.8	5,000 people
Provenance Festival	Food and drink festival	September	Various	N/A	Various small events across different venues
Grampian Wellbeing Festival	Wellbeing festival	May	Various	N/A	Various small events across different venues
Huntly Hairst	Annual harvest festival	September	Huntly	4.6	< 3,000 people

14.3.44 In addition to the events listed in **Table 14.9**, a number of smaller events are anticipated to be undertaken within the Aberdeenshire Council study area.

⁶³ NatureScot (2025) <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1361-spans-scotlands-people-and-nature-survey-202324-outdoor-recreation>

⁶⁴ Aberdeenshire Council (2025) Formartine and Buchan Way. Available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/paths-and-outdoor-access/long-distance-routes/formartine-and-buchan-way/>. (Accessed 4th March 2025)

⁶⁵ Sustrans (2025) The National Cycle Network. Available at: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network/>. (Accessed 28th February 2025)

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.3.45 This section sets out the tourist accommodation baseline for the Aberdeenshire Council area. **Table 14.10** provides a summary of the accommodation options within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas in the Aberdeenshire Council Area. The accommodation options in **Table 14.10** include hotels, inns, self-catering and guest houses.

Table 14.10: Hotels and Guest Houses within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas in the Aberdeenshire Council Area

Grouped by Nearest Settlement	Number of Hotels/ Inns/ Guest Houses	Estimated Total Number of Rooms
Huntly	9	43
Turriff	2	9
New Deer	1	2
Old Deer	1	4
Mintlaw	1	17
Peterhead	10	294
Total	24	369

- 14.3.46 Data from the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey shows that annual occupancy rates for tourist accommodation in the Aberdeen and Grampian region fluctuates based on seasonal demand and accommodation type, but consistently exceed the national average for Scotland in terms of hotel and guesthouses / B&Bs occupancy. In 2024, the average hotel occupancy rate in the Aberdeen and Grampian region was 69.90%, compared to 63.50% across Scotland. Guesthouses and B&Bs recorded an average occupancy of 61.35% (versus 53.45% nationally), while self-catering accommodation achieved an average occupancy rate of 24.90%, also above the Scottish average of 39.30%⁶⁶.
- 14.3.47 As mentioned in **paragraph 14.3.20**, monthly hotel room occupancy across Scotland as a whole ranged from 36.0% in January to a peak of 90.90% in August. Guest house occupancy reached 79.90% in August, dropping to 27.0% in December, while self-catering accommodation varied from 21.20% in January to 57.40% in August. It is important to note that the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey provides monthly occupancy data only at the national level; therefore, equivalent figures are not available at the local authority level.
- 14.3.48 Independent analysis of Airbnb survey data⁶⁷ indicates that the Aberdeenshire region recorded approximately 675 short-term lets, accounting for 3.70% of the national total. This dataset pertains exclusively to properties that were formerly, or are currently, suitable for permanent residential use, and therefore excludes bed and breakfast rooms, hotel accommodations, log cabins, glamping sites and caravan and camping sites.
- 14.3.49 The total of all explored accommodation options (hotels / inns/ guest rooms / B&Bs and short-term lets) in the Aberdeenshire Council area is approximately 1,044 rooms. Due to the numerous accommodation options available, it is considered that the sensitivity of the tourist accommodation in this area is low.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 14.3.50 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would pass along the northern extent of Glenlatterach Reservoir, which is used for hiking. The Kellas Alternative Alignment (and the Proposed Development) crosses one Core Path (Reference CP-SP01).

⁶⁶ VisitScotland (2023). Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey 2023. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/about-our-industry/accommodation#2024> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

⁶⁷ Data Map Scotland (2023). Airbnb Scotland Survey 2023. Available at: <https://datamap-scotland.co.uk/2024/02/airbnb-scotland-survey-2023/> (Accessed 20th August 2025)

Future Baseline

- 14.3.51 A number of demographic factors are likely to experience natural fluctuation and change, including total population in each of the council areas as well as Scotland as a whole. The National Record of Scotland indicates that Scotland's population is projected to grow by 4.4% in the ten years from mid-2022 to mid-2032, and by 6.2% by mid-2047. The number of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase by around a third of a million people over the 25 years to mid-2047. Over the same period, the number of children and young adults is projected to fall⁶⁸. Although Scotland's population is expected to age, it is anticipated that the overall increase in population could create greater demand for recreation and tourist facilities and activities, tourist accommodation and public access routes. An increased population could also put extra pressure on rural locations, including recreation and tourism resources. Given the recent growth in visitor numbers and tourism businesses reported in the baseline, and the strength of the recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic, it is anticipated that tourism in the Highlands and its importance to the local economy will continue to increase. It is considered that tourism investment initiatives such as Inverness Castle's City Region Deal⁶⁹, The Moray Growth Deal⁷⁰, Scotland's National Tourism strategy⁷¹ and the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund⁷² will deliver improvements in infrastructure to support increased visitor numbers to the study area.

14.4 Assessment of Likely Significance of Effects

Embedded Mitigation

- 14.4.1 **Appendix 14.2: Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan (OAMP)** sets out the draft OAMP for the Proposed Development. The OAMP will be developed by the appointed Principal Contractor in consultation with The Highland Council, Moray Council and Aberdeenshire Council Access Officers where appropriate as part of the CEMP. The draft OAMP demonstrates how continued access for recreational users along Core Paths, and other recreational routes in the area will be managed in a way that least affects users.
- 14.4.2 **Appendix 3.4: Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** sets out the strategy and measures to be adopted for the Proposed Development in respect to construction traffic. All reasonable measures, including appropriate design and installation of traffic management schemes will be employed to mitigate any potential impacts on the local communities.
- 14.4.3 The recreation and tourism assessment considers other environmental topics including landscape and visual amenity, noise as well as traffic and transport. Therefore, the mitigation measures outlined in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**, **Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration** (including a Construction Noise Management Plan) as well as **Chapter 13: Transport** are also relevant for recreation and tourism.

Approach to Worker Accommodation

- 14.4.4 During the construction phase, there could be an increase in demand for tourist accommodation in the three Councils' areas due to construction workers moving into the area temporarily. For the purpose of this assessment, there is anticipated to be a workforce ranging from 53 to 814 for the construction and demobilising works. The peak workforce is anticipated to be 814 in Quarter 1 of 2029. A blended approach to workers accommodation has been proposed, combining the use of hotels, private lets, caravans, temporary modular accommodation and provision of permanent housing. Due to the seasonality of tourism and the spread of construction areas, there may be localised challenges in terms of availability of accommodation and transporting

⁶⁸ National Records of Scotland (2025). Projected Population of Scotland: 2022-based. Available at: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/projected-population-of-scotland-2022-based/> (Accessed 28th February 2025)

⁶⁹ The Highland Council (2025). Inverness Castle. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20014/economic_development/715/city_region_deal_project_information/12 (Accessed 28th February 2025)

⁷⁰ Moray Council (2025). Moray Growth Deal Annual Report 2024 published. Available at: <https://newsroom.moray.gov.uk/news/moray-growth-deal-annual-report-2024-published#:~:text=The%20Deal%20is%20funded%20through,Moray%20Council%20and%20regional%20partners>

⁷¹ Scottish Tourism Alliance (2020). Scotland Outlook 2030. Available at: <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Scotland-Outlook-2030.pdf>

⁷² UK Government (2021). Levelling Up Fund: Prospectus. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-prospectus>

workers from available hotels to the different work fronts. A Construction Workforce Travel Plan will be developed by the Principal Contractor.

- 14.4.5 An accommodation strategy is being prepared by the Principal Contractor (Accommodation Strategy) which considers the demand for accommodation for the Proposed Development and other SSEN Transmission developments in the region in line with the SSEN Transmission 'Housing our Workers Strategy 2024'⁷³. The key assumptions within the Accommodation Strategy are set out below and have been used as the basis for the assessment in this Chapter: These are preliminary values at this stage and will be further developed following submission for the application for consent:
- five percent of the construction workforce would not require accommodation as they could either be based locally and travel to site and / or work from home;
 - twenty percent of the remaining 95% of the workforce would reside at local hotels and private lets;
 - twenty-five percent of the remaining 95% of the workforce would reside within caravans. It is assumed that the caravans would be owned by construction workers and no public caravan / sites would be used during the construction period. The caravans would be pitched on private land (with permission from the landowner) and / or council land. Where possible, caravan pitches would be upgraded for future users; and
 - fifty-five percent of the remaining 95% of the workforce would reside in accommodation that would be developed by the Applicant. All housing would be additional to the existing housing stock and would, therefore, not cause any displacement. The additional accommodation would be progressed via three initiatives:
 - **New build housing initiative:** The Applicant would provide funding to private developers that are unable to progress local housing schemes due to financial reasons, thereby bridging the funding gap. In return, the developer would lease the newly built housing to the Applicant for the duration of the construction period.
 - **Empty homes initiative:** The Applicant would fund the refurbishment of empty homes (e.g. hotels and / or care homes). In return, the council or proprietor would lease the newly refurbished property to the Applicant for the duration of the construction period. Once the Proposed Development has been built, the council or proprietor would take ownership of the newly refurbished property.
 - **Infrastructure delivery initiative:** The Applicant would construct modular units and the associated infrastructure (e.g. access roads) on land allocated for future housing in the local authority's local plan. The modular units would be removed once the construction period has been completed. The infrastructure would support future developments and be designed in consultation with the relevant local authority.
- 14.4.6 The 95% of the workforce that would require accommodation (as from the previous paragraph) equates to 773 workers and this can be further subdivided geographically with 25% of resources allocated to west (The Highland Council), 50% allocated centrally (Moray Council) and 25% allocated to the east (Aberdeenshire Council), as shown in **Table 14.11**. As stated above, the peak workforce is anticipated to be in Quarter 1 of 2029 and the other periods (Quarter 1 2026 and Quarter 4 2030) have been shown for comparison.

Table 14.11: Construction Workforce Allocation

	The Highland Council	Moray Council	Aberdeenshire Council	Total
Q1 2026	76	152	76	304
Q1 2029	193	387	193	773
Q4 2030	76	151	76	303

⁷³ SSEN Transmission (2024). Housing Our Workers Strategy. Available at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/documents/housing-strategy/ssent-housing-strategy-2024-

- 14.4.7 As per the previous paragraph, it is assumed that 20% of the 95% of the workforce requiring accommodation will be residing in tourist accommodation (e.g. hotels, private lets, caravans etc) during the construction period. It should be noted that this represents a worst-case scenario, and equates to 155 people requiring accommodation in hotels / guest houses / self-catering / B&Bs and short-term lets across the Proposed Development at the peak period. On this basis, there is a realistic estimation of an uptake of 60 - 155 beds in hotels / guest houses / self-catering / B&Bs and short-term lets at the peak construction period.
- 14.4.8 Across the three council areas, there are 119 hotels / guest houses / self-catering and B&Bs within 5 km of the Proposed OHL Alignment plus major settlement areas with capacity of approximately 1,818 rooms. In terms of short-term private lets, there is a total number of 4,687 rooms in the three council areas. The total number of hotels / guest houses / self-catering / B&Bs and short-term lets is 6,505 rooms. Utilising these accommodation options would negate the need to create specific separate worker accommodation and would deliver a financial benefit into the surrounding community all year round. In a worst-case scenario, workforce numbers are estimated to be around 2.3% of the entire room allocation (covering hotels / guest houses / self-catering / B&Bs and short-term lets) during peak construction period. However, peak construction time is anticipated during Quarter 1 2029 (January - March) which has the lowest occupancy rates as presented in **paragraphs 14.3.20, 14.3.34 and 14.3.47** with off-peak season (December/ January) occupancy rate being 28%. A regional breakdown of the accommodation requirements for each council area is presented in the sections below.

Predicted Construction Impacts

The Highland Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.4.9 As set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**, a number of recreational and tourism facilities and activities within The Highlands Council study area would be intersected by the Proposed Development. Farm Ness, near Inverness, is directly underneath a span of the existing Beaulieu to Knocknagael 132 kV OHL to be removed, between towers BK-49 and BK-50. This receptor is a local outdoor farm attraction with a children's play area and farm shop. There is likely to be a requirement for temporary access restrictions to parts of the attraction whilst the OHL is removed. As a result, this receptor is anticipated to experience a short-term, **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect during construction. Reelig Horse Riding Centre, at Easter Moniac, is located directly underneath a span of the proposed OHL, between towers BC4-5B and BC4-6C. There is likely to be a requirement for temporary access restrictions to this receptor during conductor stringing works, and some noise effects due to piling of tower foundations. As a result, this receptor is anticipated to experience a short-term, **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect during construction.
- 14.4.10 There are a number of woodlands which are used as recreational areas within the study area. Some of these, including Daviot Wood, The Aird and Clunas Wood, are anticipated to experience tree removal and the presence of construction activities, particularly where woodland is bisected by the Proposed Development. Users who visit these places may be affected by reduced tranquillity and visual changes in these areas. As a result, a **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect is anticipated for these woodlands during construction.
- 14.4.11 Other recreational activities in the study area include fishing and horse-riding. Public access is considered in the Public Access section below, however for fisheries, no significant effects are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development. Although the Proposed Development passes in close proximity to Achagour Fishery, due to the nature of the Proposed Development and positioning of the towers it is not anticipated that there would be any loss of this resource or requirement for temporary closures during construction.
- 14.4.12 Although the Proposed Development passes over a number of waterways, such as the Caledonian Canal, River Ness and River Findhorn, it would not lead to the loss of any of these resources or restricted access to these resources. As detailed in **Appendix 14.2: Draft Outline Access Management Plan**, construction workers would give priority to recreational users on the water and access would not be restricted. Therefore, access to

recreational activities on waterways, such as kayaking, canoeing and fishing would not be restricted by the construction works. Access arrangements would ensure that safety for recreational users would be maintained whilst construction works are taking place.

- 14.4.13 The construction of the Proposed Development would lead to increased traffic on the local road network. This would be due to staff transport movements with small work crews travelling to and from work site areas. Additionally, vehicle movements would be required to construct new temporary, permanent or upgraded access roads; deliver the foundation and tower components and conductor materials to the site and deliver and collect materials and construction plant from the main site compound and to individual tower locations. **Chapter 13: Transport** sets out the anticipated construction traffic movements. Based on the results of the road capacity assessment from **Chapter 13: Transport**, during the construction phase it is considered that the sensitivity of the capacity of the traffic network to changes in traffic flows is low and the magnitude of change is predicted to be **negligible** compared to the link capacities. The impact of the Proposed Development on the capacity of the road network is expected to create **temporary, short to medium-term, negligible and not significant** transport effects.
- 14.4.14 As set out in **paragraph 14.4.2**, traffic management measures would be put in place where deemed appropriate. As detailed in the **Appendix 3.4: Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)**, measures would be put in place to ensure continued safe vehicular access for the public including, for example, traffic management being designed and installed in accordance with Chapter 8 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991⁷⁴ and design standards as per Transport Scotland requirements, as well as the implementation of temporary works signage. It is anticipated that the construction of the Proposed Development would not have a direct impact on local bus routes, bus tours and long haul buses. However, if the construction works were found to have the potential to impact bus service providers, the Principal Contractor would liaise with the relevant local authority and public transport provider. Therefore, vehicular access to recreational and tourist facilities and activities would be maintained throughout the construction period. Although there would be an increase in traffic on the local road network due to the introduction of construction traffic, it is anticipated that users would still be able to access recreation and tourist facilities and activities and it would not deter users from visiting facilities or undertaking activities, such as the NC500.
- 14.4.15 The construction of the Proposed Development is anticipated to impact on the amenity experienced by some recreational users and tourists. As set out in **Chapter 3: Project Description**, it is anticipated that the main construction and commissioning of the Proposed Development would take place over a four-year period, with dismantling of existing OHLs and reinstatement to follow, although detailed programming of works would be the responsibility of the Principal Contractor in agreement with SEN Transmission. Construction working is likely to be during daytime periods only. Working hours are currently anticipated to be between approximately 07:00 to 19:00 during British Summer Time (BST) and 07:00 to 18:00 during Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), seven days a week. Special measures and arrangements would be made for works in proximity to sensitive receptors and are further described in **Appendix 3.3: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)**. Any out of hours working would be agreed in advance with the relevant local authority.
- 14.4.16 A number of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities identified within **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** do not rely on amenity and tranquillity. Such activities include, for example, indoor bowling and football. The facilities and activities that do rely on amenity and tranquillity that are in close proximity to the Proposed Development could experience an adverse impact on amenity due to the construction works. The assessment set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** takes into consideration the nature of the scheme (i.e. linear scheme), type of recreational and tourist activity that would take place, surrounding context of the resource (e.g. is it within an existing urban setting or screened by vegetation), temporary to medium-term nature of the works and whether these impacts would lead to an overall reduction in enjoyment of the activity or users' decision to access the recreational and tourist resource. The

⁷⁴ UK Government (1991). New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/22/contents>

amenity impacts associated with the construction phase would vary depending on the types of construction activities taking place and infrastructure being installed. The assessment set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the worst-case assessment scenario.

- 14.4.17 The sensitivity of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities identified in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** within The Highland Council study area range from Low to High: the high sensitivity receptors being: Caledonian Canal, the NC 500 Tourist Route and Loch Ness. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on the access, availability and amenity experienced by users of all of the recreation and tourist facilities and activities, it is anticipated that on all other receptors, there would be a Negligible to Minor Adverse impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on recreational users and tourists, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**.

Public Access

- 14.4.18 As detailed in **Appendix 14.2: Draft Outline Access Management Plan**, all public access routes would be maintained throughout the construction of the Proposed Development. In order to ensure continued safe access, some public access routes would be manned and / or signage would be put in place. However, if there is an unforeseen complication and a temporary public access route diversion is required this would be agreed with the relevant local authority's Access Officer. It should be noted that the construction work area would be fenced off and not be accessible to members of the public for safety reasons.
- 14.4.19 It is anticipated that the construction of the Proposed Development would lead to reduced amenity for some users of public access routes. The assessment set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** considers the transitional nature of the impact, nature of the scheme (i.e. linear scheme), surrounding context of the public access route (e.g. is it within an existing urban setting or screened by vegetation), temporary to medium-term nature of the construction works, other public access routes available in the area and whether the impact would change a user's overall experience of the public access routes. The amenity impacts associated with the construction phase would vary depending on the types of construction activities taking place and infrastructure being installed. The assessment set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** sets out the worst-case assessment scenario.
- 14.4.20 The sensitivity of the public access routes in The Highland Council study area range from Low to High, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on public access routes, it is anticipated there would be a Minor Adverse to Negligible impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of public access routes, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. Although the long-distance routes are of a higher sensitivity, when considering the impact of the Proposed Development in the context of the whole length of the route, the effect is not anticipated to be significant.
- 14.4.21 As set out in **Paragraph 14.3.15**, there are also a number of non-designated public access routes along the length of the Proposed Development. Due to the nature and anticipated usage of these public access routes, they have been assigned a low sensitivity. The Proposed Development could lead to a change of amenity experienced by users of these non-designated public access routes of Minor Adverse to Negligible impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of these non-designated public access routes.
- 14.4.22 As set out in **Paragraph 14.3.15**, land within the study area would be accessible to the public under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. However, given that this non-designated land is likely to be used infrequently for recreational purposes and, due to the availability of other publicly accessible land in the area, it has been assigned a sensitivity of negligible. As the areas immediately around the construction works would not be accessible to the public during the construction works due to safety concerns and there would be a minor loss of accessibility to

non-designated publicly accessible land, the magnitude of change would be Minor Adverse. This would result in an overall **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on non-designated publicly accessible land within the study area.

Tourist Events

- 14.4.23 Most of the tourist events in The Highland Council study area are anticipated to remain unaffected by the construction of the Proposed Development due to their temporary nature, size and distance from the Proposed Development. Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival event is the only event that may be affected by the Proposed Development, however, as set out in the **Appendix 3.4: Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)** tourist events will be considered and vehicular access maintained for these events. As set out in **paragraphs 14.4.18**, public access will be maintained throughout the construction phase of the Proposed Development. Therefore, the construction of the Proposed Development is not anticipated to lead to a significant effect on access to the tourist events set out in **Table 14.5**.

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.4.24 The baseline assessment indicates that occupancy rates for both serviced and non-serviced accommodation in the Highlands exceed national averages. Demand for tourist accommodation is notably seasonal, with data showing significant fluctuations in hotel and self-catering occupancy throughout the year, peaking in August. While monthly occupancy data is not available at the local authority level, it is reasonable to assume that some capacity remains available even during peak tourist season, particularly within the non-serviced accommodation sector.
- 14.4.25 As mentioned in **paragraph 14.4.5**, it is assumed that 20% of the 95% of the workforce requiring accommodation would reside in tourist accommodation (e.g. hotels, private lets) during the construction period. For The Highland Council area, it is assumed that the 20% would equate to between 15 and 39 rooms, depending on the phase of the construction period and workforce requirements.
- 14.4.26 The sensitivity of tourist accommodation is negligible due to the numerous alternative tourist accommodations available as presented in **Table 14.6**. At peak construction season, the workforce would utilise up to 0.8% of all accommodation options (hotels / inns / guest rooms / B&Bs and short-term lets) in the area. As discussed in **paragraph 14.3.20**, even when the average room occupancy for hotels, guest houses and self-catering accommodation across Scotland during peak season (August) is 45.70%, there would still be sufficient accommodation availability for tourists. The magnitude of change is negligible due to the number of required rooms compared with the capacity of room availability in the tourist accommodation in the locality of the Proposed Development within The Highland Council area. Considering the sensitivity of tourist accommodation is assessed as negligible, there would be a **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on the availability of tourist accommodation in The Highland Council area.

Moray Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.4.27 As detailed in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**, a number of waterways within the Moray Council study area would be crossed by the Proposed Development, such as the River Lossie, River Divie and River Isla. However, as set out in **paragraph 14.4.12**, construction workers would give priority to recreational users on the water and access would not be restricted. Therefore, access to recreational activities on waterways, such as kayaking, canoeing and fishing, would not be restricted by the construction works.
- 14.4.28 There are a number of woodlands which are used as recreational areas within the study area. Some of these, including Speymouth Forest, Moss of Bedawinny and Badentinan Wood are anticipated to experience tree removal and the presence of construction activities, particularly where woodland is bisected by the Proposed Development. Users who visit these places may be affected by reduced tranquillity and visual changes in these areas. As a result, a **Moderate Adverse (Significant)** effect is anticipated for these woodlands during construction.

- 14.4.29 The Highland Gliding Club is located approximately 2.5 km from the Proposed Development and is not anticipated to experience significant construction impacts, due to the distance from the Proposed Development. It is anticipated that there will be **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** effects. Other recreational receptors include Garmouth Riding Centre, Elgin Golf Club and distilleries such as the Glenlossie Distillery, however these are anticipated to experience **Neutral (Not Significant)** effects due to their distance from the Proposed Development.
- 14.4.30 As set out in **Paragraph 14.4.13**, the construction of the Proposed Development would lead to increased traffic on the local road network. **Chapter 13: Transport** sets out the anticipated construction traffic movements within the Moray Council area. Based on the results of the road capacity assessment, during the construction phase it is considered that the sensitivity of the capacity of the traffic network to changes in traffic flows is low and the magnitude of change is predicted to be **negligible** compared to the link capacities. Therefore, the impact of the Proposed Development on the capacity of the road network is expected to create **temporary, short to medium-term, negligible and not significant** transport effects.
- 14.4.31 As detailed in **paragraphs 14.4.2 and 14.4.14**, traffic management measures would be put in place where deemed appropriate. **Paragraphs 14.4.15 and 14.4.16** provide detail on the anticipated impacts on amenity experienced by users of recreational users and tourists and is of relevance to the Moray Council.
- 14.4.32 The sensitivity of the recreational and tourist facilities identified in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** within the Moray Council study area range from Negligible to Medium. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on the access, availability and amenity experienced by users of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities, it is anticipated that there would be a Negligible to Minor Adverse impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effects on recreational users and tourists, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**.

Public Access

- 14.4.33 **Paragraphs 14.4.18 to 14.4.19** are also of relevance to the Moray Council study area. Although the Proposed Development would pass along the southern extent of Glenlatterach Reservoir which is used for hiking, it would not affect the availability of this resource. The sensitivity of the public access routes in the Moray Council study area range from Low to High, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on public access routes, it is anticipated there would be a Minor Adverse to Negligible impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of public access routes, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. Although the long-distance routes are of a higher sensitivity such as The Dava Way and the Speyside Way, when considering the impact of the Proposed Development in the context of the whole length of the route is not anticipated to be significant. As detailed in **Paragraph 14.4.21**, the Proposed Development would lead to a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of non-designated public access routes. As set out in **Paragraph 14.4.22**, there would be a **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of non-designated publicly accessible land.

Tourist Events

- 14.4.34 Most of the tourist events in this area are anticipated to remain unaffected by the construction of the Proposed Development due to their temporary nature, size and distance from the Proposed Development. Gordon Castle Highland Games is the only event that may be affected by the Proposed Development, however, as detailed in **Paragraph 14.4.23**, the Proposed Development is not anticipated to have a significant effect on access to tourist events.

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.4.35 **Paragraph 14.4.24 and 14.4.25** are also of relevance to the Moray Council area. It is assumed that 20% of the 95% of the workforce requiring accommodation (as shown in **Table 14.11**) will reside in tourist accommodation (e.g. hotels, private lets) during the construction period. It should be noted that this represents a worst-case scenario. For the Moray Council area, it is assumed that this 20% would equate to between 30 and 77 rooms, depending on the phase of the construction period and workforce requirements.
- 14.4.36 The sensitivity of tourist accommodation is low due to the alternative tourist accommodation available. At peak construction season, the workforce would take up to 7% of all accommodation options (hotels / inns / guest rooms / B&Bs and short-term lets) in the area. As discussed in **paragraph 14.3.20**, even when the average room occupancy for hotels, guest houses and self-catering accommodation across Scotland during peak season (August) is 45.70%, there would still be sufficient accommodation availability for tourists. The magnitude of change is higher compared to The Highland Council and Aberdeenshire, but is still minor due to the required room and capacity of room availability in the tourist accommodation in the locality of the Proposed Development in the Moray Council area. Considering the sensitivity of tourist accommodation is assessed as low, there would be a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** effect on the availability of tourist accommodation in the Moray Council area.

Aberdeenshire Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.4.37 As detailed in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**, a number of waterways within the Aberdeenshire Council study area would be crossed by the Proposed Development, such as the River Deveron. As set out in **paragraph 14.4.12**, construction workers would give priority to recreational users on the water and access would not be restricted. Therefore, access to recreational activities on waterways, such as kayaking, canoeing and fishing would not be restricted by the construction works.
- 14.4.38 As set out in **Paragraph 14.4.13**, the construction of the Proposed Development would lead to increased traffic on the local road network. **Chapter 13: Transport** sets out the construction traffic access routes and anticipated construction traffic movements within the Aberdeenshire Council area. Based on the results of the road capacity assessment, during the construction phase it is considered that the sensitivity of the capacity of the traffic network to changes in traffic flows is low and the magnitude of change is predicted to be negligible compared to the link capacities. Therefore, the impact of the Proposed Development on the capacity of the road network is expected to create **temporary, short to medium-term, negligible and not significant** transport effects.
- 14.4.39 As detailed in **Paragraphs 14.4.2 and 14.4.14** traffic management measures would be put in place where deemed appropriate. **Paragraphs 14.4.15 and 14.4.16** provide detail on the anticipated impacts on amenity experienced by users of recreational and tourist facilities and activities and is of relevance to the Aberdeenshire Council area.
- 14.4.40 The sensitivity of the recreational and tourist facilities identified in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** within the Aberdeenshire Council study area range from Low to Medium. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on the access, availability and amenity experienced by users of the recreational and tourist facilities, it is anticipated that there would be a Negligible to Minor Adverse impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effects on recreational users and tourists, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**.

Public Access

- 14.4.41 **Paragraphs 14.4.18 to 14.4.19** are also of relevance to the Aberdeenshire Council study area. The sensitivity of the public access routes in the Aberdeenshire Council study area range from Low to High, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on public access routes, it is anticipated there would be a Minor Adverse to Negligible

impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** to **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of public access routes, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. Although the long-distance routes are of a higher sensitivity, when considering the impact of the Proposed Development in the context of the whole length of the route is not anticipated to be significant. As detailed in **Paragraph 14.4.21**, the Proposed Development would lead to a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** to **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of non-designated public access routes. As set out in **Paragraph 14.4.22**, there would be a **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of non-designated publicly accessible land.

Tourist Events

- 14.4.42 The tourist events in this area are anticipated to remain unaffected by the construction of the Proposed Development due to their temporary nature, size and distance from the construction works. As detailed in **Paragraph 14.4.23**, the Proposed Development is not anticipated to have a significant effect on tourist events.

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.4.43 **Paragraphs 14.4.24** and **14.4.25** are also of relevance to the Aberdeenshire Council area. It is assumed that 20% of the 95% of the workforce requiring accommodation (as shown in **Table 14.11**) will reside in tourist accommodation (e.g. hotels, private lets) during the construction period. It should be noted that this represents a worst-case scenario. For the Aberdeenshire Council area, it is assumed that this 20% would equate to between 15 and 39 rooms, depending on the phase of the construction period and workforce requirements.
- 14.4.44 The sensitivity of tourist accommodation is low due to the alternative tourist accommodation available. At peak construction season, the workforce would take up to 3.7% of all accommodation options (hotels / inns / guest rooms / B&Bs and short-term lets) in the area. As discussed in **paragraph 14.3.20**, even when the average room occupancy for hotels, guest houses and self-catering accommodation across Scotland during peak season (August) is 45.70%, there would still be sufficient accommodation availability for tourists. The magnitude of change is negligible due to the required room and capacity of room availability in the tourist accommodation in the locality of the Proposed Development in the Aberdeenshire Council area. Considering the sensitivity of tourist accommodation is assessed as low, there would be a **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on the availability of tourist accommodation in the Aberdeenshire Council area.

Predicted Operational Impacts

Highland Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.4.45 The operation of the Proposed Development is anticipated to impact on amenity experienced by some recreational users and tourists. A number of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities identified within **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** do not rely on amenity and tranquillity. Such activities include, for example, indoor bowling and football. The facilities and activities that do rely on amenity and tranquillity that are in close proximity to the Proposed Development could experience an adverse impact on amenity due to the presence and operation of the Proposed Development. The assessment set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** takes into consideration the nature of the scheme (i.e. linear scheme), type of recreational and tourist activity that would take place, surrounding context of the resource (e.g. is it within an existing urban setting or screened by vegetation) and whether these impacts would lead to an overall reduction in enjoyment of the activity or users' decision to access the recreational and tourist resource. Additionally, for some resources that are in close proximity to the Proposed Development, such as Achagour Fishery, it is understood that OHLs are already visible and, therefore, there would not be a large change in amenity experienced by recreational users.
- 14.4.46 Where the OHL Alignment crosses receptors used for fishing, such as River Beauly, River Ness and River Nairn, there will be permanent restrictions on fishing directly beneath the OHL for safety reasons. This would only affect

short sections of rivers directly under the OHL, with signs put up to warn people against fishing directly underneath the OHL. Therefore, it is anticipated that the effect on watercourses used for fishing would be **Neutral (Not Significant)**.

- 14.4.47 The sensitivity of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities identified in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** within The Highlands Council study area range from Low to High: the high sensitivity receptors being Caledonian Canal, the NC500 Tourist Route and Loch Ness. Some woodland areas will also experience changes due to the Proposed Development, however during operation, the presence of additional traffic and additional noise will be minimal, therefore the overall impacts to recreational receptors are **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on users of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities during the operational phase, it is anticipated that there would be a Negligible to Minor Adverse impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** to **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on the recreational users and tourists, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**.

Public Access

- 14.4.48 It is anticipated that the operation of the Proposed Development would lead to reduced amenity for some users of public access routes, including non-designated public access routes. The assessment set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** takes into consideration the transitional nature of the impact, nature of the scheme (i.e. linear scheme), surrounding context of the public access route (e.g. is it within an existing urban setting or screened by vegetation), other public access routes available in the area and whether the impact would change a user's overall experience of the public access routes.
- 14.4.49 The sensitivity of the public access routes in The Highland Council study area ranges from Low to High, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on public access routes, it is anticipated that there would be a Minor Adverse to Negligible impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** to **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of public access routes, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. Although the long-distance routes are of a higher sensitivity, when considering the impact of the Proposed Development in the context of the whole length of the route it is not anticipated to be significant.

Moray Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.4.50 **Paragraph 14.4.45** describes the potential operational impacts of the Proposed Development on users of recreational and tourist facilities and activities and is also of relevance to the Moray Council area. The sensitivity of the recreational and tourism facilities and activities identified in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** within the Moray Council study area range from Negligible to Medium. Some woodland areas will also experience changes due to the Proposed Development, however during operation, the presence of additional traffic and additional noise will be minimal, therefore the overall impacts are **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)**. Additionally, for some resources that are in close proximity to the Proposed Development, such as Dorback Burn and Badentinan Wood, it is understood that OHLs are already visible from the resource and, therefore, there would not be a large change in amenity experienced by recreational users.
- 14.4.51 Where the OHL Alignment crosses receptors used for fishing, such as River Divie and River Isla, there will be permanent restrictions on fishing directly beneath the OHL for safety reasons. This would only affect short sections of rivers directly under the OHL, with signs put up to warn people against fishing directly underneath the OHL. Therefore, it is anticipated that the effect on watercourses used for fishing would be **Neutral (Not Significant)**.

- 14.4.52 When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on users of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities during the operational phase, it is anticipated that there would be a Negligible to Minor Adverse impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on recreational users and tourists, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**.

Public Access

- 14.4.53 **Paragraph 14.4.48** details the potential operational impacts of the Proposed Development on amenity experienced by users of public access routes and is also of relevance to Moray Council. The sensitivity of the public access routes in the Moray Council study area ranges from Low to High, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on public access routes, it is anticipated that there would be a Minor Adverse to Negligible impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of public access routes, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. Although the long-distance routes are of a higher sensitivity, when considering the impact of the Proposed Development in the context of the whole length of the route is not anticipated to be significant.

Aberdeenshire Council

Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Activities

- 14.4.54 **Paragraph 14.4.45** describes the potential operational impacts of the Proposed Development on users of recreational and tourist facilities and activities and is also of relevance to the Aberdeenshire Council area. The sensitivity of the recreational and tourist facilities identified in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment** within the Aberdeenshire Council study area range from Low to Medium.
- 14.4.55 Where the OHL Alignment crosses receptors used for fishing, such as River Deveron, there will be permanent restrictions on fishing directly beneath the OHL for safety reasons. This would only affect short sections of rivers directly under the OHL, with signs put up to warn people against fishing directly underneath the OHL. Therefore, it is anticipated that the effect on watercourses used for fishing would be **Neutral (Not Significant)**.
- 14.4.56 When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on users of the recreational and tourist facilities and activities during the operational phase, it is anticipated that there would be a Negligible to Minor Adverse impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on recreational users and tourists, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**.

Public Access

- 14.4.57 **Paragraph 14.4.48** details the potential operational impacts of the Proposed Development on amenity experienced by users of public access routes and is also of relevance to Aberdeenshire Council. The sensitivity of the public access routes in the Aberdeenshire Council study area ranges from Low to High, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. When considering the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on public access routes, it is anticipated that there would be a Minor Adverse to Negligible impact. This would result in an overall **Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on users of public access routes, as set out in **Appendix 14.1: Recreation and Tourism Baseline and Assessment**. Although the long-distance routes are of a higher sensitivity the impact of the Proposed Development on the length of the route is not anticipated to be significant.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 14.4.58 The Kellas Alternative Alignment would pass along the northern extent of Glenlatterach Reservoir, which is used for hiking, rather than the southern extent. However, as neither the Proposed Development nor Kellas Alternative

Alignment would affect the availability of the resource, there would be no difference in the assessment outcomes.

14.5 Additional Mitigation

Construction Phase

- 14.5.1 Where there are impacts to tourist resources including Farm Ness and Reelig Horse Riding Centre, additional consultation would be held with these landowners to agree the timing of works and to look to undertake specific activities that might restrict access or cause disturbance at times when the number of visitors would be reduced, for example during the winter months and on weekdays.
- 14.5.2 It should be noted that the appendices which support **Chapter 12: Forestry** include mitigation strategies in relation to forestry management during construction. Where these assets are also tourist and recreational resources, the mitigation strategies are relevant in limiting loss of forest. The relevant appendices are:
- Daviot Wood (Appendix 12.1.32, Appendix 12.1.33 and Appendix 12.1.34).
 - The Aird (Appendix 12.1.14, Appendix 12.1.16, Appendix 12.1.19, Appendix 12.1.20, Appendix 12.1.21, Appendix 12.1.22 and Appendix 12.1.23)
 - Clunas Wood (Appendix 12.1.44)
 - Speymouth Forest (Appendix 12.1.80 and 12.1.81)
 - Moss of Bednawinny (Appendix 12.1.61, Appendix 12.1.63, Appendix 12.1.64, Appendix 12.1.65, Appendix 12.1.66 and 12.1.67).
 - Badentinan Wood (Appendix 12.1.75)

Operational Phase

- 14.5.3 No additional mitigation is proposed for the Proposed Development. The mitigation included for tree planting in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual** is relevant here as well with regards to visual amenity effects on woodlands, see **Appendix 7.6: Forestry Landscape Mitigation Principles**.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 14.5.4 No additional mitigation is proposed for the Proposed Development.

14.6 Residual Effects

Construction Phase

- 14.6.1 With the additional mitigation proposed, it is anticipated that the visitor numbers to Farm Ness and Reelig Horse Riding Centre would be lower when the works are carried out, therefore the residual effect for both these resources would decrease to **Minor Adverse (not significant)**.

Operational Phase

- 14.6.2 As no additional mitigation is proposed, the residual effects would be the same as reported in **Section 14.14** of this chapter.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 14.6.3 As no additional mitigation is proposed, the residual effects would be the same as reported in **Section 14.14** of this chapter.

14.7 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

- 14.7.1 The following assessment has been undertaken in line with the methodology in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**, Section 5.5 Cumulative Effects.

In-combination Effects: Stage 1 – Associated SSEN Transmission Network upgrades

- 14.7.2 It is anticipated that for all the associated SSEN Transmission Network upgrade (Fanellan substation, Greens substation and Netherton Hub) developments traffic management measures would be put in place to ensure vehicular access is maintained to recreation and tourism resources throughout the construction and operation of the developments. Additionally, it is anticipated that public access would be maintained, where possible, during the construction and operation of these developments. As the Proposed Development would not lead to any discernible changes to vehicular and public access for recreation and tourism resources and it is anticipated these impacts would be managed appropriately for the associated SSEN Transmission Network upgrade developments, these have not been considered further within this in-combination cumulative assessment.

Fanellan Substation

- 14.7.3 It is anticipated that the proposed Fanellan substation works could have in-combination effects in relation to amenity experienced by recreational users and tourists as well as tourist accommodation availability. In particular, the proposed Fanellan substation and Proposed Development could have an in-combination amenity impact on Core Path 'Home Farm to Hughton by Lonbuie' (Reference: IN20.11) that runs to the south of the proposed substation. The core path is situated 2.9 km west of Fanellan substation's proposed site access. Due to the nature of the Proposed Development (linear scheme) and the distance from Fanellan substation, it would not lead to any loss of this resource. There may also be changes to amenity due to the presence of additional traffic and noise during construction, however from a recreation and tourism perspective this is anticipated to be **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)**. The presence of the new OHL would not significantly change the availability or amenity of the recreation and tourism resources in the area during operation, as there is already an OHL at the site.

Greens Substation

- 14.7.4 The proposed Greens substation and the Proposed Development could be visible from Upper Keithen Horse Riding School. The horse-riding school is generally screened by woodland, but there could be some views that are affected and some increased noise during construction. As a result, a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** in-combination impact is associated with the Proposed Development.

Netherton Hub

- 14.7.5 There are no expected in-combination amenity impacts associated with Netherton Hub and the Proposed Development, as there are limited recreation and tourism resources located in this area.

Tourist Accommodation

- 14.7.6 There is potential for cumulative impacts arising from increased demand for tourist accommodation in the study area, driven by construction workers associated with the Proposed Development, in conjunction with other related and unrelated developments temporarily relocating to the area. As described in **paragraph 14.4.5** it is assumed that fifty-five percent of the 95% of the workforce who do not live locally would reside in accommodation that would be developed by the Applicant and would, therefore, not cause any displacement. The assessment for the Proposed Development therefore concluded that there would be a **Neutral (Not Significant)** effect on tourism accommodation in both The Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council and a **Minor Adverse (Not Significant)** effect in Moray Council.
- 14.7.7 In relation to intra-project effects, an influx of construction workers required for the associated SSEN Transmission Network upgrade developments as well as the Proposed Development could put increased demand on tourist accommodation, if the construction periods were to overlap. The associated SSEN

Transmission Network upgrade developments (Fanellan substation, Greens substation and Netherton Hub) are spread out along the length of the Proposed Development and as such a lesser demand on tourist accommodation is expected. The EIA Report for the Fanellan substation project concludes that there is likely to be capacity within the vicinity of the Proposed Development and that cumulative impacts on tourist accommodations are therefore not expected⁷⁵. The EIA Reports for the Greens substation and Netherton Hub do not consider effects on tourist accommodation. Moreover, in case of an overlap, the Applicant has put considerable measures in place to alleviate the pressure on tourist accommodation during the construction period. The Applicant's *Housing our Workers Strategy* document further elaborates on these measures, such as contributing to the development of 200 new homes and includes Empty Homes Initiatives, refurbishing disused properties and exploring temporary worker housing options⁷⁶. The document also includes the Fanellan substation, Greens substation and Netherton Hub developments and they will follow the same wider housing strategy.

In-combination Effects: Stage 2 – Other SSEN Transmission and 3rd Party Developments

- 14.7.8 A review of the local authority council planning portals and the Energy Consent Unit's website has been undertaken to determine what other cumulative developments (other SSEN Transmission and 3rd Party Developments) should be considered with regards to the Proposed Development. A number of other developments have been identified along the length of the Proposed Development and can be found in **Appendix 5.1: Cumulative Developments**.
- 14.7.9 It is anticipated that for all these developments traffic management measures would be put in place to ensure vehicular access is maintained to recreation and tourism resources throughout the construction and operation of the developments. Additionally, it is anticipated that public access would be maintained, where possible, during the construction and operation of these developments. As the Proposed Development would not lead to any discernible changes to vehicular and public access for recreation and tourism resources and it is anticipated these impacts would be managed appropriately for the other developments, these have not been considered further within this in-combination cumulative assessment.
- 14.7.10 It is anticipated that the other developments could have in-combination effects in relation to amenity experienced by recreational users and tourists as well as tourist accommodation availability. An influx of construction workers required for the other developments as well as the Proposed Development could put increased demand on tourist accommodation, if the construction periods were to overlap. In particular where the other developments are proposed along the rural parts of the Proposed Development. Therefore, the influx of construction workers could lead to a significant in-combination effect on tourist accommodation availability. The magnitude of change in the Moray Council area is higher compared to The Highland Council and Aberdeenshire, but is still minor due to the required rooms and capacity of room availability in the tourist accommodation in the locality of the Proposed Development in the area. Moreover, as set out in the SSEN Transmission 'Housing our Workers Strategy 2024'⁷⁷, the Applicant has put considerable measures in place to alleviate the pressure on tourist accommodation during the construction period as described in **paragraph 14.7.7**.

Kellas Alternative Alignment

- 14.7.11 As previously mentioned, for this assessment it is assumed that the Kellas Drum Windfarm is consented, meaning that the Proposed Development will route around the location where the windfarm development would be. The Kellas Alternative Alignment would pass along the northern extent of Glenlatterach Reservoir, which is used for hiking. The Kellas Drum Windfarm is proposed to the south of the Kellas Alternative Alignment, which could lead

⁷⁵ SSE (2025). Proposed Fanellan Hub 400kV Substation and Converter Station EIA Report, Volume 2 – Chapter 16: Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation. Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-fanellan-400kv-substation-and-converter-station/>

⁷⁶ SSEN Transmission (2024). Housing Our Workers Strategy. Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/documents/housing-strategy/ssent-housing-strategy-2024->

⁷⁷ SSEN Transmission (2024). Housing Our Workers Strategy. Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/documents/housing-strategy/ssent-housing-strategy-2024->

to in-combination visual amenity and noise impacts on users of Glenlatterach Reservoir and CRoW recorded public rights of ways. Due to the nature of the development (linear scheme) and as neither the Proposed Development or Kellas Alternative Alignment would affect the availability of Glenlatterach Reservoir and CRoW recorded public rights of way, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant cumulative effect with Kellas Drum Windfarm.

- 14.7.12 Regardless of the outcome of the planning application process for Kellas Drum Windfarm, the number of traffic and construction workers for the Proposed Development would be the same as above.

14.8 Summary and Conclusions

- 14.8.1 **Table 14.12** provides a summary of the impacts and significance of effects on sensitive receptors from the Proposed Development. As the residual effect is the same as the pre-mitigation effect there is no additional mitigation proposed.

Table 14.12: Summary of Predicted Impacts and Residual

Receptor	Assessment of Likely Significant Effect	Residual Effect
The Highland Council		
<i>Construction</i>		
Recreational users and tourists - recreational and tourist facilities and activities	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Recreational users and tourists – Farm Ness	Moderate Adverse (Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Recreational users and tourists – Reelig Horse Riding Centre	Moderate Adverse (Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Recreational users and tourists – Woodlands including: Daviot Wood, The Aird and Clunas Wood,	Moderate Adverse (Significant)	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Users of public access routes (designated and non-designated)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of non-designated publicly accessible land	Neutral (Not Significant)	Neutral (Not Significant)
Tourists - tourist accommodation	Neutral (Not Significant)	Neutral (Not Significant)
<i>Operation</i>		
Recreational users and tourists - recreational and tourist facilities and activities	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of public access routes	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Moray Council		
<i>Construction</i>		
Recreational users and tourists - recreational and tourist facilities and activities	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Recreational users and tourists – Woodlands including: Speymouth Forest, Moss of Bednawinny and Badentinan Wood	Moderate Adverse (Significant)	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

Receptor	Assessment of Likely Significant Effect	Residual Effect
Users of public access routes (designated and non-designated)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of non-designated publicly accessible land	Neutral (Not Significant)	Neutral (Not Significant)
Tourists - tourist accommodation	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Operation		
Recreational users and tourists - recreational and tourist facilities and activities	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of public access routes	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Aberdeenshire Council		
Construction		
Recreational users and tourists - recreational and tourist facilities and activities	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of public access routes (designated and non-designated)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of non-designated publicly accessible land	Neutral (Not Significant)	Neutral (Not Significant)
Tourists - tourist accommodation	Neutral (Not Significant)	Neutral (Not Significant)
Operation		
Recreational users and tourists - recreational and tourist facilities and activities	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)
Users of public access routes	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant) to Neutral (Not Significant)