Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

# SSEN Transmission

# Bingally 400 kV Overhead Line Tie-In

# Environmental Appraisal

## April 2025

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

## CONTENTS

# 4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL IMPACT

## 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This chapter considers the potential for effects on landscape character and visual amenity resulting from construction, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would consist of a temporary layout arrangement for construction, and a permanent layout arrangement for operation. This chapter makes also reference to the Proposed Bingally substation which adjacent to the Proposed Development but is assessed separately.

4.1.2 This section contains:

- Details of the approach and methodology;
- A description of existing baseline conditions of the Site and surrounding context;
- A concise appraisal of the direct and indirect impacts on landscape and visual receptors resulting from the Proposed Development; and
- Recommendations for additional mitigation, where required.

4.1.3 This chapter is supported by the following figures, reports, photomontages and drawings:

- **Appendix A Figures**:
  - **Figure 4-1 Landscape Designations**;
  - **Figure 4-2 Landscape Character Type**;
  - **Figure 4-3 Representative Viewpoints, Recreational Routes and ZTV**; and
  - **Figure 4-4 Cumulative Developments**.
- **Appendix C Visualisations**; and
- **Appendix D Landscape and Habitat Management Plan Report**;
  - **Figure 4-1a Landscape Restoration Plan**; and
  - **Figure 4-1b Landscape Restoration Plan Wider Context**.

## 4.2 Information Sources

4.2.1 The following information sources have been used to inform this report:

- Online mapping including Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photography;
- Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions[1]; and
- Relevant local planning and policy documents.

## 4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 The EIA Screening process has confirmed that the Proposed Development is not considered to constitute EIA development. The scope and approach of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) outlined below reflects this status and the nature and scale of the Proposed Development.

4.3.2 Mitigation measures have been developed as part of the Proposed Bingally substation EA and include measures in the OHL area (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan)**. The embedded mitigation is set out in **Section 4.7** of this chapter. The appraisal considers this embedded mitigation and reports residual impacts with it in place.

4.3.3 The LVA has been conducted in accordance with the following good practice guidance documents:

[1] NatureScot, 2019. *Scottish Landscape Character Types and Descriptions* [online]. [Accessed 07 October 2024]. Available from: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions

- The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), Third Edition[2];
- Landscape Institute (2019) Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals[3]; and
- Landscape Institute (2021) Technical Guidance Note 02/21, Assessing landscape value outside national designations[4].

4.3.4 GLVIA places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining landscape and visual effects. The LVA has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects with experience in the assessment and appraisal of similar projects. Professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape and visual value and susceptibility, the resulting sensitivity, magnitude, and importance of effect. The definition of 'impact' and 'effect' is as follows:

- 'Impact' is specific and defined as the action being taken, for example, cutting down trees; and
- 'Effect' is defined as the change resulting from that action, for example, the alteration in landscape character or visual quality.

4.3.5 When identifying likely effects, all types of effect, such as beneficial and adverse, will be included. As stated in GLVIA3, "… *identifying significant effects stresses the need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of the investigation that is appropriate and proportional*".

4.3.6 The characteristics of an effect will vary depending on the duration of the activity causing the effect, the sensitivity of the receptor and the resultant change. It is therefore necessary to assess whether the effect is temporary or permanent; beneficial and adverse, and indirect or direct. Effects that are temporary are usually reversible and generally confined to the construction period.

4.3.7 For the purposes of this LVA the terms used in the appraisal of effects are defined as follows:

- Temporary - where the effect occurs for a limited period of time and the change at a defined receptor can be reversed;
- Permanent - where the effect represents a long-lasting change at a defined receptor;
- Direct - where the effect is a direct result (or primary effect) of the Proposed Development;
- Indirect - a knock-on (or secondary) effect which occurs within or between environmental components, may include effects on the environment which are not a direct result of the Proposed Development, often occurring away from the proposals or as a result of a complex biological or chemical pathway; and
- Cumulative - these effects may arise when more than one development of a similar scale and nature combine to create a potentially greater impact than would result from the Proposed Development alone.

4.3.8 The result of the appraisal is the determination of whether the likely effect of the Proposed Development on the receptor in the Study Area (as defined in **Section 4.4** below) would be important or not important, and adverse or beneficial. An initial Study Area of 3 km from

[2] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management Assessment, 2013. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Third Edition.

3 Landscape Institute, 2019. *Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals* [online]. [Accessed 07 October 2024]. Available from: https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/09/LI_TGN-06-19_Visual_Representation.pdf

4 Landscape Institute, 2021. *Technical Guidance Note 02/21, Assessing landscape value outside national designations* [online]. [Accessed 07 October 2024]. Available from: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/

the OHL layout (see **Figure 2-2a** and **Figure 2-2b, Appendix A Figures**) has been identified for the LVA.

***Landscape Sensitivity***

4.3.9 Landscape receptors are described as components of the landscape that may be affected by the Proposed Development. These can include overall character and key characteristics, individual elements, or features and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects.

4.3.10 The sensitivity of the landscape receptor has been derived by combining of the value of the landscape (undertaken as part of the baseline study) and the susceptibility to change of the receptor to the specific type of development being considered.

4.3.11 Landscape value is frequently addressed by reference to international, national, regional, and local designations. Absence of such a designation does not necessarily imply a lack of quality or value. Factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality, highly valuable as a local resource.

4.3.12 The evaluation of landscape value has been informed by Technical Guidance Note 02/21[5] and undertaken considering the following factors and classified as high, medium, or low with evidence provided as to the basis of the evaluation:

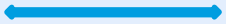
- Natural heritage – Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological, or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape;
- Cultural heritage – Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical, or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape;
- Landscape condition – Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure;
- Associations – Landscape, which is connected with notable people, events, and the arts;
- Distinctiveness – Landscape that has a strong sense of identity;
- Recreational – Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important;
- Perceptual (scenic) – Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense;
- Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity) – Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and / or dark skies; and
- Functional – Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.

4.3.13 Landscape susceptibility relates to the ability of a particular landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development. It is appraised through consideration of the baseline characteristics of the landscape, and in particular, the scale or complexity of a given landscape. The evaluation of landscape susceptibility is defined as very high, high, medium, low, or very low and is supported by a clear explanation.

4.3.14 The appraisal of sensitivity of the landscape receptor has been made by applying professional judgement to combine and analyse the factors which contribute to the identified value with those which contribute to susceptibility. Landscape sensitivity has been described based on a scale of high, medium, or low. **Table 4-1**, below, outlines indicators that inform landscape value, susceptibility, and sensitivity.

[5] Technical Guidance Note | 02/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations, Landscape Institute 2021

**Table 4-1 Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors**

| | Higher Sensitivity | | Lower Sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Value** | A designated landscape (for example National Scenic Area) or a landscape in very good condition, exceptional scenic quality and high recreational opportunities or a high degree of rarity. |  | Landscapes containing few if any notable elements / features, of poor condition or containing several detracting features and limited aesthetic qualities. Landscapes which are not formally designated. |
| **Susceptibility** | Attributes that make up the character of the landscape which offer very limited opportunities to accommodate change of the type proposed without fundamentally altering key characteristics. |  | Attributes that make up the character of the landscape which are tolerant of a large degree of the type of change proposed without fundamentally altering the key characteristics. |

***Visual Sensitivity***

4.3.15 The sensitivity of visual receptors has been defined through an appraisal of the viewing expectation, or value placed on the view as identified in the baseline study, and its susceptibility to change.

4.3.16 The value of the view is an appraisal of the value attached to views and is often informed by the appearance on Ordnance Survey or tourist maps and in guidebooks, literature, and art, or identified in policy. Value can also be indicated by the provision of parking or services, and signage and interpretation. The nature and composition of the view and its scenic quality is also an indicator. The value of the view has been classified as high, medium, or low and is supported by evidenced, professional judgements.

4.3.17 The susceptibility of visual receptors to change has been established as a function of the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention or interest is focussed on the view and the visual amenity they experience. For example, residents in their home, walkers whose interest may tend to be focused on the landscape or a particular view, or visitors at an attraction where views are an important part of the experience, indicate a higher level of susceptibility. Conversely receptors engaged in outdoor sport where views are not important or receptors at their place of work are considered less susceptible to change.

4.3.18 As with landscape susceptibility, judgements about the susceptibility of visual receptors have been described as high, medium, or low using consistent and reasoned judgements.

4.3.19 The appraisal of sensitivity of the visual receptor has been made by applying professional judgement to combine and analyse the factors which contribute to the identified value with those which contribute to susceptibility. **Table 4-2**, below, outlines indicators that inform value of the view, susceptibility, and sensitivity of viewers. Visual receptor sensitivity has been described based on a scale of high, medium, or low.

**Table 4-2 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors**

| | Higher Sensitivity | | Lower Sensitivity |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Value** | Views protected by designation, or nationally recognised, or recorded on maps / guidebooks or with cultural associations. Views that have high scenic qualities relating to the content and composition of the view. | ⟷ | Views which are not documented or protected with minimal or no cultural associations. Views that exhibit low scenic qualities relating to the content and composition of the view. |
| **Susceptibility** | Viewers whose attention or interest is focused on their surroundings. | ⟷ | Viewers whose attention or interest is not focused on their surroundings and where the view is incidental to their enjoyment. |

***Landscape Magnitude of Effect***

4.3.20 Landscape magnitude of effect refers to the extent to which the Proposed Development would alter the existing characteristics of the landscape. It is an expression of the size or scale of change to the landscape, the geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility. The variables involved are:

- The extent of existing landscape elements that would be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents and the contribution of that element to the character of the landscape;
- The extent to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered either by removal of existing components of the landscape or by the addition of new components;
- Whether the change alters the key characteristics of the landscape that are integral to its distinctive character;
- The geographic area over which the change would be experienced (for example within the application boundary, the immediate setting around that boundary, at the local landscape character area scale, or on a larger scale influencing broader areas of landscape character); and
- The duration of the change (i.e. short term (0-5 years), medium term (5-10 years), or long term (10 years +)), and its reversibility (i.e. whether it is permanent, temporary, or partially reversible).

4.3.21 Landscape change can be both direct, through alteration of physical components, or indirect, resulting from changes to perceptual aspects of character and how it is experienced.

4.3.22 An overall appraisal of the magnitude of landscape effect resulting from the Proposed Development on landscape receptors has been made by combining the above judgements using evidence and professional judgement. The levels of landscape magnitude of impact are described as very high, high, medium, low, very low and none, as defined in in the **Table 4-3.**

**Table 4-3 Landscape Magnitude of Effect**

| Magnitude | Description |
|---|---|
| Very High | Substantial alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact an extensive area or unique characteristics at a local level. May be longer term, permanent or reversible. |
| High | Large alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact an extensive area or unique characteristics at a local level. May be longer term, permanent or reversible. |
| Medium | Partial alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact a wide area or characteristics at a local level. May be medium term, permanent or reversible. |
| Low | Slight alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact a restricted area and few key characteristics. May be short to medium term, permanent or reversible. |
| Very Low | Very little, or no, perceptible change to key characteristics or setting. |
| None | No change to the landscape receptor. |

***Visual Magnitude of Effect***

4.3.23 Visual magnitude of effect relates to the extent to which the Proposed Development would alter the existing view and is an expression of the size or scale of change in the view, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The variables involved are described below:

- The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the Proposed Development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the form, scale, composition, and focal points of the view;
- The nature of the view of the Proposed Development in relation to the amount of time over which it would be experienced, and whether views of this would be visible fully, partially or glimpsed;
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor, distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development and the extent of the area over which the changes would be visible; and
- The duration of the change (i.e. short term (0-5 years), medium term (5-10 years), or long term (10 years +), and its reversibility (i.e. whether it is permanent, temporary, or partially reversible).

4.3.24 An overall appraisal of the magnitude of visual change resulting from the Proposed Development on the visual receptor has been made combining the above judgements using evidence and professional judgement. The levels of visual magnitude of impact are described as very high, high, medium, low, very low, and none as defined in the **Table 4-4** overleaf.

**Table 4-4 Visual Magnitude of Effect**

| Magnitude | Description |
|---|---|
| Very High | A substantial change to the composition of the view or change that may be viewed in the foreground or directly. May be longer term, permanent or reversible. |
| High | A pronounced change to the composition of the view or change that may be viewed in the foreground or directly. May be longer term, permanent or reversible. |

| Magnitude | Description |
|---|---|
| Medium | A noticeable change to the composition of the view or change that may be viewed in the middle ground or indirectly. May be medium term, permanent or reversible. |
| Low | An unobtrusive change in the composition of the view or change that may be viewed in the background or obliquely. May be short to medium term, permanent or reversible. |
| Very Low | Very little, or no, perceptible change in visual composition. |
| None | No change to the view. |

### *Cumulative Effects*

4.3.25 There are two aspects to Cumulative Effects, defined as follows:

- In-combination effects with other developments: The combined effect of the Proposed Development together with other reasonably foreseeable developments (taking into consideration effects at the site preparation and earthworks, construction, and operational phases); and
- Effects Interactions from the same development: The combined or synergistic effects caused by the combination of a number of effects on a particular receptor (taking into consideration effects at the site preparation and earthworks, construction, and operational phases), which may collectively cause a more important effect than individually. A theoretical example is the culmination of disturbance from dust, noise, vibration, artificial light, human presence, and visual intrusion on sensitive fauna (e.g. certain bat species) adjacent to a construction site.

4.3.26 The potential for cumulative effects will be considered in relation to developments within the Study Area relevant to each particular issue, as detailed in **Table 4-7** in **Section 4.11** of this chapter. The basis for this is that only these developments have the potential to result in important cumulative effects in combination with those arising from the Proposed Development.

### *Level of Effects*

4.3.27 Determination of the level of landscape and visual effects has been undertaken by employing professional judgement and experience to combine and analyse the magnitude of impact against the identified sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors.

4.3.28 The landscape appraisal has taken account of direct and indirect changes to existing landscape elements, features, and key characteristics, and evaluates the extent to which these would be lost or modified, in the context of their importance in determining the existing baseline character.

4.3.29 The visual appraisal has taken account of the likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which new features would distract from, or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure, or focus of the existing view.

4.3.30 The level of landscape and visual effects are described with reference to the criteria presented in the **Table 4-5** below.

**Table 4-5 Level of Effect**

| Level of Effect | Landscape | Visual |
|---|---|---|
| Major Beneficial | Alterations that result in a considerable improvement of the existing landscape | Alterations that typically result in a pronounced improvement in the existing view. |

| Level of Effect | Landscape | Visual |
|---|---|---|
| | resource. Valued characteristic features would be restored or reintroduced. | |
| Moderate Beneficial | Alterations that result in a partial improvement of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be largely restored or reintroduced. | Alterations that typically result in a noticeable improvement in the existing view. |
| Minor Beneficial | Alterations that result in a slight improvement of the existing landscape resource. Characteristic features would be partially restored. | Alterations that typically result in a limited improvement in the existing view. |
| Negligible Beneficial | Alterations that result in a very slight improvement to the existing landscape resource, not uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape. | Alterations that typically result in a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view. |
| Neutral | No alteration to any of the components that contribute to the existing landscape resource. | No change to the existing view. |
| Negligible Adverse | Alterations that result in a very slight deterioration to the existing landscape resource, not uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape. | Alterations that typically result in a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view. |
| Minor Adverse | Alterations that result in a slight deterioration of the existing landscape resource. Characteristic features would be partially lost. | Alterations that typically result in a limited deterioration in the existing view. |
| Moderate Adverse | Alterations that result in a partial deterioration of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be largely lost. | Alterations that typically result in a noticeable deterioration in the existing view. |
| Major Adverse | Alterations that result in a considerable deterioration of the existing landscape resource. Valued characteristic features would be wholly lost. | Alterations that typically result in a pronounced deterioration in the existing view. |

***Temporal Scope of Appraisal***

4.3.31 Landscape and visual effects can differ from one stage of the Proposed Development to the next and change over time as mitigation planting establishes and matures. The appraisal therefore considers potential effects of the Proposed Development at each of the following stages:

- Construction: including consideration of all temporary structures and works areas relating to construction, such as temporary construction compounds, movement of plant and machinery etc.; and
- Operation: including consideration of potential medium to longer term effects associated with Proposed Development following completion of the construction phase and associated reinstatement. This stage is intended to represent the potential worst-case operational effects prior to establishment of any mitigation planting, should it be required.

## 4.4 Study Area

4.4.1 An initial Study Area of 3 km from the Site (see **Figure 2-2a** and **Figure 2-2b, Appendix A Figures**) has been identified for the LVA. The extent of the Study Area has been informed by an initial desk and site-based review, analysis of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (**Figure 4-3, Appendix A Figures**), aerial photography and mapping, and application of professional judgement. The Study Area extent has been reviewed and refined during the appraisal processes, to ensure the appraisal is focused on potential greatest landscape and visual effects.

***Zone of Theoretical Visibility***

4.4.2 Initial ZTV mapping has been undertaken to establish the theoretical extent of visibility of the Proposed Development. The ZTV has been used to inform the extent of the Study Area and the identification of landscape and visual receptors. The ZTV maps indicated areas from where it may be possible to view the Proposed Development. It is considered as a tool to assist in evaluating the theoretical visibility and not a measure of the visual effect. The approach to ZTV modelling and limitations in its use are outlined below:

- The ZTV is based on a bare ground model – Ordnance Survey (OS) Terrain 5 DTM data which does not take account of the screening effects of vegetation, buildings, or other structures;
- The ZTV has been calculated based on the OHL geometry and maximum heights of the permanent new towers 78R (64.42 m) and 79R (55.91 m);
- Some areas of theoretical visibility may comprise buildings, forestry, and woodland which do not tend to be visited and the likelihood of views being experienced is consequently low; and
- The ZTV maps do not take account of the likely orientation of a viewer, such as the direction of travel and there is no allowance for reduction of visibility with distance, weather, or light.

4.4.3 ZTV analysis was undertaken as part of the LVA in parallel with the iterative design process to identify and refine the Proposed Development.

## 4.5 Baseline Environment

***Landscape Character***

4.5.1 The Site is located at the transition between two landscape types characterised by the farmed strath to the west, transitioning east to a more steeply sloping rocky moorland plateau. The Site sits within an area of moorland immediately adjacent to a recently felled block of plantation woodland. The Site mostly follows the existing OHL corridor at the boundary between woodland and upland moor. Vegetation is mostly comprised of heather and open grassland. Forestry operations, including felling, are commonplace within the Study Area. Although the Site is located within a plateau landscape, more broadly, local landform within the Site is undulating.

4.5.2 The Site and immediate context are accessed via a network of access and forestry tracks. Some tracks are also designated as Core Paths. One Core Path runs through the Site along an existing track and adjacent to the main works area. There is a rich network of Core Paths that connect through forestry within the immediate context to the west of the Site.

4.5.3 Much of the broader landscape to the west of the Site is well recreated and a popular draw for tourism. However, the wooded slopes to the south of the farmed strath provide a strong physical and perceptual separation between the much less accessed landscape within which the Site is located. The sense of enclosure to the west is reinforced by the expanse

of woodland. The Site and the landscape to the east is far more open and the sense of isolation prevails in more upland hills and plateaus.

***Landscape Designations***

4.5.4 No landscape designations are located within the 3 km Study Area however, there are existing designations outside of the 3 km Study Area; defined due to their scenic qualities or historic landscape qualities as shown on **Figure 4-1, Appendix A Figures**. This includes a National Scenic Area (NSA) and a Special Landscape Area (SLA). The ZTV has been used to identify landscape designations and defined areas within the Study Area that may have visibility of the Proposed Development. Any designations and defined areas that are not within the ZTVs are scoped out of the LVA and are not included within the baseline section as there is no potential for the Proposed Development to result in effects on receptors outside the ZTVs.

***Landscape Character Types***

4.5.5 The landscape appraisal for the Proposed Development is based on the LCTs defined and described by NatureScot[1]. The following LCTs are found within the Study Area and immediate context, as indicated on **Figure 4-2, Appendix A Figures**:

- LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness;
- LCT 227 - Farmed Strath – Inverness;
- LCT 220 - Rugged Massif – Inverness; and
- LCT 226 - Wooded Glen – Inverness.

4.5.6 The Site is located within the *immediate context* of the following Landscape Character Types also included within the 3 km Study Area;

- LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness; and
- LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness.

4.5.7 For the purposes of this study the above landscape character types will be used in this appraisal. The following provides a summary of the character and value of each of the LCTs. A description of the defined key characteristics of each LCT are provided on the NatureScot website[1].

***LCT 227 - Farmed Strath – Inverness***

4.5.8 This LCT occupies the lower-level strath and central part of the Study Area. The strath is characterised by open farmed valley floors and a central meandering river contained within steep, mainly forested and wooded slopes.

4.5.9 Key characteristics include;

- “Linear to sinuous channels cut through uplands, with a central meandering river located in a flat or gently undulating strath floor, edged by the steep, rocky, side slopes;
- Pronounced and dynamic river meanders of Strathglass, emphasised by riparian trees, oxbow lakes, and curved wetland features;
- Small scale broadleaf woodlands and small blocks of conifer forest within Strathnairn / Stratherrick strath floor which do not override openness of the strath;
- A few small settlements located on the strath floor or sides and infrequent small farms, crofts, estate buildings or groups of houses;
- Roads which generally relate well to landform, with a limited number of river crossing points;
- Many archaeological sites in Strathnairn dating from a range of periods;

- Contrast between the open, inhabited, and agricultural landscape of the straths, the side slopes cloaked in alternating broadleaf woodlands, conifer forests and heather moorland, and the setting of adjacent rugged, remote uplands;
- Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures, and thin bands of woodland; and
- An overall sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes"[6].

4.5.10 This LCT is not subject to any landscape designations. The combination of intact belts of woodland and natural scenic qualities contained by the more upland LCTs to the west and east contribute to the sense of place and enclosure. Landscape value is judged to be medium.

***LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness***

4.5.11 The Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness LCT consists of two areas of high rocky plateau which covers much of the central part of the district, gradually merging to the Rugged Massif - Inverness in the west and bordering the Great Glen to the east. This LCT occupies the eastern and southeastern half of the Study Area.

4.5.12 Key characteristics include;

- "Open, gently rolling moorland plateaux with distinct edges descending to adjoining straths and glens or rising to merge with Rugged Massif;
- Plateau with a patchy texture of small rocky outcrop hills, bogs and lochans in no clear hierarchy or discernible pattern;
- Hilltops and upper slopes dominated by rocky heather moorland, except in the north east where extensive, contrasting conifer forests dominate;
- Regenerating trees and scrub in glens with rivers and sheltered lower hillsides;
- Strong contrast in landcover and settlement between the plateau and adjoining straths and glens;
- Sparsely inhabited and little evidence of active landuse;
- A few historic sites indicating past settlement and land use;
- Orientation is difficult due to the lack of hierarchy, pattern, and foci in the landform and landcover;
- Within the plateau distance and scale are generally difficult to perceive due to the lack of elements of known size;
- Distinct edges isolate the plateau from adjacent areas and give the sense of a vast, remote, upland moor;
- At the plateau edges, expansive views over inhabited straths and glens create surprise;
- Eastern areas have a semi-exposed character with occasional views of distant hills framed by the distinct edges of conifer forests; and
- Perception of remoteness on the open plateau, from the rugged patchy texture and absence of obvious human artefacts"[7].

4.5.13 This LCT is not subject to any landscape designations. The expanse of plantation forestry is a less valued element; however the network of upland lochs and uninhabited vast hills contribute to the tranquillity, relative sense of remoteness and distinctiveness of this landscape. On balance, landscape value is judged as medium.

[6] NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Character Type 227* [online]. [Accessed 07 October 2024]. Available from: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20227%20-%20Farmed%20Strath%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

[7] NatureScot, 2019. *National Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Character Type 222* [online]. [Accessed 07 October 2024]. Available from: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20222%20-%20Rocky%20Moorland%20Plateau%20-%20Inverness%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf

## 4.6 Sensitive Visual Receptors

4.6.1 The visual appraisal determines the degree of anticipated change to visual amenity experienced by people (visual receptor) that would occur from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. Potential visual receptors which may experience views of the Proposed Development include:

- Residential, comprising those in residential dwellings;
- Recreational and places of interest, includes walkers and users of promoted cycling routes; and
- Road users, including users of the local transport network.

4.6.2 Residential settlement within the Study Area includes Tomich and Cannich, clustered and scattered properties within the Study Area where residents experience a range of views that have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. However existing woodland and forestry tends to enclose residential areas and reduces the potential intervisibility. Residential properties located on more exposed upland areas and those in closer proximity to the Site are more sensitive to change.

4.6.3 Recreational routes include a rich network of Core Paths and long-distance trails alongside more informal paths throughout the landscape. The routes within the Study Area include the following Core Paths:

- IN05.01;
- IN05.02;
- IN05.03;
- IN05.04;
- IN05.05;
- IN05.08;
- IN05.09;
- IN05.10;
- IN05.11; and
- IN05.12.

### *Representative Viewpoints*

4.6.4 A total of three representative viewpoints have been selected in consultation with NatureScot and THC to represent the visual receptors within the Study Area likely to be most affected by the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. Viewpoint locations are shown on **Figure 4-3, Appendix A Figures** and listed in the **Table 4-6** below.

**Table 4-6 Representative Viewpoints**

| ID | Name | Receptor Type | Easting | Northing | Visual Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South | Recreational | 229793 | 823420 | Low |
| This viewpoint is representative of recreational receptors using Core Path IN05.03 at the transition between mixed woodland and plantation forestry and open moorland. The existing OHL towers dominate the view and visual character. Landform is gently rising from the base of the OHL towers to a band of plantation forestry on either side. There are long range views of more upland mountain peaks to the north and plateau moorland to the east. This is not a designated or recognised view. The scale of the OHL towers contrast with the more natural elements within view and limit the scenic quality from this frame. On balance visual value is low. | | | | | |

| ID | Name | Receptor Type | Easting | Northing | Visual Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Core Path IN05.03, towards Lough na Beinne Baine | Recreational | 229116 | 821508 | Medium |
| This viewpoint is representative of recreational users of the Core Path south of Viewpoint 1. This is an elevated, expansive, and long-range view orientated north and northeast. Foreground and mid-ground views of open moor occupy most of the horizontal extent. The OHL towers follow the existing track and appear in contrast with the natural landscape features. The view is back clothed by blocks of plantation forestry set within the glen and lower slopes that transition to the Rugged Massif and peaks. Although this view is not located within a designation, the Rugged Massif across the backdrop sits within the Glen Affric NSA and the Strathconon, Monor and Mullardoch SLA. The combination of the vast open moor and upland contribute to a high degree of scenic quality, whilst the OHL appears in contrast to the otherwise majority natural setting. On balance visual value is judged to be medium. | | | | | |
| 3a/b | Core Path IN05.02, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick | Recreational | 232077 | 826324 | High |
| This viewpoint is representative of recreational receptors along Core Path IN05.02. This Core Path spans from Tomich to Corrimony and connects some residential dwellings and scattered tourist accommodation overlooking the nearby Loch na Beinne Moire. Views of the wider landscape are an important part of the experience for recreational users along the Core Path IN05.03 in both viewpoint 'a' and 'b'. The viewpoint has been split into a / b in order to show a wider extent of the proposed Bingally substation access track. The existing OHL towers extend across part of the view (i.e. Viewpoint a and b), along the edge of the plateau, at the transition to the lower wooded glens and back into the more southwestern extent of the Rugged Massif. During construction, earthworks, movement of vehicles and plant machinery would result in a pronounced change in the view. Although this view is not located within a designation, the Rugged Massif across the backdrop sits within the Glen Affric NSA and the Strathconon, Monor and Mullardoch SLA. The combination of elements within the view contribute to strong scenic qualities albeit tempered by the OHL. On balance visual value is high. | | | | | |

## 4.7 Embedded Mitigation

4.7.1 Primary mitigation measures and steps have been taken during the design phase of the Proposed Development to help influence the design and minimise potential effects, based on key sensitivities, constraints, and opportunities as part of an iterative process of design and appraisal. These measures are embedded in the overall design. Landscape and visual considerations have been important in informing the identification and evaluation of the layout option for the Proposed Development and landscape elements within the Site in collaboration with forestry and ecology studies.

4.7.2 Landscape and visual mitigation measures haven taken consideration of a number of factors to include;

- The siting of the OHL and tie-ins to the Proposed Bingally substation (not considered within this appraisal);
- The context of existing plantation forestry; and
- The existing Fasnakyle Substation.

4.7.3 These factors have been included in order to limit wider landscape fragmentation. Other planting measures such as proposed Scots Pine woodland, wet woodland planting, peatland and heathland restoration are associated with both, the OHL and the Proposed Bingally substation application and have been considered within the cumulative appraisal. It is also assumed that embedded mitigation (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat**

**Management Plan**) is subject to the Proposed Bingally substation works being carried out first therefore the proposed mitigation may be implemented prior to the Proposed Development works take place.

## 4.8 Sources of Effect

4.8.1 Sources of potential landscape and visual effects include the following:

- Temporary physical change to the landscape as a result of vegetation and OHL tower removals, introduction of construction compounds, temporary OHL towers, laydown or storage areas, and earthworks;
- Temporary change to perceptual aspects of landscape character, including the sense of remoteness or tranquillity, as a result of nearby construction activity, including lighting at night;
- Temporary disruption or change to views experienced from receptors and at viewpoints as a result of visibility of construction activity, temporary compounds, tracks, and associated lighting;
- Long term and / or permanent change to physical components of the landscape, including loss of existing features such as trees or woodland, and introduction of new OHL towers and connections;
- Change to perceptual aspects of the landscape character resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development into adjacent or nearby landscapes; and
- Longer term and / or permanent change to the composition and nature of views because of introduction of new OHL towers and connections.

4.8.2 Decommissioning of the Proposed Development is considered unlikely even in the long term. However, for the purposes of this appraisal, potential decommissioning effects are likely to be broadly similar to those experienced during construction. Effects identified in relation to construction are therefore considered to also be representative of potential worst case decommissioning effects.

## 4.9 Appraisal of Landscape Effects

4.9.1 Landscape effects are a combination of the physical changes to the fabric of the landscape arising from the Proposed Development. This includes perceptual changes – the way these physical changes alter how the landscape is perceived. The landscape appraisal considers the effect of the Proposed Development on the LCTs found within the Study Area.

***LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness***

4.9.2 Landscape value is considered medium. Factors that increase susceptibility include the intricate network of lochans set within a plateau landscape. The existing OHL and network of tracks in relation to the Site reduce susceptibility. Taking this into account together with the characteristics and context, the landscape susceptibility is medium. Together with the medium value and the medium susceptibility for this LCT, the sensitivity is assessed as **Medium**.

4.9.3 During construction, there would be direct effects on the landscape elements, characteristics, and perceptual qualities of this LCT. Construction activities including earthworks and movement of plant and materials. These works would be concentrated within a small part of the landscape. The proposed Bingally substation access track would extend north beyond this LCT into neighbouring Farmed Strath LCT and increase the impression of operations and vehicle movements in addition to those from the OHL works, albeit they would occur in a similar timeframe and be indistinguishable. The scale and intensity of activity would reduce the relative sense of remoteness within part of the Rocky Moorland Plateau where construction activity is not commonplace in a sparsely inhabited

landscape. Construction activities would be short-term and temporary. Most of the key characteristics would remain unchanged and the scale of change limited within the context of this LCT. Taking all of this into account, the magnitude of effect would be **Low**.

4.9.4 The medium sensitivity to change combined with the low magnitude of change would result in **Minor Adverse** effect at construction.

4.9.5 At year one of the operational phase, the Proposed Development would result in a minor change to the landscape elements and characteristics of this LCT. The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in localised change at the transition between the farmed strath and the wooded slopes that transition to the moorland plateau. This would, if consented, locally reduce the degree of contrast between the plateau and the more developed edge of the adjoining straths and glens. There would be a reconfiguration of electrical infrastructure within the immediate and wider landscape setting. Effects at operation would be long-term and permanent. Overall, the scale and extent of change would be contained within a small part of the overall LCT. Taking all of this into account, the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low.**

4.9.6 The medium sensitivity to change combined with the medium magnitude of change would result in **Minor Adverse** effect at year one of operation.

4.9.7 At year 15 of operation, landscape mitigation measures (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**) would not reduce the local impact of the OHL towers, given their vertical prominence however it would help to reduce the impression of change beyond the immediate setting of this LCT. Effects on landscape elements as a result of the Proposed Development would remain similar to those assessed at year one however, the proposed landscape mitigation measures would have established in order to increase the overall presence of woodland alongside broader heathland restoration measure within the Site. This combined with the reduction in plantation forest would strengthen the quality of landscape elements between the wooded slopes of the strath and the upland moor whilst retaining the accessibility of Core Paths. Despite the influence of mitigation measures the overall magnitude of effect would remain **Low**.

4.9.8 The medium sensitivity to change combined with the low magnitude of change would result in **Minor Adverse** effect at year 15 of operation.

***LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness***

4.9.9 Landscape value is considered medium. Factors that increase susceptibility include the steep landform and transition from woodland to more exposed upland moor within which part of the Site is located. The scale and density of woodland on the lower slopes of the strath affords some capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development. On balance, landscape susceptibility is medium. Together with the medium value and the medium susceptibility for this LCT, the sensitivity is assessed as **Medium**.

4.9.10 During construction, there would be direct and indirect effects within a small portion of this LCT. Direct effects are attributable to physical alterations of the landscape resulting from the Proposed Development, whereas in-direct effects result indirectly from the Proposed Development as a consequence of the direct effects, often occurring away from the site. That can include changes to perceptual aspects of the landscape character and how it is experienced. Direct effects would be along the transition to the rocky moorland plateau and confined as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Bingally substation access track which would serve both the Proposed Development and Proposed Bingally substation. Indirect effects would occur from the construction programme of the Proposed Development. Vegetation clearance, earthworks and movement of materials, followed by the operation of the track to transport plant, personnel and materials to the construction site would be concentrated along part of the eastern edge of this LCT at the

transition from the wooded edges of the strath to the more rolling moorland plateaux to the east. The movement of plant and materials would be more intense than other forestry operations within the landscape however, the majority of characteristics and features of the strath floor, such as, improved pasture and small-scale woodlands would remain intact. Indirect effects on the perceptual qualities of this landscape would be limited by the band of woodland along the eastern slopes of this LCT. Construction activities within this LCT would be short-term. Taking all of this into account the magnitude of effect would be **Low**.

4.9.11 The medium sensitivity to change combined with the low magnitude of change would result in **Minor Adverse** effect at construction.

4.9.12 At year one of operation, the intensity of movement would have reduced to levels similar within the existing landscape. The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in some limited increase to the impression of electrical infrastructure within the landscape. Operational effects would be long-term and permanent. Taking all of this into account the magnitude of effect would be **Low**.

4.9.13 The medium sensitivity to change combined with the low magnitude of change would result in **Minor Adverse** effect at year one of operation.

4.9.14 At year 15 of operation, the loss of vegetation in particular heather moorland and occasional trees would be substantially mitigated by the planting of new woodlands and expansive heathland restoration measures (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**). Once established, the landscape restoration measures would help to reduce the impression of change on the setting of this LCT due to the introduction of the Proposed Development. The scale of woodland proposed would strengthen the integrity of existing woods that defines the sloping eastern edge of the strath. Overall, there would be a level of change to the impression of character and the magnitude of effect would reduce to **Very Low**.

4.9.15 The medium sensitivity to change combined with the very low magnitude of change would result in **Negligible Adverse** effect at year 15 of operation.

## 4.10 Appraisal of Visual Effects

***Viewpoint 1 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South***

4.10.1 Visual value is low. Views experienced by recreational receptors at the transition between the strath and upland moor are an important part of the experience and contribute to the sense of tranquillity within the view. Visual susceptibility is medium. Taking the medium value assessed alongside the medium susceptibility results in sensitivity assessed as **Medium**.

4.10.2 Construction, activities would be prominent across a noticeable extent of short to mid-range views. Earthworks, movement of plant and material, construction of electrical structures and site compound areas would become the dominant feature in the view. In particular, the construction of the temporary towers and re-alignment of existing towers would increase the intensity of construction works within this area. At this distance and orientation, it would result in a substantial change to the composition and focus of the view. The sequential nature of views would somewhat limit the duration of focus on construction activities and these construction activities would be short-term and reversible however, taking all of this into account, the magnitude of visual effect is assessed as **Medium**.

4.10.3 The medium sensitivity combined with the medium magnitude of effect would result in **Moderate Adverse** effect during construction.

4.10.4 At year one of operation, the Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change across a small part of the background view and contained within the same context as the Proposed Bingally substation. The height and scale of the Proposed Development would

increase the presence of electrical infrastructure within the view and become the main feature in closer range views along this Core Path when travelling south to north. Effects at operation are considered to be long-term and permanent. Taking all of this into account the magnitude of effect is **Low**.

4.10.5 The medium sensitivity combined with the low magnitude of effect would result in **Minor Adverse** effect at year one of operation.

4.10.6 At year 15 of operation, landscape restoration measures (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**) would have established and reduce the overall visual prominence of the human-made electrical infrastructure within the view. The upper parts of the electrical equipment will appear beyond the intervening woodland. Vehicle movements accessing the Site would also be visible albeit infrequent. Further woodland planting would overtime introduce a wooded backcloth across part of the background. Overall, the scale and mass of the Proposed Development would remain a noticeable change across the mid-range view. The magnitude of visual effect would reduce to **Low**.

4.10.7 The medium sensitivity combined with the Low magnitude of effect would result in **Minor Adverse** effect during operation at year 15.

***Viewpoint 2 Core Path IN05.03, towards Lough na Beinne Baine***

4.10.8 Visual value is medium. Views of the landscape are an important part of the experience for recreational users of the Core Path network. However, the scale of the existing OHL towers lowers the magnitude of effect of the Proposed Development. On balance visual susceptibility is medium. Taking all of this into account overall visual susceptibility is **Medium**.

4.10.9 During construction, activities within the Site would be somewhat noticeable across a small part of mid-range view, immediately east of the existing OHL towers. The movement of plant machinery, earthwork, and the OHL tower assemblance would be difficult to discern from more elevated areas along this Core Path network. The overall scale and intensity of construction activity would not defect from the overall panoramic view. Considering this and the short term and temporary nature of change, the magnitude of impact would be **Low**.

4.10.10 The medium sensitivity of the receptor combined with the Low magnitude of effect would result in a **Minor Adverse** effect during construction.

4.10.11 At operation year one, the Proposed Development would be visible across a small part of mid-range views. The introduction of the Proposed Development would increase the presence of electrical infrastructure within the view but due to the existing presence of OHL towers this would be filtered. Scenic qualities along this viewpoint would remain intact due to the distance. Effects at operation year one are considered to be long-term. Taking all of this into account, the magnitude of effect is **Very Low**.

4.10.12 The medium sensitivity of the receptor combined with the Very Low magnitude of effect would result in a **Neutral** effect at operation year one.

4.10.13 At year 15 of operation, the upper parts of the Proposed Development would appear in mid-range views and the scale of change similar to that at year one. On balance, mitigation measures would help reduce the visual prominence of electrical infrastructure. Once woodland has established, the magnitude of effect would remain **Very Low**.

4.10.14 The medium sensitivity of the receptor combined with the low magnitude of effect would result in a **Neutral** effect at operation year 15. The dense band of forestry planting (which slopes from right to left within the extent of the view) would be extended with the introduction of proposed Scots pine and wet woodland planting.

***Viewpoint 3a/b Core Path IN05.03, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick***

4.10.15 Visual value is high. Views of the wider landscape are an important part of the experience for recreational users along the Core Path IN05.03 in both viewpoint 'a' and 'b'. The viewpoint has been split into a / b in order to show a wider extent of the access track associated with the Proposed Bingally substation. Viewpoint 'a' is facing southwest and represents a mid-level, open and expansive view southwest across the open plateau moor and Loch a' Ghreidlein. Viewpoint 'b' is a similarly open and expansive view facing northwest, towards the settlement of Tomich. The existing OHL towers extend across part of the view (i.e. Viewpoint a and b), along the edge of the plateau, at the transition to the lower wooded glens and back into the more southwestern extent of the Rugged Massif. On balance, visual susceptibility is medium. During construction, earthworks, movement of vehicles and plant machinery would result in a pronounced change in the views. Construction and operation of the Proposed Development would occupy a small overall extent of the views. The overall scale and intensity of construction activity would be apparent across a small area against the backcloth of the existing OHL towers and upland mountains. Considering this and the short term and temporary nature of change, the magnitude of impact would be **Low**.

4.10.16 The high sensitivity of the receptor combined with the low magnitude of effect would result in a **Moderate** effect during construction.

4.10.17 At operation year one, views of the Proposed Development would be similar to those experienced within the more northwestern portion of the rocky moorland plateau. Vertical elements of the Proposed Development would be somewhat filtered by the backdrop of the upland peaks, helping to minimise visual impacts from this viewpoint. The Proposed Development would follow the existing OHL tower trajectory therefore containing changes to the landscape. The scale of the Proposed Development would appear as an unobtrusive change in the overall composition of this view. This Proposed Development combined with the long-term duration of effects would result in the magnitude of effected assessed as **Low**.

4.10.18 The high sensitivity of the receptor combined with the low magnitude of effect would result in a **Moderate Adverse** effect at operation year one.

4.10.19 Effects at year 15 of operation would be decreased with the establishment of proposed mitigation (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**). The Proposed Development would remain similar to that of operational year one against the backdrop of upland peaks. Given this, the overall magnitude effect would be **Very Low**.

4.10.20 The low sensitivity combined with the very low magnitude of effect would result in a **Minor Adverse** effect at year 15 of operation.

## 4.11 Cumulative Effects

4.11.1 This section presents an appraisal of potential cumulative effects resulting from the Proposed Development in addition to a number of other similar proposed or consented developments. In line with good practice guidance from GLVIA and Nature Scot; *The cumulative impacts on our nature and landscapes need to be carefully considered and this guidance sets out our advice on assessing cumulative landscape and visual impacts. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) highlights that cumulative impacts may limit the capacity for further development and the need to consider cumulative impacts in the decision making process (SPP para 169)*[8]*.* The cumulative appraisal is undertaken on a targeted basis focused on the most important cumulative effects and those which are likely to influence

[8] https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-assessing-cumulative-landscape-and-visual-impact-onshore-wind-energy-developments

decision making. Cumulative schemes included within the scope of this appraisal are set out in **Table 4-7** below and shown in **Figure 4-4, Appendix A Figures**.

4.11.2 The developments outlined below have the potential for cumulative effects given the likelihood that they are already constructed or would be constructed and operate concurrently with the Proposed Development.

**Table 4-7 Developments for Consideration in the Cumulative Appraisal**

| Planning Application Reference / Name | Description | Location | Status | Timeframe | Scoped in / out |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25/00592/FUL<br>Proposed Bingally 400 kV substation | 400 kV Substation Comprising New Buildings, Platform, Plant And Machinery, Access, Laydown/Work Compound Area(S), Drainage, Landscaping, And Other Ancillary Works (National Development) | Overlaps with the Site | Under consideration | Start April 2026 | Scoped in |
| ECU00001969<br>Fiodhag Wind Farm | Construction of wind farm comprising of 46 turbines (height to blade tip 149.9 m). | Overlaps with the Site | Decided | Unknown | Scoped in |
| 23/04100/FUL<br>Fasnakyle Energy Storage | Erection and operation of a BESS and associated infrastructure | 4.5 km north of the Site | Under consideration<br>(EIA not required) | Unknown | Scoped in |
| 23/01025/SCRE<br>Kerrow Farm BESS | Erection and operation of a BESS, multiple containerised storage units, associated infrastructure, control building, switch room, lights, and associated works | 4.9 km north of the Site | Decided<br>(EIA not required) | Unknown | Scoped in |
| Bingally to Fasnakyle UGC / OHL connection | The installation of an UGC / OHL to connect the Proposed Bingally substation to the existing Fasnakyle Substation. | Adjacent to the Site | Not in the planning system | Unknown | Scoped in |
| Tomchrasky Wind Farm OHL connection | The installation of an OHL connection from Tomchrasky Wind Farm | Adjacent to the Site | Not in the planning system | Unknown | Scoped in |

| Planning Application Reference / Name | Description | Location | Status | Timeframe | Scoped in / out |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | to the Proposed Bingally substation. | | | | |
| ECU00004704<br>Chrathaich Wind Farm | Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 30 years, comprising of 14 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 149.9m, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure | 3.8 km east of the Site | EIAR submitted | Unknown | Scoped in |
| ECU00004569 (original application: ECU00004792)<br>Erection of OHL | Erection of small two span spur and free standing pole for communications mast on the 33 kVA OHL by Benevean Dam, Tomich | 3.9 km northwest of the Site | Consented, EIA not required | Unknown | Scoped in |
| ECU00005214<br>Cnoc Farasd Wind Farm | A wind farm consisting of 9 turbines up to 220m tip height, battery storage and associated infrastructure. | 10 km northeast of the Site | Scoping report submitted | Unknown | Scoped in |

4.11.3 The following two cumulative scenarios have been considered as part of this appraisal:

- **Cumulative Scenario 1**: The cumulative baseline for this scenario includes schemes which have been consented and / or are under construction in addition to existing operational schemes; and
- **Cumulative Scenario 2**: The cumulative baseline for this scenario includes schemes at application stage in addition to existing operational schemes and those which have been consented and / or are under construction.

4.11.4 The appraisal of cumulative magnitude of impact and level of effect involves consideration of the additional change resulting from the Proposed Development at operation to each cumulative baseline scenario.

## 4.12 Cumulative Landscape Appraisal

4.12.1 Potential important cumulative effects would occur where the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline would increase the prominence of energy infrastructure to the extent that it would become either an influential characteristic or character-defining feature of a landscape.

4.12.2 A 3 km Study Area has been considered for the cumulative nature of change resulting from the Proposed Development identified in the LVA; it is considered that there would be limited potential for significant cumulative landscape effects on the majority of the

landscape receptors found within the Study Area given the existing energy infrastructure and nature of the re-alignment of towers associated with the Proposed Development. The cumulative landscape appraisal focuses on the LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness, LCT 226 – Wooded Glen – Inverness and LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness based on the location of each cumulative development included within the assessment.

***LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness***

4.12.3 Landscape sensitivity would remain medium as stated in the non-cumulative appraisal.

4.12.4 In Scenario 1, the Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP) would be located less than 200 m east of the Proposed Development. Both developments would be located in the northwest edge of this LCT, with the Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP) more prominent across the skyline given it's increased size and scale. The Proposed Development therefore would not be the dominant development in comparison and would not alter the more valued characteristics of the LCT. There would be an increase in the perception of OHL tower infrastructure however this be confined to a small area of the overall LCT. Taking this into account the cumulative magnitude of impact would be low. When combined with the medium sensitivity this would result in a **minor adverse** cumulative effect for scenario 1.

4.12.5 In Scenario 2, the proposed Bingally substation would be located immediately adjacent to the Proposed Development, resulting in a minor increase in the presence of electrical infrastructure within this LCT. The nature and location of this cumulative scheme would result in a very similar condition for cumulative Scenario 1. The Proposed Development would add further electrical infrastructure into this LCT due to the re-alignment of existing OHL towers. The extent of potential change would be somewhat reduced due to the existing OHL towers contributing to the existing presence of electrical infrastructure within the immediate context of this LCT. Overall, there would be a small increase in the perception of electrical infrastructure within this area of the LCT. The potential for in-combination views is likely given the proximity and inter-connectivity of both schemes however the change would be localised. Taking all of this into account the cumulative magnitude of the impact would be low. When combined with a medium sensitivity this would result in a **minor adverse** level of cumulative effect for Scenario 2.

4.12.6 The landscape and habitat proposals (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**), in particular Scots pine woodland planting and wet woodland planting would establish over time and help reduce the impact of the Proposed Development into the wider landscape setting. As previously mentioned, the degree of reduction is low given the vertical nature of the Proposed Development.

***LCT 226 – Wooded Glen – Inverness***

4.12.7 Landscape sensitivity would remain high as stated in the non-cumulative appraisal.

4.12.8 In Scenario 1, the OHL development (ECU00004569) would be contained within the lower glens, undulating lower slopes and surrounding conifer forests and woodland. As this LCT is divided into various sections, the OHL development (ECU00004569) would be located within the southwest portion of the LCT within view (see **Figure 7.4, Volume 2, Appendix A**). There would be no combined cumulative effects with the Proposed Development, due to intervening landform, topography and as it would be located within the Rocky Moorland Plateau LCT. The cumulative magnitude of impact would be considered none. When combined with the high sensitivity this would result in a **Neutral** cumulative effect.

4.12.9 In Scenario 2, the Cnoc Farasd Wind Farm (ECU00005214) would be located within the northeast section of this LCT close to the A831 road. Along this route there is an increased presence of road infrastructure, farmsteads and scattered housing. In-combination views

with the Proposed Development are not anticipated due to the distance, topography and location of the Proposed Development within the neighbouring Rocky Moorland Plateau LCT. Depending on timing, there may be an increased presence of construction activity concentrated within the northeast section of the Rocky Moorland Plateau LCT (along the A381) as the Cnoc Farasd Wind Farm (ECU00005214) would use the A831 road, during construction, which would also be used for the Access Track associated with the proposed Bingally substation. The cumulative magnitude of impact would be considered very low. When combined with the high sensitivity this would result in a **Minor** Adverse cumulative effect.

***LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness***

4.12.10 Landscape sensitivity would remain medium as stated in the non-cumulative appraisal.

4.12.11 The addition of the Proposed Development into this LCT would have a **negligible** cumulative effect in both Scenarios 1 and 2 given it transitions into a very small portion of the Farmed Strath.

## 4.13 Cumulative Visual Appraisal

4.13.1 Potential important cumulative effects would occur where the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline would increase the prominence of energy infrastructure to the extent that they would potentially become an influential characteristic in views across the landscape.

***Viewpoint 1 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South***

4.13.2 In Scenario 1, the Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP) would be visible along with the Proposed Development due to their proximity (less than 20m apart). The Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP) would be the more prominent feature within the context of the view therefore, on balance, the overall magnitude of cumulative effect of the Proposed Development would be considered low. When combined with low sensitivity this would result in a **negligible** level of cumulative effect.

4.13.3 In Scenario 2, the Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP) and Proposed Bingally 400kV substation (24/01648/SCRE) would be seen in sequential views from recreational users along this Core Path. The addition of the Proposed Development into this cumulative scenario would increase the influence of energy infrastructure from this viewpoint. The lower elements of the Proposed Development would be slightly less visible due to the proposed mitigation (see **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**) however the overall magnitude of cumulative effect is considered to be medium. When combined with low sensitivity this would result in a **minor adverse** level of cumulative effect.

***Viewpoint 2 Core Path IN05.03, towards Lough na Beinne Baine***

4.13.4 In Scenario 1, effects are similar to that of viewpoint 1; the Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP) would be visible along with the Proposed Development due to their proximity (less than 20 m apart) however the intervening distance would limit the visual presence of the Proposed Development in comparison with the Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP). On balance, the magnitude of cumulative effect is considered very low. When combined with medium sensitivity this would result in a **neutral** level of cumulative effect.

4.13.5 In Scenario 2, the Proposed Development would be the most noticeable feature across a small part of the overall view. The remaining cumulative schemes would not contribute to a cumulative effect given the distance and imperceptibility from this viewpoint. The addition of the Proposed Development would therefore marginally add to the scale and mass of electrical infrastructure within view. Taking this into account the cumulative magnitude of

effect is anticipated to be very low. When combined with medium sensitivity this would result in a **neutral** level of cumulative effect.

***Viewpoint 3a/b Core Path IN05.03, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick***

4.13.6 In Scenarios 1 and 2, no cumulative change is anticipated given the landform / topography screens any sequential or in combination views between the Proposed Development and any of the listed schemes in **Table 4-7**.

## 4.14 Recommendations and Mitigation

4.14.1 All landscape and visual mitigation proposals are covered in detail in **Appendix D Landscape Habitat Management Plan**, which include the following:

- LHMP Report;
- Landscape Restoration Plan; and
- Landscape Restoration Plan Wider Context.

4.14.2 Visual mitigation is limited to ensuring established native woodland cover remains southwest and east of the Proposed Development and proposed Scots Pine and wet woodland helps to mitigate new electrical infrastructure from views along the northern boundary, experienced by recreational users along the Core Paths (Viewpoint 1).

## 4.15 Summary of Findings

4.15.1 **Table 4-8** below provides a summary of findings of the LVA at Year 15.

**Table 4-8 Summary of Findings**

| Receptor | Sensitivity | Operation Magnitude of Impact (Year one) | Level of Effect (Year one) | Operation Magnitude of Impact (Year 15) | Level of Effect (Year 15) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LCT 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness | Medium | Low | Minor Adverse | Low | Minor Adverse |
| LCT 226 – Wooded Glen – Inverness | High | None | Neutral | Very Low | Minor Adverse |
| LCT 227 – Farmed Strath – Inverness | Medium | Low | Minor Adverse | Very Low | Negligible Adverse |
| Viewpoint 1 - Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South | Medium | Low | Minor Adverse | Low | Minor Adverse |
| Viewpoint 2 - Core Path IN05.03, towards Lough na Beinne Baine | Medium | Low | Minor Adverse | Very Low | Neutral |
| Viewpoint 3a/b - Core Path IN05.03, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick | High | Low | Moderate Adverse | Very Low | Minor Adverse |