

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 6: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

6.	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL	6-1
6.1	Executive Summary	6-1
6.2	Introduction	6-2
6.3	Scope of Assessment	6-2
6.4	Methodology	6-7
6.5	Baseline Conditions: Landscape	6-15
6.6	Baseline Conditions: Visual Amenity	6-21
6.7	Assessment of Likely Significant Effects: Landscape	6-24
6.8	Assessment of Likely Significant Effects: Visual Amenity	6-31
6.9	Cumulative Effects	6-35
6.10	Mitigation	6-38
6.11	Residual Effects	6-39
6.12	Summary	6-39

Figures (Volume 2 of this EIA Report)

Figure 6.1a-e: Study Area with Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

Figure 6.2: Designated and Protected Landscapes with ZTV

Figure 6.3: Landscape Character Types (LCT) with ZTV

Figure 6.4a-e: Visual Receptors within assessment with ZTV

Figure 6.5: Baseline and Cumulative Developments with ZTV

Visualisations to NatureScot (NS) Guidelines (Volume 3a of this EIA Report)

Figure 3.2.1a-g: VL1 - Cairn o' Mount Scheduled Monument

Figure 3.3a-d: VL2 - B974

Figure 3.4a-d: VL3 - Cleuchhead Farm

6. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

6.1 Executive Summary

Introduction

- 6.1.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development within a study area of 1.5 km. The LVIA has been undertaken by Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute, in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)¹.
- 6.1.2 The LVIA considers the two separate subjects of landscape and visual amenity as follows:
- The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes.
 - The visual assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential receptors and routes.
- 6.1.3 The LVIA also gives consideration to cumulative effects occurring as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline. For this purpose, the consented Glendye Wind Farm which the Proposed Development would be closely associated with and dependant on, has been considered as operational within the baseline for the assessment. The associated UGC sections are covered under Permitted Development and assessed in **Appendix 1.1: Permitted Development Works Appraisal**. They are scoped out of further assessment within this chapter).

Summary of Effects

Landscape Effects

- 6.1.4 The landscape assessment has considered the potential for effects on landscape character and any designated or protected landscape areas within the study area (see **Figure 6.2**). The assessment has determined that there would be some limited (not significant) effects on landscape character. However, the scale of the moorland landscape in the western part of the study area and forested nature of large parts of the eastern study area would help to accommodate the Proposed Development within the landscape, with little perceptible change to landscape characteristics. Over time, the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in any noticeable change to the landscape character of the study area.
- 6.1.5 No significant effects are predicted to the designated or protected landscapes of Braes of the Mearns Special Landscape Area (SLA) or Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA.

Visual Effects

- 6.1.6 The assessment of visual effects has considered the potential for effects on views experienced by residents, recreational users and road travellers within the study area. This has identified a number of temporary significant visual effects affecting residents within building-based receptor groups B1 (Bogburn, Corsebauld, and West Bogton) and B3 (Mains of Inchbreck, Bogton, Brawliemuir, Bogjurgan, and Cleuchhead), and users of the route R1 (B974), within the study area. These effects are predicted to reduce to not significant in the longer term as construction activity ceases and temporary access tracks and works areas are reinstated. All other visual effects are predicted to be not significant. Overall, the visual effects are not predicted to lead to any notable long-term reduction to visual amenity within the study area.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

- 6.1.7 The LVIA has considered the potential for cumulative effects where the Proposed Development could combine with other consented, proposed and reasonably foreseeable future developments which could increase the level of predicted effects. The cumulative landscape and visual assessment has identified that there would be no significant cumulative landscape or visual effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline during operation.

6.2 Introduction

- 6.2.1 This Chapter presents the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the Proposed Development. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and describe potential significant effects which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development to views obtained by those living, working in and visiting the area, and to the wider landscape resource.
- 6.2.2 The Proposed Development is described in detail in **Chapter 3: The Proposed Development** and illustrated on **Figure 3.1a-e**. The LVIA considers the above ground elements of the Proposed Development, constituting approximately 19 km of new 132 kV overhead line (OHL) and ancillary development, including access tracks.
- 6.2.3 Underground cables (UGC) would require installation at either end of the OHL, to complete the connection to both Glendye Wind Farm on-site substation and the existing Fetteresso substation. These UGC works are considered separately given their permitted development status, so do not form part of the Proposed Development (see **Appendix 1.1: Permitted Development Works Appraisal**).
- 6.2.4 This assessment has been undertaken by Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute. The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance, the GLVIA3¹. A table presenting relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Appendix 5.1: EIA Team**.

6.3 Scope of Assessment

Consultation and Scoping

- 6.3.1 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement, reference to the relevant guidance documents and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA scoping process.
- 6.3.2 The Scoping Opinion was issued by the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) on the 28th February 2025² (see **Appendix 4.2**). **Table 6.1** below provides a summary of the key responses from consultees which are relevant to the subject areas of landscape and visual amenity and provides comment as to how these have been addressed.
- 6.3.3 Full details on the consultation responses and Scoping Opinion can be reviewed in **Chapter 4: Scope and Consultation**, and associated appendices.

² The Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit Scoping Opinion on behalf of Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 - Glendye Wind Farm Overhead Line Grid Connection

Table 6.1: Scoping Responses

Consultee	Response	Comment
Scottish Government ECU	Scottish Ministers recommend viewpoints to be assessed within the landscape and visual impact assessment should be agreed in consultation with Aberdeenshire Council.	Advice provided by Aberdeenshire Council during scoping has been considered and adopted in the identification and selection of viewpoints for the production of visualisations. Paragraph 6.3.11 of this Chapter describes the viewpoint locations included in Volume 3 – Visualisations to NatureScot Guidelines .
Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council have some concerns regarding potential setting impact on the Cairn O' Mount cairns Scheduled Monument and would expect detailed visualisations to be provided in due course.	The potential setting effects from Cairn o'Mount cairns Scheduled Monument are considered in Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage . A visualisation has been prepared from this location and is included within Volume 3 – Visualisations to NatureScot Guidelines .
	Aberdeenshire Council state that the Scoping Report sets out the approach to the LVIA assessment, and that this is generally satisfactory.	This has been noted.
	The LVIA should consider the potential disruptive visual and perceptual effects of introducing any vertical structures to the open and simple rolling moorlands in the western part of the corridor, noting that there are similarities in landscape to Route Option 1a of the 2023 Route Options Appraisal of the Tealing to Kintore Transmission line, which was discounted.	The LVIA includes an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on landscape designations, landscape character and visual amenity, including cumulative effects.
	The Council also request that full and robust consideration should be given to short/long term effects (given any weathering of finishes) in the LVIA. The effects of construction compounds and access tracks should also be considered in the LVIA.	Chapter 2: The Routeing Process and Alternatives, provides discussion on the reasonable alternatives that have been considered for the Proposed Development. The LVIA considers the short and long-term effects of the Proposed Development, including ancillary development such as access tracks. As described in Chapter 3 – The Proposed Development, temporary construction

		compounds would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and a separate planning permission / application sought, as required.
	The Council acknowledges that the consented Glen Dye Wind Farm will incur significant adverse effects on the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) covering the open hills in the western part of the site and further diminishment of the wild qualities of the area should be addressed. The LVIA should assess the effects of the proposal on the character and special qualities of the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse and the Braes of the Mearns SLA's.	The LVIA includes an assessment of the special qualities of the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA and the Braes of the Mearns SLA, including consideration of other existing or proposed infrastructure (see Section 6.7).
	The Council consider that the two viewpoints identified for visualisations of the proposal are insufficient given the sensitivity of the open hills on the western part of the route. An additional viewpoint should be selected from the B974, close to a point where the line would cross the road, with the visualisation showing views of the overhead line both to the east and west.	Following this advice from Aberdeenshire Council, an additional viewpoint has been included as supporting information to the LVIA from the B974. The viewpoint selected illustrates views of the OHL to both the east and west from the road. The visualisation is included in Volume 3 - Visualisations to NatureScot Guidelines.
	There are a number of major consented and proposed developments in the vicinity of the proposed OHL which have been identified within the scoping report. Robust and clear analysis is needed in the cumulative LVIA to identify key effects associated with multiple large scale infrastructural projects.	Cumulative effects on landscape and visual receptors are considered in Section 6.9 of this Chapter.
Nature Scot	NatureScot advise that the Proposed Development will not have a significant adverse impact on the Special Landscape Qualities of any National Scenic Areas or the Cairngorms National Park. NatureScot consider that the impacts of the proposal do not raise landscape and visual issues of national interest, but that this should not be interpreted as meaning there are no other significant effects that need to be considered when determining the application.	The LVIA includes an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on landscape designations, landscape character and visual amenity, including cumulative effects. Other potential effects are addressed in separate technical chapters.

	There are likely to be some significant localised effects from the western routes on Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA and the Braes of Mearns SLA.	The potential effects on the special qualities of these SLAs have been considered in the LVIA (see Section 6.7).
	There is the potential for localised significant impacts on the landscape character type (LCT) 29 Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire, including the potential for cumulative effects with the existing OHL at Strathfinella and south of Fetteresso. It could also generate localised to wider significant effects on LCT 24 Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire.	The potential effects on landscape character, including cumulative effects, are considered in the LVIA (see Section 6.7).
	There is potential for significant visual effects on the B974 as the OHL crosses the more open section of this route, with the potential for significant effects on short sections of the B974 and views from the Cain o'Mount Summit and viewpoint. There is also potential for cumulative effects with the existing OHL at Strathfinella and Glendye Wind Farm.	The LVIA includes an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on landscape designations, landscape character and visual amenity, including cumulative effects. This includes route receptors and outdoor receptor locations. Visualisations have been prepared from the B974 and Cairn o'Mount cairns Scheduled Monument, both of which are included within Volume 3 – Visualisations to NatureScot Guidance. There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from the Cairn o'Mount viewpoint itself, due to topographic screening.
Feughside Community Council	The Community Council note their concerns about the impact an OHL could have on two SLA's, the scenically popular B974 which the Proposed Development is required to cross, and landscape character, including cumulative effects. The Community Council note their position that undergrounding should be considered.	The LVIA includes an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on landscape designations, landscape character and visual amenity, including cumulative effects. This includes route receptors and outdoor receptor locations. Chapter 2: The Routeing Process and Alternatives provides discussion on the reasonable alternatives that have been considered for the Proposed Development, including discussion on undergrounding.

Study Area

- 6.3.5 The study area comprises the area where any potentially significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development would be likely to occur and has been established through consideration of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (see **paragraphs 6.3.7 to 6.3.1010**), and professional judgement.

- 6.3.6 Following review of the ZTV, it was considered that potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would likely be limited to an area within 1.5 km of the Proposed Development. This was proposed in the Scoping Report (para. 8.5.5), and was considered acceptable (Scoping Opinion, para. 3.5). As such, a 1.5 km study area offset from the proposed OHL alignment has been adopted for this assessment, as shown on **Figure 6.1a-e: Study Area with Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 6.3.7 As an aid to establishing the scope for the LVIA, a ZTV has been produced for the Proposed Development and is presented in **Figure 6.1a-e**. The ZTV is a computer-generated diagram which uses a terrain model to indicate areas from which the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible. The ZTV for the Proposed Development has been generated using ESRI ArcGIS software based on a terrain modelled using Ordnance Survey (OS) Terrain 5 Digital Terrain Model (T5 DTM) data.
- 6.3.8 The ZTV has been run using the designed heights for each pole, as identified in **Appendix 3.1: Indicative Pole Schedule**.
- 6.3.9 The ZTV has been prepared based on a viewer height of 2 m above ground level in line with the NatureScot, 2017 guidance³, with earth curvature and light refraction set to 0.075.
- 6.3.10 Whilst the ZTV is a useful tool for the identification of potential effects, it is not indicative of an effect in itself. The ZTV does not consider the potential screening effects of woodland and other localised features such as buildings, trees or local landform which are not captured by the OS T5 data. Nor does it reflect the limit of deviation, which allows for both increases and decreases in height. It does not give an indication of the way in which a development may relate to its broader landscape context and the receding scale and visibility of features with distance. However, consideration of these aspects are taken into account during the assessment through professional judgement.

Visualisations

- 6.3.11 Three visualisations have been produced to support the LVIA, in accordance with NatureScot visualisation guidance³. These illustrate the Proposed Development during operation from the following locations:
- Visualisation Location 1: Cairn o'Mount Scheduled Monument (OS Grid Reference: NO 64927, 80754) (see **Volume 3, Figure 3.2.1a-b: VL1**). Representative of views from the Scheduled Monument across the upland plateaux;
 - Visualisation Location 2: B974 (OS Grid Reference: NO 64833 81756) (see **Volume 3, Figure 3.3a-d: VL2**). Representative of views from the B974 travelling south towards the Proposed Development; and
 - Visualisation Location 3: Cleuchhead Farm (OS Grid Reference: NO 76404, 84104) (see **Volume 3, Figure 3.4a-d: VL3**). Representative of views from the minor road towards the Proposed Development.
- 6.3.12 The visualisations have been produced to support the LVIA work and are intended to show the appearance of the Proposed Development within the landscape setting. Visualisation Locations have not been assessed as viewpoints. The visual assessment is a receptor-based assessment (considering all potential visual receptors) rather than a viewpoint-based assessment.

Issues Scoped out of Assessment

- 6.3.13 Effects arising from the process of decommissioning are considered to be of a similar nature and duration to those arising from the Proposed Development construction process and therefore have not been assessed separately in this LVIA. Moreover, the consent is sought in perpetuity. Therefore, the potential construction effects referenced in the assessment are considered representative of predicted decommissioning effects.

³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Visual Representation of Wind Farms. Guidance. Version 2.2.

6.4 Methodology

Assessment Guidance

- 6.4.1 The LVIA has been prepared with reference to GLVIA3¹ and Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland⁴.

Professional Judgement

- 6.4.2 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects. As part of this assessment, professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape value and landscape and visual sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect. The assessment has been undertaken and verified by two Landscape Professionals (including at least one Chartered Landscape Architect) to provide a robust and consistent approach.

Key Stages of the Assessment

- 6.4.3 GLVIA3 advises that landscape and visual effects should be assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any mitigation measures which are being adopted.
- 6.4.4 The GLVIA3 methodology for landscape assessment involves an appreciation of the existing landscape resource, the susceptibility of its key components to accept the change proposed, and an understanding of the potential effects which could occur and how these could affect these key landscape components.
- 6.4.5 Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature and expectation of existing views by visual receptors is a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and the subsequent evaluation of the significance of effects.
- 6.4.6 The potential to mitigate adverse effects should also be considered for both landscape and visual receptors.
- 6.4.7 There are five key stages to the assessment of landscape and visual effects:
1. Establishment of the baseline;
 2. Appreciation of the development proposed;
 3. Identification of key landscape and visual receptors;
 4. Identification of potential effects; and
 5. Assessment of significance of effect.

Establishment of the Baseline

- 6.4.8 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through a combination of desk study and site appraisal to identify the existing conditions and relevant intra / inter dependent consented development. The desk study involved review of the following general documents and sources, as a means of understanding both the geographical features as well as any designated areas within the baseline area:
- The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)⁵;
 - The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023⁶;

4 Scottish Natural Heritage, The Countryside Agency. (2002). Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.

5 Scottish Government (2023). National Planning Framework 4.

6 The Aberdeenshire Council (2023) Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. (online) Available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2023/> 9 (last accessed 08/10/2025)

- Other local supplementary guidance^{7, 8};
- The Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses for the Proposed Development (see **Table 6.1** and **Appendix 4.2**);
- Online mapping and aerial photography resources from Ordnance Survey, Google, Bing and National Library of Scotland^{9, 10, 11}; and
- The ZTV for the Proposed Development (see **Figure 6.1a-e**).

6.4.9 In addition, the following specific baseline activities were undertaken for the assessments of landscape and visual effects:

Landscape Assessment Baseline Tasks

6.4.10 The desk study for the landscape assessment included review of the following additional documents and resources:

- Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance¹²; and
- NatureScot Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions¹³.

Identification of Baseline Landscape Value

6.4.11 The value of the landscape is an important consideration in informing later judgement of the significance of effects. Landscape value concerns the perceived importance of the landscape when considered as a whole, and within the context of the study area, and is established through consideration of the following factors:

- Presence of landscape designations, other inventory or registered landscapes / landscape features or identified planning constraints;
- The scenic quality of the landscape;
- Perceptual aspects, such as wildness or tranquillity;
- Conservation interests such as cultural heritage features or associations, or if the landscape supports notable habitats or species;
- Recreational value; and
- Rarity, either in the national or local context, or if it is considered to be a particularly important example of a specific landscape type.

6.4.12 It should be noted that absence of a designation does not necessarily mean that a landscape or component is not highly valued, because factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality landscape as a highly valuable local resource.

6.4.13 Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in **Table 6.2** below. These levels represent points on a continuum and, where required, interim ratings such as Low-Medium have been used to indicate the anticipated level.

7 Ironside Farrar on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council (2014). Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy: 7933/ Final Report March 2014.

8 LUC on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council (2016). Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance.

9 Walk Highlands (online). Available at: <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

10 Bing Mapping aerial photography (online). Available at: <https://www.bing.com/maps/> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

11 Google mapping aerial photography (online) Available at: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

12 LUC (2016) Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance, The Aberdeenshire Council.

13 NatureScot: (2019): Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions (online) Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions> (last accessed 08/10/2025).

Table 6.2: Landscape Value Criteria

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	- The landscape is closely associated with features of international or national importance which are rare within the wider context; - The landscape is of high scenic quality and forms a key part of an important designated landscape or planning constraint; and/or - The landscape is an example of a scarce resource within the local context and is of considerable local importance for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Medium	- The landscape is associated with features of national or regional importance which are relatively common within the wider context; - The landscape forms part of a designated landscape or is associated with other features of importance, but is not rare or distinctive within the local context; and/or - The landscape is one of a number within the local context appreciated for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Low	- The landscape characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any particular features or attributes considered to be important; and/or - The landscape is of poor scenic quality and is not appreciated for any recreational or cultural associations.

Visual Assessment Baseline Tasks

6.4.14 A combination of desk study and field survey was used to establish the range and distribution of potential visual receptors within the study area. Visual receptors can be defined as individuals occupying and using the study area with the potential to obtain views of the Proposed Development. Potential visual receptors included in the assessment encompass those experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public.

6.4.15 The following additional resources were used to enhance understanding of the use of the study area by potential visual receptors:

- The Aberdeenshire Council Core Paths Interactive Map¹⁴;
- Scottish Hill Tracks (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society¹⁵; and
- Other web based and published sources providing information on local resources and activities within the study area.

6.4.16 Site visits were undertaken to verify the visual receptors identified through the initial desk study, with the identification of further potential receptors and collation of information on baseline visual amenity. This included information on the types and activities of visual receptors likely to be present, and the nature of the existing views obtained. Site recording involved the completion of standardised recording forms and annotation of Ordnance Survey plans, supported by a photographic record of views from key receptor locations.

Appreciation of the Proposed Development

6.4.17 Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, its nature, scale and location within the baseline landscape, and any peripheral or ancillary features proposed. Analysis of the proposed activities and changes which would take place as a result of the Proposed

¹⁴ The Aberdeenshire Council, Core Paths Interactive Map (online) available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/paths-and-outdoor-access/core-paths-plan/core-paths-plan-maps/> (last accessed 08/10/2025).

¹⁵ The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) (2011): Scottish Hill Tracks (Fifth Edition) Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

Development leads to an understanding of the potential effects that may occur to the landscape and visual resource.

6.4.18 This stage included review of all available desk-based information relating to the Proposed Development, in terms of its long-term physical appearance and requirements for construction and access.

Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors

6.4.19 The identification of key landscape and visual receptors with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development is the first step in the analysis of the potential for significant effects to occur. Landscape and visual receptors can be described as follows:

- **Landscape receptors** comprise key characteristics or individual features which contribute to the value of the landscape and have potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. Landscape receptors are identified through analysis of baseline characteristics, when considered in relation to the impacts which might result from the Proposed Development.
- **Visual receptors** comprise individuals experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public. Potential visual receptors are identified through analysis of desk resources, mapping and field survey, as described under 'Establishment of the Baseline' above. A review of the ZTV in the context of site survey is used to identify the potential for visual receptors to be affected by the Proposed Development.

Identification of Potential Effects

6.4.20 The next step in the assessment process involves the identification of potential effects which may occur as a result of the interaction of the Proposed Development with the identified landscape and visual receptors.

6.4.21 The assessment takes into account direct effects upon existing views, landscape elements, features and key characteristics and, also, indirect effects which may occur secondarily to changes affecting another landscape component or area. The identification of potential effects is a two-fold process, giving consideration as to how these effects may arise from aspects of the Proposed Development and how they may be accommodated by the existing baseline features.

6.4.22 Where it is established that potential landscape and visual effects could be limited by mitigation measures, these are also given consideration.

6.4.23 Potential landscape and visual effects are evaluated through the allocation of criteria for sensitivity and magnitude.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

6.4.24 Sensitivity concerns the nature of the baseline landscape or visual receptor, and the ability to accommodate development of the type proposed without compromising the key characteristics and / or composition.

6.4.25 There are two aspects which contribute to the evaluation of landscape and visual sensitivity: value and susceptibility to change. The consideration of these two separate aspects in the differing assessments for landscape and visual amenity are outlined below:

- Landscape
 - Value: The baseline value of the landscape and the contributory value of individual landscape receptors to the landscape as a whole (see **Table 6.2**); and
 - Susceptibility: The ability of landscape receptors to accommodate development of the type proposed without changing the intrinsic qualities of the landscape as a whole.
- Visual Amenity

- Value: The baseline value of a particular view to the visual receptor, including the perceived value of individual features or aspects within the view; and
- Susceptibility: The susceptibility of the viewer to changes to the view, considering the particular activity they may be involved in, the composition of the baseline view and importance of the proposed area of change as a part of the view.

6.4.26 Criteria for the evaluation of sensitivity to change are presented below in **Table 6.3**. These levels represent points on a continuum and, where required, interim ratings such as Low-Medium have been used to indicate the anticipated level.

Table 6.3: Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity Rating	Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity
High	A highly valued landscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present.
Medium	A reasonably valued landscape with a composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and • workplaces where the changed aspect is an important element of the view and there are no detracting features present.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape which is potentially tolerant of a large degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or numerous detracting features are present; • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or where numerous detracting features are present; • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; and • workplaces where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present.

Landscape and Visual Impact Magnitude

6.4.27 Magnitude of change concerns the extent to which the existing landscape character or view would be altered by the Proposed Development. Elements specific to the evaluation of magnitude of change for the differing assessments of landscape and visual amenity are detailed below:

- Landscape
 - The degree to which features or characteristics may be removed, altered or added within the landscape;
 - The geographical extent of proposed changes;
 - Whether changes would be direct or indirect; and
 - The potential duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).
- Visual Amenity
 - The scale or extent of proposed changes within the view;
 - The location of proposed changes within the view, relevant to other existing features;
 - The extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view; and
 - The duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

6.4.28 Criteria for the evaluation of magnitude of change are presented below in **Table 6.4**. These levels represent points on a continuum and, where required, interim ratings such as Low-Medium have been used to indicate the anticipated level. In recognition of the differing changes that would occur over time, the assessment has been undertaken at two stages: during the construction of the Proposed Development, and approximately 10 years post construction (during operation) once reinstatement has had time to establish.

Table 6.4: Landscape and Visual Magnitude of Change Criteria

Magnitude Rating	Landscape	Visual
High	Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a very noticeable change in the existing view.
Medium	Perceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to notable change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view.
Low	Virtually imperceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or perceptible change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view.
Negligible	No discernible change in any landscape characteristics or components.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view.

Assessment of Significance of Effects

6.4.29 Evaluation of the predicted significance of effect has been carried out through the analysis of the anticipated magnitude of change in relation to the landscape or visual sensitivity, taking into account any embedded mitigation measures, and is established using professional judgement.

6.4.30 The significance of effect for landscape and visual elements is considered as follows:

- Landscape Effects
 - The assessment takes into account identified effects upon existing landscape receptors and assesses the extent to which these would be lost or modified, in the context of their importance in determining the existing baseline character.

- Visual Effects
 - The assessment takes into account likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which new features would distract or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure or focus of the existing view.

6.4.31 The assessment takes into consideration the potential for effects to be adverse. Changes such as the addition of new distracting features, or the removal of existing positive features, are anticipated to negatively affect the landscape or view. Beneficial effects may occur where changes, such as the removal of existing distracting features or the addition of mitigation measures are anticipated to positively influence the landscape or view.

6.4.32 The significance of landscape and visual effects is assessed by relating the sensitivity of the receptors (see **Table 6.3**) to the magnitude of change (see **Table 6.4**) in relation to the criteria outlined in **Table 6.5**. These levels represent points on a continuum and, where required, interim ratings such as Minor-Moderate have been used to indicate the anticipated level. For the purposes of the LVIA, effects with a rating of **Moderate or greater** are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Table 6.5: Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect Criteria

Effect Significance	Landscape Effects	Visual Effects
Major Adverse (significant)	The Proposed Development is at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape and would be a dominant feature, resulting in considerable reduction in scenic quality and large-scale change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would become a prominent and very detracting feature and would result in a very noticeable deterioration to an existing highly valued and well composed view.
Moderate Adverse (significant)	The Proposed Development is out of scale with the landscape, or inconsistent with the local pattern and landform and may be locally dominant and/or result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would introduce some detracting features to an existing highly valued view, or would be more prominent within a pleasing or less well composed view, resulting in a noticeable deterioration of the quality of view.
Minor Adverse (Not Significant)	The Proposed Development does not quite fit with the scale, landform or local pattern of the landscape and may be locally intrusive but would result in an inappreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a perceptible but not detracting feature within a pleasing or valued view, or would be a prominent feature within a poorly composed view of limited value, resulting in a small deterioration to the existing view.
Negligible (Not Significant)	The Proposed Development sits well within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and would not result in any discernible reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration or improvement to the view.
Minor Beneficial (Not Significant)	The Proposed Development would add/remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a small or localised improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a fairly attractive feature and/or remove a fairly detracting feature from an existing less well composed view, resulting in a small improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.

Moderate Beneficial (significant)	The Proposed Development would add/remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would become a new attractive feature within, or result in the removal or partial removal of an existing detracting feature from, a poorly composed or less well composed view leading to a noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.
Major Beneficial (significant)	The Proposed Development would add/remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a very noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a prominent new attractive feature within, or result in the removal of an existing very detracting feature from, a poorly composed view leading to a very noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.

Assumptions and Limitations

6.4.33 The LVIA is subject to the following limitations and assumptions:

- The prominence of the Proposed Development in the landscape and views will vary according to the prevailing weather conditions. The LVIA has been carried out, as is best practice¹, by assuming the 'worst case' scenario i.e., on a clear, bright day in winter, when neither foreground deciduous foliage nor haze can interfere with the clarity of the view obtained.
- The assessment of effects assumes a baseline situation where the turbines of the consented Glendye Wind Farm would be in-situ and operational, because the Proposed Development would be dependent on this development. This is reflective of the fact that the Proposed Development would not be required if the wind farm was not constructed, and as such would not exist in a landscape in which the wind farm was not present. Where this would change the existing baseline, this is noted in the assessment.
- The assessment of operational effects assumes that areas disturbed during the construction of the Proposed Development, but not required for operation (temporary tracks and working areas, excavations for pole foundations etc.) would be successfully reinstated to reflect, as far as possible, similar vegetation types and appearance to that present prior to construction in line with the Applicants GEMPs (see **Appendix 3.3**). It is noted that reinstated vegetation types may not necessarily comprise identical habitat types and value to those originally present. Habitat change is discussed separately in **Chapter 7: Ecology**.
- ZTVs are used to inform the landscape, visual and cumulative assessments. The limitations and technical specifications for production of ZTVs are included in **paragraphs 6.3.7 to 6.3.10**.
- The field assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from public roads, footpaths or open spaces. For residential receptors, assumptions have been made about the types of rooms in buildings and about the types and importance of views from these rooms. For there to be a visual effect, there is the need for a viewer and therefore only buildings that are in use have been considered in the visual assessment.
- The assessment of effects on visual receptors occupying buildings (such as residences and public buildings) includes consideration of potential for views from exterior areas associated with the building, including gardens where appropriate. These effects are referenced where relevant.
- The assessment reflects the baseline situation at the time of the site work (September 2024 and March 2025) and therefore does not take account of any changes to the landscape fabric which have taken place after this date.

6.5 Baseline Conditions: Landscape

Overview

- 6.5.1 The Proposed Development crosses through a number of different landscapes. Between western and central parts of the Proposed Development, prominent hills and ridges transform into a broad, expansive upland plateaux, largely covered with heather and grass moorland. The central area of lower slopes becomes more modified further east, with conifer plantations and wind farm developments to the north and scattered farms and properties to the south. To the south of the central and eastern parts of the Proposed Development, shallow valleys are covered by a patchwork of green pastures, arable fields and shelterbelts.
- 6.5.2 Settlements within the vicinity of the Proposed Development is concentrated to the east, where a number of scattered properties and farm buildings are present, as shown on **Figures 6.4a-e**.
- 6.5.3 Renewable energy and energy / electricity related developments are already present within the landscape, with further expansion expected through construction of consented developments such as Glendye and Fetteresso Wind Farms, and the proposed Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL. Other developments proposed within the local area are discussed further in **Section 6.9: Cumulative Effects**.

Landscape Character

- 6.5.4 NatureScot has undertaken detailed review and classification of various landscape areas and types of Scotland¹³. Two individual Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are identified within the 1.5 km study area for the Proposed Development: LCT 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire and LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire (see **Figure 6.3 Landscape Character with ZTV**). NatureScot notes the following key characteristics for these LCTs.

LCT 24: Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills – Aberdeenshire

- A large scale and open landscape of smoothly rolling ridges and shallow valleys.
- Narrow ravines cutting through the ridges towards the coast.
- Large fields of arable land and pasture with red-pink soils that present a rich tapestry of colours with the strong patchwork pattern influenced by different crops and ploughed fields.
- Few hedges or dykes.
- Sparse woodland with coniferous shelterbelts planted on some ridges.
- Broadleaf woodlands, although small, commonly emphasise the landform, tracing water courses or planted on knolls.
- Scattered settlement pattern with varied architectural styles including some large stately homes, farms and traditional cottages, often built of local red sandstone.
- Comprehensive network of minor roads, as well as the main A90 which provides glimpses of the sea.
- A concentration of Bronze Age burial cairns often focussed on hilltops with views to the sea.
- Telecommunication masts located on the highest hills.
- Frequent single and small groups of large wind turbines.
- Strong coastal influence particularly where more open slopes fall gently to the top of cliffs or raised beach allowing views of the sea.
- Sea views to the east and views westwards across the Howe of the Mearns.

LCT 29: Summits and Plateaux – Aberdeenshire

- An expansive upland plateaux with a smooth rolling landform and rounded hill summits. Landform is more complex along the Highland Boundary Fault.

- Foreground to the Cairngorm massif and Cairngorms National Park.
- Backdrop in views from the north from Lower Deeside and the fringes of Aberdeen city.
- Extensive central and western ridges covered with expansive heather and grass moorland.
- Regionally prominent hills.
- Coniferous forested lower hills, particularly extensive in the north-east. Wind farm development is also present in this area.
- A patchwork of green pasture extends high into narrow valleys on the fringes of these uplands.
- Unexpected pockets of farmland and isolated farms and estate buildings at lower elevations within these uplands.
- Derelict grey stone cottages are occasional features amidst open moorland.
- Numerous old routeways (including the B974 Cairn o'Mount road) that are popular with walkers and offer commanding views to the Howe of Mearns and the coast, and to Deeside.
- Wild character experienced in the less modified central and western parts of this landscape.
- Dramatic juxtaposition of the steep scarp slopes of these rugged uplands with the expansive low-lying farmed and settled Howe of the Mearns.

6.5.5 Drawing on NatureScot's LCTs and their descriptions and supported by site survey, a finer, grained landscape characterisation has been conducted within the study area. Three Local Landscape Zones (LLZs) have been identified by ASH to reflect the landscape baseline context at the time of assessment. These LLZs comprise areas of more localised character, relating more directly to the scale and context of the landscape of the study area.

6.5.6 These LLZs are shown on **Figure 6.3: Landscape Character Types with ZTV** and comprise:

- LLZ 1: Upland Plateaux;
- LLZ 2: Forested Foothills; and
- LLZ 3: Farmed Ridges.

6.5.7 These LLZs are described below in **Table 6.6** to **Table 6.8**.

Table 6.6: LLZ 1 – Upland Plateaux

	
LLZ 1 overlooking upland moorland plateaux and Clachnaben summit.	
Description	The western part of the study area falls within this LLZ, which covers an expansive upland plateaux. Along the southern boundary, the LLZ encompasses the fringe of the upper steep scarp slopes of the Mounth – a distinctive upland range that forms part of the eastern end of the Grampian Mountains extending from Cairngorms to the west and Stonehaven coast to the east, marking the line of the Highland Boundary Fault. This forms a transition and a dramatic backdrop to the expansive low-lying Howe of the Mearns to the south, outside of LLZ 1. The high plateaux is extensively covered by heather and grass moorland. It is uninhabited, which emphasises its remote character. The B974 (Old Military Road) crosses the eastern part of this LLZ. The lack of large-scale development adds to the sense of openness, exposure and remoteness within this LLZ. However, the construction of the consented Glendye Wind Farm will influence this sense of remoteness. A wide range of vistas are experienced from this LLZ, including across the Howe of the Mearns and to the coast, while prominent hills like Clachnaben form key foci in the landscape. The popular viewpoint at Cairn o' Mount is within this LLZ.
Key Characteristics	• Upland plateaux with a smooth rolling landform and rounded hill summits covered with expansive heather and grass moorland; • The steep southern slope of the expansive upland, forming a rugged ridge; • The B974 (Old Military Road) offers commanding views to the Howe of Mearns and is popular with walkers; • More remote character experienced in the less modified parts of the LLZ, away from the B974 (Old Military Road); • Elevated southern views across the expansive low-lying farmed and settled Howe of the Mearns.
Landscape Value	This LLZ falls within designated areas of the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA and Breas of the Mearns SLA (discussed below in paragraph 6.5.13 – 6.5.19). The landscape is popular for hill walking and is appreciated for its scenic qualities, distinctive landform and remote character. Landscape value is considered to be High.

Table 6.7: LLZ 2 – Forested Foothills

	
LLZ 2 overlooking felled area and forested foothills.	
Description	The majority of the northern and eastern parts of the study area falls within this LLZ. This LLZ encompasses the smooth rolling foothills blanketed with coniferous forests. Settlement is focused near the southern edge of this LLZ and takes the form of small, clustered farms along local access roads. A few recreational routes pass through this LLZ.
Key Characteristics	• This landscape forms a gradual transition between adjacent uplands of LLZ1 and the coastal farmlands to the east, outwith the LLZ; • Coniferous forestry covers wide parts of this LLZ; • Green pasture extends into narrow valleys on the fringes of the forested foothills that characterise the area; and • Recreational routes popular with walkers are present with this LLZ.
Landscape Value	This LLZ's characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any particular features or attributes considered to be of regional or national importance. Landscape value is considered to be Low-Medium.

Table 6.8: LLZ 3 – Farmed Ridges

	
LLZ 3 overlooking agricultural land	
Description	The majority of the southeastern farmland within the study area falls within this LLZ. This area is characterised by sweeping rolling low hills gently sloping away towards the east, with narrow ravines with watercourses running through them. The farmlands form a geometric patchwork of fields occasionally defined by broadleaf shelterbelts and woodlands which emphasise the landform. Coniferous forestry is present in the form of small blocks within areas of semi-natural grassland or scrub. Settlement is well established within the landscape, comprised of farmsteads and scattered properties. OHL structures are present within this LLZ as are single wind turbines.
Key Characteristics	• Large fields of arable land and pasture with red-pink soils present a rich tapestry of colours with the strong patchwork pattern influenced by different crops and ploughed fields; • Sparse woodland with coniferous shelterbelts planted on some ridges; • Broadleaf woodlands, although small, commonly emphasise the landform, tracing water courses or planted on knolls; • Scattered settlement pattern with varied architectural styles accessed by a network of minor roads; • Single wind turbines; and • Views south-westwards across the Howe of the Mearns.
Landscape Value	This LLZ overlaps with the Braes of the Mearns SLA for a short section of its western edge within the study area, however it does not incorporate the more sensitive characteristics of this SLA. The LLZ has some local value for the vistas over the open landscape towards the coastline and Howe of the Mearns. Overall landscape value is considered to be Low-Medium.

Protected and Designated Landscapes

- 6.5.8 Landscapes can be ascribed an international, national, regional or local designation that recognises the importance of the landscape for its scenic interest or attractiveness. Areas of landscape may also be protected by planning policy at either a national or regional level.

National Context:

- 6.5.9 There are no nationally designated landscapes within the 1.5 km study area.

Regional Context:

- 6.5.10 SLA is a landscape designation applied by Aberdeenshire Council through the development planning process to landscapes identified as being of regional or local importance. The Special Qualities (SQ's) of Aberdeenshire SLAs are identified in Appendix 13 of the Aberdeenshire LDP¹⁶.

- 6.5.11 Approximately 3.7 km of the western section of the Proposed Development lies within the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA. Further to the east, two small sections of the western and central parts of the Proposed Development, totalling approximately 2.4 km, overlap with the northern fringe of the Braes of the Mearns SLA (see **Figure 6.2 - Designated and Protected Landscapes with ZTV**).

- 6.5.12 The easternmost part of the Proposed Development does not lie within any designated or protected landscapes.

Braes of the Mearns (SLA)

- 6.5.13 The northern fringe of the Braes of the Mearns SLA would overlap with the study area and approximately 2.4 km of the Proposed Development would cross through this SLA. Within the study area, the SLA contains Cairn o' Mount Hill and scenic viewpoint, which is a popular stopping place, and the southern, steep slopes of Whitelaws, Thorter and Goyle Hills which form the northern fringe of the Mounth.

- 6.5.14 This SLA as a whole is appreciated for encompassing an important combination of two distinctive landscapes. The dramatic, moorland landscape displays some wildness qualities and forms the rugged ridged background that contrasts with the flat, farmed and settled valley of the Howe of the Mearns. The ridge of the Mounth exhibits the juxtaposition along the Highland Boundary Fault, which in the wider context marks the division between the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland. The southern, settled and farmed area of this SLA near the Howe of Mearns is valued for its heritage and long-established wooded estate landscapes. The strong structure of beech woodlands and avenues add to the sense of place and history. The open, exposed views across the Howe of Means enhance the sense of isolation and contribute to its scenic qualities. Its recognition as an SLA emphasises its generally **High** landscape value.

- 6.5.15 The key features for which Braes of the Mearns SLA has been recognised are listed below:

- Strong contrast between the distinctive flat Howe and the dramatic ridge of the Mounth to the north;
- Clear expression of the Highland Boundary Fault, where Highland and Lowland Scotland meet;
- Intact farmed landscape of the Howe of the Mearns, with a strong structure of beech woodland and avenues along the foot of the slopes;
- Highly visible ridge viewed from across the landscape to the southeast, including from the A90, which defines the Howe of the Mearns;
- Cairn o' Mount scenic viewpoint, a popular stopping place on the hill road with views across the Howe;

¹⁶ Aberdeenshire Council Local Development Plan 2023 (Online) Available at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2023> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

- Strath Finella, an intimate wooded glen leading into the hills;
- Wooded estate landscapes including Fasque, Fettercairn and Drumtochty; and
- Well known literary associations of the Howe of Mearns, including the work of Lewis Grassie Gibbon.

Clachnaben and Forest of Birse (SLA)

- 6.5.16 The Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA covers the northwestern part of the study area including Rough Bank, Meluncart and Kircram Hills, which form an expansive upland heather moorland and sheltered glen landscape of high naturalness and wildness qualities. Approximately 3.7 km of the Proposed Development would cross through this SLA.
- 6.5.17 In the wider context, the SLA encompasses rolling upland hills of Forest of Birse, stretching towards the Cairngorms National Park to the west, to the edge of the Dee Valley to the north. This SLA includes part of upland Mounth to the west and the prominent and distinctive craggy hill of Clachnaben, north of Glen Dye valley.
- 6.5.18 This SLA is characterised by its scenic qualities created by an open expanse of rolling uplands, strong rolling relief, distinctive hill profiles and extensive areas of heather moorland. The area is largely uninhabited and inaccessible, except on foot. This is a highly valued landscape, which is appreciated for its scenic qualities, its distinctive landform, its remote character and popularity for hillwalking. Its recognition as an SLA further emphasises its generally **High** landscape value.
- 6.5.19 The features for which the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA has been recognised are listed below:
- Strong, rolling relief of the upland landscape, including highly distinctive hill profiles, the most recognisable of which is the crag of Clachnaben;
 - Uninterrupted natural landcover of heather moorland across most of the area, with forestry on the fringes;
 - Forest of Birse includes a range of habitat types, including the community-owned Commonly Pinewoods;
 - A widely visible landscape, forming the backdrop to Deeside to the north, and with the landmark of Clachnaben seen from miles around;
 - The long minor road into Ballochran ends at the remote Forest of Birse Kirk, with historic links over The Fungie, an ancient way linking Deeside with Glen Tarf;
 - Expansive area which continues seamlessly westwards into the Glen Tanar Forest area in the Cairngorms National Park; and
 - Clachnaben is a popular hill summit, with views across the whole of this landscape and beyond. Remote Mount Battock is the most easterly of the Corbetts (hills over 2500 feet) within this area, and there are several hill ascents accessible from Ballochran.

- 6.5.20 The consented Glendye Wind Farm will be located within this SLA and will influence these qualities.

6.6 Baseline Conditions: Visual Amenity

Interpretation of the ZTV

- 6.6.1 The ZTV (see **Figures 6.1a-e**) indicates that the surrounding topography would help contain the visual envelope of the Proposed Development within a radius of approximately 0.5-1.5 km. The ZTV shows more extensive coverage to the south in the eastern parts of the study area, where the Proposed Development sits somewhat elevated above the farmlands to the south. Slightly wider theoretical visibility is also indicated in the western part of the study area, across the upland plateaux. However, areas of woodland and coniferous

forestry particularly in the central and eastern parts of the study area would partially reduce the extent of visibility in these areas.

Visual Receptors

- 6.6.2 Visual receptors are limited within the study area and comprise residents or visitors present in and around linear groupings of properties and those using local routes through the study area (including transport and recreational routes) who may obtain a view of the Proposed Development. The visual receptors within the 1.5 km study area which fall outwith the ZTV coverage are scoped out of further assessment as no visual effects are anticipated. All visual receptor locations are identified in **Figures 6.4a-e** and described below.

Building-based Receptors

- 6.6.3 The building-based receptors with ZTV coverage within the 1.5 km study area have been broadly divided into four groups from which similar views of the Proposed Development, or construction of the Proposed Development, could theoretically be obtained:

Building-based Receptor Group B1: Bogburn, Corsebould, and West Bogton (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.6.4 Building-based receptors within this grouping are located to the south of the Drumtochty coniferous forestry plantation. Main views from receptors within this group are generally situated to take best advantage of the open, elevated views southward across undulating fields, shelterbelts and small woodlands, with single or small groups of wind turbines and OHL structures being common features in the view. Views to the north, northeast and northwest are typically contained by coniferous forestry. Views from buildings are often limited or screened by farm outbuildings and filtered by garden vegetation. Evidence of forestry, agricultural management activity and associated traffic are also evident in existing views.

Building-based Receptor Group B2: Mains of Glenfarquhar, Denside, Glenfarquhar Lodge, Tippetty, Chapelton, and Bogincaber (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.6.5 Main views from within this receptor grouping are typically orientated to take best advantage of views to the south, with northerly views relatively contained by rising landform. Farm outbuildings, garden vegetation, mixed woodlands and shelterbelts limit or filter some views. Existing OHLs and some single turbines are present in existing views.

Building-based Receptor Group B3: Mains of Inchbreck, Bogton, Brawliemuir, Bogjurgan and Cleuchhead (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.6.6 Main views from within this receptor grouping are typically orientated to take best advantage of open views to the south, with northerly views relatively contained by rising landform. Coniferous forestry is visible in views to the northeast and west. Farm outbuildings, garden vegetation, mixed woodlands and shelterbelts limit or filter some views. Existing OHLs and some single turbines are present in existing views southward.

Building-based Receptor Group B4: East Town Farm, Quithel and Cuttiesouter (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.6.7 Building-based receptors within this grouping are located to the south of the Fetteresso coniferous forestry plantation. Main views from within this receptor grouping are typically orientated to take best advantage of open views to the south, with northerly views contained by coniferous forestry. Farm outbuildings, garden vegetation, mixed woodlands and shelterbelts limit or filter some views. Existing OHLs and some single turbines are present in existing views southward.

Route-based Receptors

- 6.6.8 Route-based receptors include those using public roads and recreational users of tracks and other established walking routes who may experience views of the Proposed Development. Views from the following routes have

been identified within the 1.5 km study area for inclusion within the assessment based on the ZTV and are classified into two different categories, public roads and recreational routes.

Public Roads

Route R1: B974 (Old Military Road) (see **Figure 6.4b**)

- 6.6.9 This route offers shifting views, from those contained by landform to elevated, long range, panoramic views across upland moorlands and prominent hills to the west, coniferous forested hills to the east, and of the Howe of the Mains to the south. OHL infrastructure and wind turbine tips are present on the skyline in views to the east and the consented Glendye Wind Farm turbines would be visible to the west. Wider views from the northern section of the route within the study area are partially contained by landform, whilst views to the south are contained by Cairn o' Mount.

Route R2: Minor Public Road - Annamuick - Mains of Inchbreck - Glenfarquhar Lodge - Mains of Glenfarquhar (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.6.10 This route offers distant views primarily in a southerly direction across geometric, rolling hills divided by small woodlands and shelterbelts. Similar, but less distant views are seen to the north, where the eye is drawn along the skyline near Hill of Bogjurgan. Through the western part of the route, a large section is contained by coniferous forest and landform along the roadside which contains views. As the road continues eastward, the views shift, offering glimpsed or filtered views through roadside shelterbelt trees and vegetation, before eventually opening up and providing more elevated views that extend across the wooded foothills and farmlands, particularly to the south. Wind turbines and OHL infrastructure is present within existing views from this route.

Recreational Routes

Route R3: Strachan to Auchenblae by the Builg Mounth (Scottish Hill Track (SHT) 196) (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.6.11 The Proposed Development would cross this SHT where it transitions from the containment of coniferous forestry to the north to the more open section to the south. At lower elevations the route partially follows the Bervie Water watercourse, affording views along its valley setting. Existing views from the route feature farmland demarcated by broadleaf shelterbelts, the forested foothills to the north, and OHL infrastructures and wind turbines to southeast.

Route R4: Strachan to Glenbervie by the Stock Mounth (SHT 197) (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.6.12 Most of this route runs through the coniferous forest within the northern part of the study area. The views obtained from southern section of this route are filtered by roadside vegetation/ broadleaf shelterbelts and mature garden vegetation. The route ascends in a northeasterly direction where elevated views are afforded across the valley setting. Views to the south include wind turbines and OHL infrastructure.

Route R5: Banchory to Glenbervie by the Cryne Corse Mounth Track (SHT 198) (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.6.13 The majority of this route is contained by the coniferous forest in the northern part of the study area. Some more open views are afforded through patches of recent felling. As the route descends southward it opens up and views are obtained across undulating fields, and feature wind turbines and OHL infrastructure.

Outdoor Receptors

Outdoor Location O1: Cairn o' Mount (see **Figure 6.4b**)

- 6.6.14 This receptor represents the viewpoint and associated car park noted on the OS map, paths leading up to the Scheduled Monument and views from the Scheduled Monument.

6.6.15 The Cairn o'Mount area affords elevated, expansive views across Howe of the Mearns to the southeast, upland plateaux moorlands to the west and the popular summit Clachnaben and other hills to the northwest. However, local topographic changes across the receptor mean that not all of these views are obtained at the same time. Views from the viewpoint are focussed to the south and east, with distant views possible out to sea, whereas views to the west and north are limited by landform. More panoramic views are obtained from the Scheduled Monument (Cairn o'Mount cairns), and the consented Glendye Wind Farm would be visible to the northwest from this area. The existing Mid Hill Wind Farm development, OHL infrastructure, coniferous forestry and farmlands are all seen in easterly views from the Scheduled Monument area.

6.7 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects: Landscape

6.7.1 This section of the LVIA provides an assessment of the effects that the Proposed Development would have on the landscape character and designated and protected landscapes within the study area during construction and operation, in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in **Section 6.4**. Assessment of potential effects on each identified LLZ (see **Figure 6.3**) are presented below in **Tables 6.9 – 6.11**, followed by an assessment of the potential effects on the SQ's of the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA, and Braes of the Mearns SLA (**Tables 6.12 – 6.13**).

Assessment of Effects on Local Landscape Zones

Table 6.9: LLZ 1 – Upland Plateaux

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this LLZ which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: • Upland plateaux with a smooth rolling landform and rounded hill summits covered with expansive heather and grass moorland; • The B974 (Old Military Road) offers commanding views to the Howe of Mearns and is popular with walkers; and • More remote character experienced in the less modified parts away from the B974 (Old Military Road).
Landscape Sensitivity	This LLZ falls within the Braes of Mearns SLA and the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA. This is a valued landscape, susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed. However, it is anticipated that the sensitivity would be decreased due to the construction and operation of the consented Glendye Wind Farm within this LLZ. Sensitivity is considered to be Medium-High.
Potential Effects	The western section of the Proposed Development is located within this LLZ. Potential effects which may result to this LLZ comprise: • Construction works would temporarily disturb existing groundcover; • Construction activities or permanent features could introduce a new focal point or distraction within open vistas across the upland plateaux; and • Construction activities or permanent features could reduce the sense of remoteness.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	The Proposed Development would directly affect part of the LLZ. The ZTV indicates that intervisibility would be largely contained within a shallow depression within the wider landscape. Greater numbers of poles would be perceptible from higher slopes, although they would result in a more noticeable change at lower elevations in closer proximity. Construction works would be likely to form a new focus due to the appearance of construction vehicles and equipment, additional movements and activities related to the construction of temporary and permanent access tracks, poles, and overhead line installation resulting in a notable change in a localised part of the LLZ ranging to a

	perceptible change across a wider area which would be lessened during operation, following reinstatement works. Given the presence of the consented Glendye Wind Farm in the wider area (which, as noted above, is treated as part of the baseline), the introduction of a steel trident pole OHL is unlikely to introduce a dominant feature or notably change the landscape character in the wider context over the longer term. The containment of the surrounding upland landscape would limit potential wider intervisibility of the OHL and permanent tracks, following reinstatement works. Magnitude of change would be Medium during construction, reducing to Low-Medium during the operational stage.
Significance of Effect	The LLZ is largely uninhabited and lacks built features apart from the B974 and the consented Glendye Wind Farm on which the Proposed Development is dependant. During construction, the Proposed Development would lead to an increased sense of development and movement within a concentrated area. Although the LLZ would be already affected to some degree by the consented Glendye Wind Farm within the wider landscape, the works would extend the area of activity and influence of development further eastward which may lead to a localised reduction of the remote qualities of the area. Once construction and reinstatement works are complete, these influences would be somewhat reduced and the area would continue to maintain some qualities of remoteness, due to its elevated and exposed character and the surrounding rugged, unmanaged terrain. The Proposed Development is not predicted to noticeably change the wider character of the landscape as the effects would be relatively contained by the surrounding landform. Due to the localised influence of the works within the LLZ, the effect is predicted to be Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant) during construction of the Proposed Development, reducing to Minor (not significant) during operation.

Table 6.10: LLZ 2 - Table 6.7: LLZ 2 – Forested Foothills

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this LLZ which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: • Large blocks of coniferous forest; • A patchwork of green pasture extending high into narrow valleys on the fringes of the foothills.
Landscape Sensitivity	This LLZ is somewhat valued and has a composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change to the type of development proposed. Due to the extensive coverage of commercial forestry, ongoing felling operation and presence of existing wind turbine development, the sensitivity to development (of the type proposed within this LLZ) is somewhat reduced. Sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low - Medium.
Potential Effects	The northern and eastern section of Proposed Development is located within this LLZ. Potential effects which may result to this LLZ comprise: • Construction and operation of the Proposed Development, including the creation of an operational corridor through areas of woodland and forestry that could reduce the sense of enclosure.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	The Proposed Development would run largely parallel to the southern boundary of this LLZ. Construction works would be evident within this LLZ. However, they would resemble the ongoing felling operations in the area and would therefore not appear out of character within the forest setting. The construction traffic would use a combination of existing forestry tracks, new permanent tracks and temporary tracks to enable access to the construction area. Although any temporary works areas would be reinstated upon completion, an operational corridor would need to be maintained through the commercial forestry for the safe operation of the overhead line. In the context of existing and proposed wind farm developments within the wider landscape beyond the boundaries of the LLZ, the Proposed Development would

	introduce a limited change in landscape characteristics overall. However, locally the Proposed Development would be visible, particularly from the south running along the edge of the commercial forestry. Magnitude of change would be Low-Medium during construction, reducing to Low during operation.
Significance of Effect	Although the ZTV shows quite widespread intervisibility within this LLZ, it would likely be largely contained or backdropped by the existing forestry. During construction, there would be an increase in activity around the Proposed Development, which would lead to an increase in the presence of construction related activity within a localised part of this LLZ. The Proposed Development would run parallel to the southern boundary of the LLZ where the commercial forestry starts to transition to sloped farmland to the south. The Proposed Development would have a more noticeable influence to the south where it would form a clear boundary between the Forested Foothills LLZ and the Farmed Ridges and Hills LLZ (LLZ3). The presence of commercial forestry and wind farm development within and surrounding the LLZ means that although the Proposed Development would increase the presence of infrastructure, it is unlikely to change the intrinsic, relatively modified landscape character of this LLZ. Due to the localised influence of the Proposed Development within the LLZ and presence of extensive commercial forestry, the effect is predicted to be Minor Adverse (not significant) during construction and operation.

Table 6.11: LLZ 3 – Farmed Ridges

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this LLZ which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: • An open landscape of smoothly rolling ridges and shallow valleys; • Large fields of arable land and pasture with a patchwork pattern influenced by different crops and ploughed fields.
Landscape Sensitivity	A reasonably valued landscape influenced by electricity infrastructure within the LLZ and wind developments within adjacent landscapes. The landscape of broad, rolling farmland is considered to have potential to accommodate a relatively large degree of change of the type proposed without change to the intrinsic character. Sensitivity is therefore considered to be Low-Medium.
Potential Effects	Potential effects which may result to this LLZ comprise: • The introduction of the Proposed Development within an adjacent LLZ may affect the perception of the transition from farmland to coniferous forestry; • Introduction of Proposed Development within the adjacent LLZ would increase the perception of electricity infrastructure from within this LLZ which could lead to an increased sense of development with the wider landscape.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	There would be some indirect change to this LLZ, resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development within the adjacent LLZ to the north. During construction, there would be an increase in construction related activity to the north of the LLZ and along existing and upgraded tracks and temporary access tracks through the LLZ leading to the construction area. In the longer term, the Proposed Development would be visible against the skyline to the north, from parts of the LLZ. The Proposed Development would result in a perceptible increase in the sense of electricity related development within the wider landscape as it is perceived from the LLZ. However, it would not change the intrinsic landscape character of the LLZ. The magnitude of change is therefore considered to be Low during construction and Negligible-Low during operation.

Significance of Effect	The Proposed Development would be accommodated within the wider local landscape pattern and scale. Construction traffic passing through the LLZ to access the Proposed Development would increase the sense of activity within the landscape, however this would reduce during operation. During operation the Proposed Development would be perceived in the context of existing OHL infrastructure and wind turbines within the wider landscape. Although it would increase the sense of development surrounding the LLZ, it would not change the intrinsic landscape character of the LLZ. The effect is therefore anticipated to be Minor Adverse (not significant) during both construction and operation.
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Assessment of Effects on Designated and Protected Landscapes

Table 6.12: Braes of the Mearns SLA

Assessment of Potential Effects on Special Qualities			
Special Quality	Sensitivity	Potential Effects	Magnitude of Change
Strong contrast between the distinctive flat Howe and the dramatic ridge of the Mounth to the north.	High	The Proposed Development would not affect the landform or appearance of the dramatic ridge of the Mounth seen from Howe of Mearns. It would be contained within a natural dip and would not be visible from the Howe of Mearns. Therefore, minimal impact on the strong contrast between these two distinctive landscapes is anticipated.	Low
Clear expression of the Highland Boundary Fault, where Highland and Lowland Scotland meet.	High	There would be no visibility or effect of the Proposed Development on the clear expression of the Highland Boundary Fault.	Negligible
Intact farmed landscape of the Howe of the Mearns, with a strong structure of beech woodland and avenues along the foot of the slopes.	Medium	The Proposed Development would not affect the beech woodlands or avenues of Howe of Mearns further south outwith the study area.	Negligible
Highly visible ridge viewed from across the landscape to the southeast, including from the A90, which defines the Howe of the Mearns.	High	The Proposed Development would be contained by topography and forestry and would be unlikely to affect any appreciation of the landscape from the A90.	Negligible
Cairn o' Mount scenic viewpoint, a popular stopping place on the hill road with views across the Howe.	High	The ZTV indicates that there is very limited theoretical visibility from the OS marked viewpoint. Although the Proposed Development would be present in open vistas northward and north westward from the cairn, it would not intrude on views south across the Howe from the marked viewpoint and car park. In the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm development, the Proposed Development is not anticipated to introduce a notable change in views northward from the cairn.	Low
Strath Finella, an intimate wooded glen leading into the hills.	Medium	There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from Strath Finella.	Negligible

Assessment of Potential Effects on Special Qualities			
Wooded estate landscapes including Fasque, Fettercairn and Drumtochty.	Medium	Although the Proposed Development would cross through Drumtochty Forest, the wooded estate landscape associated with Drumtochty Castle does not fall within the study area.	Negligible
Well known literary associations of the Howe of the Mearns including the work of Lewis Grassic Gibbon	Medium	The study area of the Proposed Development does not overlap with the Howe of Mains. It is unlikely to affect any appreciation of the landscape associated with the literary work of Lewis Grassic Gibbon.	Negligible
Assessment of Landscape Effects			
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a highly valued landscape, closely associated with geographical features of national importance. Open views northward from the Cairn o'Mount area would be susceptible to change given the simplicity of the landscape. Landscape sensitivity to change of the type proposed is considered Medium .		
Magnitude of Change	There would be limited, direct change to the northern edge of the SLA, where approximately 3.7 km of the OHL elements of the Proposed Development would be situated within the SLA, with indirect changes occurring due to intervisibility with the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be noticeable within close proximity from higher, open slopes. However, forest cover to the east would reduce the extent of the area affected, compared to that covered by the ZTV. Construction of the Proposed Development and tracks within the northern edge of the SLA existing forest would result in a temporary and localised, but perceptible change within the SLA. In the longer term, the Proposed Development would be relatively contained by the surrounding landform, reducing its influence on the SLA. Changes in the landscape to the north of Cairn o'Mount would be seen beyond the SLA and in the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm, and in the opposite direction from views across the Howe. The special qualities of the SLA are most strongly prevalent across the core part of the SLA where the influence of the Proposed Development would be limited and is therefore unlikely to introduce discernible changes. Magnitude of change to the SLA would therefore be Low during construction and Negligible-Low during operation.		
Effect Significance	There would be some direct effects to relatively small parts of the northeastern edge of the SLA within the context of and adjacent to commercial forestry, which are not strongly demonstrative of its special qualities. Increased construction related activity would be experienced within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, as well as from some nearby elevated areas. This may appear somewhat out of place, but given the context of commercial forestry it is unlikely to reduce the scenic quality of the SLA overall. Overall, the surrounding upland hills would contain the intervisibility of the Proposed Development and its construction. Therefore, the Proposed Development is not anticipated to result in any discernible reduction in special qualities or intrinsic character of the SLA. The special qualities of the SLA are stronger within the core part of the SLA which would be largely unaffected by the Proposed Development. As such, effect of the Proposed Development on the Braes of the Mearns SLA is therefore considered to be Minor Adverse (not significant) during both construction and operation.		

Table 6.13: Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA

Assessment of Potential Effects on Special Qualities			
Special Qualities	Sensitivity	Potential Effects	Magnitude of Change
Strong, rolling relief of the upland landscape, including highly distinctive hill profiles, the most recognisable of which is the crag of Clachnaben.	High	The Proposed Development would not affect the landform, and the proposed poles would not be visible on the skyline of any of the distinctive hill profiles.	Negligible
Uninterrupted natural landcover of heather moorland across most of the area, with forestry on fringes.	High	Construction works and the introduction of new steel poles and permanent and temporary tracks would locally disturb the landcover of the existing moorlands. Reinstatement works would help re-establish naturally occurring species within affected moorland areas, thus reducing the longer-term changes within the landscape.	Low-Medium
Forest of Birse includes a range of habitat types, including the community-owned Commonly Pinewoods, which are being positively managed and is an important habitat for bird life.	High	The Forest of Birse lies outside of the study area and would be unaffected by the Proposed Development.	Negligible
A widely visible landscape, forming the backdrop to Deeside to the north, and with the landmark of Clachnaben seen from miles around.	High	The Proposed Development would be unlikely to affect any appreciation of the landscape in long distant views. The proposed poles would be visible from localised areas within this SLA, however topography would contain intervisibility from more distant areas. The scale of the poles would be unlikely to distract from the appreciation of Clachnaben.	Low
The long minor road into Ballochran ends at the remote Forest of Birse Kirk, with historic links over The Fungle, an ancient way linking Deeside with Glen Tarf.	Low	There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from Ballochran, Forest of Birse Kirk, Deeside or Glen Tarf.	Negligible
Expansive area which continues seamlessly westwards into the Glen Tanar Forest area in the Cairngorms National Park.	High	There would be no visibility of the Proposed Development from the Glen Tanar Forest area in the Cairngorms National Park, and it is unlikely to affect the seamless transition to this area.	Negligible
Clachnaben is a popular hill summit, with views across this landscape and beyond. Remote Mount Battock is the most easterly of the Corbetts (hills over 2500 feet), and there are several	High	These summits fall outwith the study area, and as such any potential influence of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be limited by distance.	Low

Assessment of Potential Effects on Special Qualities			
hill ascents accessible from Ballochan.			
Assessment of Landscape Effects			
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a highly valued landscape. The long vistas obtained from elevated areas, as well as the tranquillity of the less accessible hills and sheltered glens would be particularly susceptible to change. The construction and operation of the consented Glendye Wind Farm would somewhat reduce the sensitivity of this part of the SLA. Landscape sensitivity to change of the type proposed is therefore considered to be Medium-High .		
Magnitude of Change	There would be direct change within the SLA related to the introduction of new steel poles within the otherwise uninterrupted upland landscape. However, the immediate surrounding slopes would contain the influence of the Proposed Development, typically providing a backdrop for the poles. A 3.7 km section of the Proposed Development would traverse the expansive eastern part of this SLA and would present a notable change within a localised area. However, the Proposed Development in this area would be experienced in the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm which would heavily influence the area, and therefore it is not anticipated that it would result in a notable change over an extensive area. Construction of the Proposed Development would result in disturbance to the heather landcover of existing moorlands. Reinstatement works of temporary infrastructure and disturbed ground would help restore naturally occurring species of heather across the area, reducing the longer-term changes. The magnitude of change to the SLA during construction is Medium and Low – Medium during operation.		
Effect Significance	The Proposed Development would have direct effects on this SLA resulting from the introduction of new OHL infrastructure into an uninterrupted upland landscape, characterised by open expanses of rolling upland and heather moorlands. However, the Proposed Development would not affect the core part of the SLA where its special qualities are most strongly experienced, due to distance (over 1.5 km) and topographic screening. The construction activity may appear locally intrusive, resulting in a temporary reduction in scenic quality. In the longer term, the introduction of the Proposed Development would form a new feature within this SLA. However, the influence of the Proposed Development would be largely contained by surrounding landform and experienced in the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm in the southeastern part of the SLA. It is considered that any effects would be localised and would not affect the SLA as a whole. Therefore, effects on this SLA are anticipated to be Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant) during construction and Minor Adverse (not significant) during operation.		

Summary of Effects on Landscape Receptors

- 6.7.2 A summary of the effects on landscape receptors during construction and operation is provided below in **Table 6.14**. For the purposes of the LVIA, effects with a rating of **Moderate or greater** are considered to be significant.

Table 6.14: Summary of Landscape Effects

LCT	Level of Effect (Construction)							Level of Effect (Operation)						
	Negligible	Negligible - Minor	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major	Negligible	Negligible - Minor	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Major	Major
LLZ1 – Upland Plateaux				•						•				
LLZ2 – Table 6.7: LLZ 2 – Forested Foothills			•							•				
LLZ3 – Farmed RidgesTable 6.8: LLZ 3 – Farmed Ridges			•							•				
Braes of the Mearns SLA			•							•				
Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA				•						•				

- 6.7.3 No significant effects are predicted to any of the LLZs or either SLA within the study area. Whilst there would be some direct effects, these would be very localised. During construction, some temporary Minor-Moderate Adverse effects are anticipated for LLZ1 - Upland Plateaux and Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA. Minor Adverse effects were identified for LLZ2 – Forested Foothills, LLZ3 – Farmed Ridges, and Braes of Mearns SLA. During the operational phase of the Proposed Development, when temporary access tracks would be removed and reinstatement of disturbed ground would be complete, it is anticipated that effects on landscape receptors would be somewhat reduced.

6.8 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects: Visual Amenity

- 6.8.1 This section of the LVIA discusses the findings of the detailed visual assessment undertaken for the Proposed Development. It evaluates and describes the likely changes to existing views from buildings, routes and outdoor receptors during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development and the extent to which these changes would affect the visual amenity of residents, visitors and other users of the landscape in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in **Section 6.4**.

Building-based Receptors

- 6.8.2 Four building-based receptor groups were included in the assessment as described in **Section 6.6.3 - 6.6.7** and shown on **Figures 6.4a-e**. The groups were broadly divided based on the likelihood that they would experience similar effects due to their positioning and proximity to the Proposed Development. Visual effects for receptors at these locations are described below.

Building-based Receptor Group B1: Bogburn, Corsebauld and West Bogton (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.8.3 This receptor grouping sits to the approximately 100 m south of the OHL components of the Proposed Development at the closest point. During construction there would be an increase in works related activity to the north and rear of these properties in close proximity. This would include increased use of existing access tracks and the construction and use of temporary and permanent tracks near Bogburn and Corsebauld. Felling in areas of woodland and forestry would be required to establish and maintain an operational corridor for safe working around the Proposed Development. This may include felling along the woodland edge which would be seen from this receptor grouping. Although agricultural and forestry management activities already occur in the

area, due to their close proximity, the construction works would result in a temporary but noticeable increase in activity within existing views, albeit mainly in rear views from properties to the north.

- 6.8.4 Magnitude of change from this **Medium** sensitivity receptor group would be **Medium-High** during construction and **Low-Medium** during operation. The visual effect from this receptor group is anticipated to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction and **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Building-based Receptor Group B2: Mains of Glenfarquhar, Denside, Glenfarquhar Lodge, Tipperty, Chapelton and Bogincaber (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.8.5 Within this receptor group, main views are generally orientated in a southerly direction away from the Proposed Development, which would be largely seen backclothed by forestry or landform in rear views. The Proposed Development would sit approximately 600 m away at its closest point. During construction there would be an increase in works related activity to the north and rear of these properties. This would include increased use of existing access tracks and the construction and use of temporary tracks. Felling required along the forestry edge to create and maintain the operational corridor would likely appear similar to existing forestry management activities taking place in the area. Existing commercial forestry would screen some parts of the Proposed Development, particularly north of Chapelton. Elsewhere, coniferous forestry would provide some screening or form a backdrop for the steel poles from most properties within this grouping. Intervening shelterbelts and mature vegetation around properties would provide additional screening or filtering of the OHL components of the Proposed Development from some properties.

- 6.8.6 Considering the existing electricity infrastructure present in views southward, and forestry and agricultural management already present in the views, it is anticipated the Proposed Development would form a perceptible feature within rear views, but that it would not result in a noticeable deterioration to views from properties within this receptor group.

- 6.8.7 Magnitude of change for this **Medium** sensitivity receptor group would be **Medium** during construction and **Low** during operation. The visual effect for this receptor group is anticipated to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during both construction and operation.

Building-based Receptor Group B3: Mains of Inchbreck, Bogton, Brawliemuir, Bogjurgan and Cleuchhead (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.8.8 This receptor grouping sits the south of the OHL components of the Proposed Development, approximately 200 m at its closest point at Cleuchhead. From this receptor grouping, the section of the OHL between Bogton and Bogjurgan would appear against the skyline. During construction there would be an increase in works related activity to the north and rear of these properties. This would include increased use of existing access tracks and the construction and use of temporary and permanent tracks. During operation, temporary tracks would be reinstated. Although the OHL would remain visible against the skyline in rear views from much of this receptor grouping, given the presence of existing OHL infrastructure and single wind turbines in existing views to the south, this would not introduce a new type of feature into the landscape.

- 6.8.9 Magnitude of change from this **Medium** sensitivity receptor group would be **Medium-High** during construction and **Low-Medium** during operation. The visual effect from this receptor group is anticipated to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction and **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Building-based Receptor Group B4: East Town Farm, Quithel and Cuttiesouter (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.8.10 Main views are generally orientated in a southerly direction away from the Proposed Development, which would be seen backclothed by forestry or landform. Construction related activities would be perceptible in northern, largely rear views from receptors in this grouping. Considering the existing electricity infrastructure present in views southward, and forestry and agricultural management already present in the views, it is anticipated the

Proposed Development would form a perceptible feature within the view, but that it would not result in a noticeable deterioration to views from properties within this receptor group. Existing commercial forestry would screen the easternmost parts of the Proposed Development. Intervening shelterbelts and mature vegetation around properties would provide additional screening or filtering of the Proposed Development from some properties.

- 6.8.11 Magnitude of change for this **Medium** sensitivity receptor group would be **Low-Medium** during construction and **Low** during operation. The visual effect for this receptor group is anticipated to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during both construction and operation.

Route-based Receptors

- 6.8.12 Five routes were identified for inclusion in the assessment as described in **paragraphs 6.6.8 – 6.6.13** (see **Figures 6.4a-e**). Visual effects for receptors using these routes are described below.

Route R1 – B974 (Old Military Road) (see **Figure 6.4b**)

- 6.8.13 The Proposed Development would be clearly visible from much of the route within the study area, particularly in close proximity to the point where the OHL would oversail the B974. Local landform would help to contain views from the southernmost part of the route, for those travelling northwards along the route. During construction, the steel poles, temporary access tracks and sections of permanent track close to the road, coupled with construction activity, would likely form a distracting focus within views, particularly for those travelling southbound. Once construction was complete, the Proposed Development would be seen as a horizontal line of infrastructure crossing the moorland, although reinstatement of disturbed ground from temporary work areas would help to lessen its influence. This would particularly be the case for those travelling southbound. For those travelling northbound, the OHL elements would only be visible for a short section of the route (just over 1 km), before they moved into rear views. As the OHL crosses the route, the closest poles would appear prominent to users of the route, especially during the construction phase. However, they would become less noticeable at greater distances and seen in increasingly oblique views. The coniferous forest to the east would screen more distant sections of the Proposed Development in this direction, particularly for those travelling southbound. Although the Proposed Development would introduce an OHL into western views, extending infrastructure closer to the route, this would be seen in the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm turbines.

- 6.8.14 The sensitivity of this route is considered to be **Medium**. Magnitude of change would be **Medium-High** during construction, and **Low-Medium** during operation. The resultant effect is predicted to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction, and **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Route R2 – Minor Public Road - Annamuick - Mains of Inchbreck - Glenfarquhar Lodge - Mains of Glenfarquhar (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.8.15 The Proposed Development would be located to the north of this route and would not affect the main southerly views. Visibility from the western part of this route is somewhat limited by roadside vegetation, intervening properties, farm outbuildings, small woodlands and shelterbelts. There would be some views from this route of construction activity which would appear more frequent, but visually similar to existing traffic related to forestry and agricultural activities. The Proposed Development would be clearly visible between Mains of Inchbreck and East Town Farm (approximately 2.7 km of the route within the study area) where it would be seen against the skyline to the north, rather than backclothed by forestry as it would from most of the rest of the route.
- 6.8.16 Given the presence of other electrical infrastructure in the wider area and distance from receptors (approximately 0.9 km – 1.2 km), the addition of the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in a notable change within the view.

- 6.8.17 The Magnitude of change for this **Medium** sensitivity receptor would be **Low-Medium** during construction and **Low** during operation. The visual effect is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction and operation.

Route R3 – Strachan to Auchenblae by the Builg Mounth (SHT 196) (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.8.18 The Proposed Development would cross this Scottish Hill Track where it transitions between the containment of coniferous forestry to the north and the more open southern section. The Proposed Development would be largely screened from the northern part of this route within the study area by a combination of topography and forestry. The Proposed Development would have a greater influence on northbound recreational users before they enter the forestry, where poles would be seen against the forest edge. For those travelling southbound, it would be visible in close proximity as the Proposed Development crosses the route. However, it would quickly move into rear views where it would be less influential and where existing OHL infrastructure would be seen in main views southward.

- 6.8.19 Where the Proposed Development crosses the route, construction activities would be seen in close proximity introducing some distracting features into the experience of the route. However, these works would be temporary.

- 6.8.20 Magnitude of change for this **Medium** sensitivity receptor would be **Medium** during construction due to the close proximity to construction activity for a small part of the route and **Low - Medium** during operation. Effects for this receptor are predicted to be **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during construction, and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

Route R4 – Strachan to Glenbervie by the Stock Mounth (SHT 197) (see **Figure 6.4d**)

- 6.8.21 Construction activities, including felling to create an operational corridor, would be noticeable within close proximity from a small part of this route as the Proposed Development crosses it. These activities would likely appear similar to ongoing forestry management taking place in the surrounding area. Commercial forestry would screen views from the majority of the route. However, there may be some more distant views of the Proposed Development from the southern parts of the route towards Bogjurgan Hill and Corsebauld, where the poles would be seen as oblique and backdropped by the forestry within the wider context.

- 6.8.22 During the operational stage, the closest poles and operational corridor through the commercial forestry would be clearly seen as the Proposed Development crosses the route, however wider and more distant views would be contained.

- 6.8.23 The magnitude of change for this **Medium** sensitivity receptor would be **Low** during construction and **Low** during operation. The significance of effect is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction and operation.

Route R5 – Banchory to Glenbervie by the Cryne Corse Mounth Track (SHT 198) (see **Figure 6.4e**)

- 6.8.24 Construction activity associated with the Proposed Development would be largely screened by commercial forestry from the majority of this route. However, it would be seen in close proximity from the southernmost part of the route near Hill of Quithel. From this part of the route felling to create the operational corridor further to the east would appear similar to existing forestry operations. During operation, the Proposed Development would largely be screened from this route or seen against a background of commercial forestry for a very short section (less than 0.5 km) from the southern starting point. Although recent felling may afford more open views, these would reduce as these areas are replanted as part of ongoing forestry management plans.

- 6.8.25 The Proposed Development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration to the visual amenity of this route. The magnitude of change for this

Medium sensitivity receptor would be **Low** during construction and **Low** during operation. The significance of effect is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during construction and operation.

Outdoor Location Receptor

- 6.8.26 One outdoor location was identified for inclusion in the assessment, where potential views of the Proposed Development may be obtained (see **Figure 6.4b**).

Outdoor Location O1 – Cairn o' Mount (see **Figure 6.4b**)

- 6.8.27 Although the elevated position of this outdoor receptor grouping affords open views across the surrounding landscape, visibility of the nearest proposed poles from the more elevated area (around the Scheduled Monument itself) would be limited by their position at a lower elevation, where intervening landform would provide screening (see **Figures 3.2 a-b: VL1 - Cairn o' Mount Scheduled Monument (Volume 3a)**). More distant poles would be seen to the northwest in the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm and to the northeast towards Goyle Hill. While the area immediately to the north is less influenced by man-made structures, the Proposed Development would be seen within the context of other man-made features such as deer fencing, roads, OHL infrastructure and wind turbines that are present within the wider area. The Proposed Development would not be seen from the marked viewpoint itself which is focussed on views southward.
- 6.8.28 Given the context of the consented Glendye Wind Farm and the presence of other wind turbines and electric infrastructure in distant views, the magnitude of change for this **Medium-High** sensitivity receptor is predicted to be **Low - Medium** during construction and **Low** during operation. Effects for this receptor are anticipated to be **Minor - Moderate Adverse** (not significant) during construction and **Minor** (not significant) during operation.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 6.8.29 A summary of the effects on visual receptors during construction and operation is provided below in **Table 6.15**. Significant effects are those identified as being **Moderate** or greater.

Table 6.15: Summary of Visual Effects

Visual Receptor Type	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Operation)					
	Negligible	Negligible - Minor	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Major	Negligible	Negligible - Minor	Minor	Minor - Moderate	Moderate	Major
Building-based Receptors	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
Route-based Receptors	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	4	1	-	-
Outdoor Locations	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Totals	-	-	5	2	3	-	-	-	7	3	-	-

6.9 Cumulative Effects

- 6.9.1 Cumulative effects are those which occur where the effects of more than one development of a similar type within a particular landscape combine to produce a greater level of effect.

6.9.2 With respect to inter project cumulative effects, the following proposed developments have been identified with the potential to affect the landscape character or visual amenity of the 1.5 km study area (as shown on **Figure 6.5 Cumulative Developments with ZTV**):

- Glendye Wind Farm (consented);
- Fetteresso Wind Farm (consented); Craig Neil Wind Farm (consented);
- 'Hydroglen' Green Hydrogen Production Facility (James Hutton Institute)
- Hurlie 400 kV Substation, Fetteresso Forest (application submitted);
- Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL (application Submitted))
- The Waters (Glenbervie) Battery Energy Storage Facility (BESS) (pre-application);
- Quithel BESS (pre-application)
- Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Cable Connection and Substation (pre-application);
- SSEN Transmission Offshore Grids Project (including Hurlie potential area for offshore connections) (pre-application);
- Network Rail Drumlithie (pe-application)
- Fiddes 132 kV Project (pre-application);
- Fetteresso 132 kV Substation Extension (pre-application); and
- Fetteresso Wind Farm Grid Connection / Access Corridor (pre-application)

6.9.3 There is insufficient information available as to what other work may be ongoing at the time that the Proposed Development is being constructed to allow for a reasonable assessment of cumulative effects during construction. Therefore, the cumulative assessment has focussed on operational effects only.

6.9.4 The Proposed Development would be closely associated with and dependant on the construction of the consented Glendye Wind Farm and as such, this has been considered within the baseline for the landscape and visual assessment.

6.9.5 The UGC sections of the connection are covered under permitted development and assessed separately (see **Appendix 1.1**). Long-term effects of the UGC sections are unlikely to be perceptible during the operational stage and therefore the intra cumulative effects have not been considered further in this assessment.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

6.9.6 During operation, the cumulative baseline would see the introduction of a number of developments that may influence landscape receptors that are also affected by the eastern part of the Proposed Development.

6.9.7 Under the cumulative baseline there would be a cluster of electricity related developments that would fall within the easternmost part of the study area. The forested character of LLZ2 – Forested Foothills would limit the wider effects of the proposed Hurlie 400 kV Substation Development, and the potential Fetteresso 132 kV Substation Extension and Hurlie Offshore Connection. The intervisibility between the Proposed Development, the Quithel BESS, the Waters BESS, Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL and Bowndun Offshore Wind Farm Connection in particular, would result in an increase in the perceived prominence of electrical infrastructure within a localised area around Hill of Quithel within LLZ3 – Farmed Ridges.

6.9.8 Cumulative baseline developments that would fall outwith or on the edge of the central part of the study area include Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL, Fetteresso Wind Farm and Herscha Hill Wind Farm. There would be limited influence of Fetteresso Wind Farm on the areas affected by the Proposed Development due to screening provided by commercial forestry within LLZ2 – Forested Foothills. The Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL and the Herscha Hill Wind Farm 2 turbines would likely influence a wider area of LLZ3 – Farmed Ridges given their elevated position and extent respectively. The addition of the Proposed Development would result in

an increased presence of electricity related development within LLZ2 and LLZ3. However, given the scale of the Proposed Development compared to the cumulative baseline, the effect of its addition would be similar to that of the Proposed Development alone.

6.9.9 Although there may be some distant intervisibility of the consented Fetteresso Wind Farm from the B974 as it runs through LLZ1 – Upland Plateaux, the Braes of the Mearns SLA or the Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA, no notable cumulative effects are predicted for these landscapes in relation to the addition of the Proposed Development. No other cumulative developments were identified within the 1.5 km study area which would be likely to affect the portions of these landscape receptors falling within the study area. The cumulative effects for these landscapes are therefore predicted to be similar to those identified for the Proposed Development alone.

6.9.10 Predicted inter cumulative landscape effects are detailed below in **Table 6.16**. Effects of Moderate or greater are significant.

Table 6.16: Cumulative Effects

Landscape Area	Predicted Cumulative Landscape Effects
LLZ 1	Minor Adverse (not significant)
LLZ 2	Minor Adverse (not significant)
LLZ 3	Minor Adverse (not significant)
Braes of the Mearns SLA	Minor Adverse (not significant)
Clachnaben and Forest of Birse SLA	Minor Adverse (not significant)

Cumulative Visual Effects

6.9.11 Some visual receptors within receptor groups B3, B4, as well as receptors travelling along Route R2, would likely see the Proposed Development within the same view as the following cumulative sites:

- Quithel BESS;
- The Waters BESS;
- Herscha Hill Wind Farm 2;
- Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Cable Connection and Substation; and
- Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL.

6.9.12 The Proposed Development would increase levels of development when seen in addition to the cumulative baseline, particularly in the eastern part of these receptor groups. It is anticipated that cumulative effects from the addition of the Proposed Development to these receptors B3 and B4 would be slightly higher than for the Proposed Development on its own but would be unlikely to change the effect rating. Receptor R2 would experience a slighting increase in effect from Minor (not significant) to Minor-Moderate (not significant)

6.9.13 Fetteresso Wind Farm would likely be visible in the distance to the east from the B974 (R1). The Proposed Development would be seen in a different part of the view and in closer proximity, particularly as it crosses the route. The Cairn o'Mount summit area outdoor receptor (O1) would experience similar visibility of the Proposed Development in combination with Fetteresso Wind Farm. The addition of the Proposed Development would increase the sense of development from this route, but given the distance to Fetteresso Wind Farm and proximity to the Proposed Development, cumulative effects from these two receptors (R1 and O1) are unlikely to be greater than for the Proposed Development on its own.

- 6.9.14 The addition of the Proposed Development would result in sequential cumulative effects from route receptors R3 and R4 with Fetteresso Wind Farm, which would be located to the north of the study area within forestry. From the southern stretches of these routes, and from visual receptor groups B1 and B2, the Proposed Development would be seen in addition to Herscha Wind Farm 2 and the Tealing to Kintore 400 kV OHL. However, these two cumulative developments would be seen in the distance, beyond the study area and in opposite views to the Proposed Development. The addition of the Proposed Development may result in a small increase in the sense of development along these routes (R3 and R4), but the effect rating is unlikely to be greater than the Proposed Development on its own.
- 6.9.15 The Quithel BESS and the Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Cable Connection and Substation are located in close proximity to the southern access to route receptor R5. The addition of the Proposed Development to this area would increase the spread of electricity related infrastructure, but it is unlikely to lead to a greater level of effect than would occur from the Proposed Development alone.
- 6.9.16 Predicted inter cumulative visual effects for relevant receptors are detailed below in **Table 6.17**. Effects of Moderate or greater are significant.

Table 6.17: Cumulative Visual Effects

Visual Receptor Location	Predicted Cumulative Effects
B1: Bogburn, Corsebauld, and West Bogton	Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant)
B2: Mains of Glenfarquhar, Denside, Glenfarquhar Lodge, Tippetty, Chapelton, and Bogincaber,	Minor Adverse (not significant)
B3: Mains of Inchbreck, Bogton, Brawliemuir, Bogjurgan, and Cleuchhead	Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant)
B4: East Town Farm, Quithel, and Cuttiesouter	Minor Adverse (not significant)
R1: B974 - Old Military Road	Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant)
R2: Minor Public Road - Annamuick - Mains of Inchbreck – Glenfarquhar Lodge - Mains of Glenfarquhar	Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant)
R3: Strachan to Auchenblae by the Builg Mounth (SHT 196)	Minor Adverse (not significant)
R4: Strachan to Glenbervie by the Stock Mounth (SHT 197)	Minor Adverse (not significant)
R5: Banchory to Glenbervie by the Mounth Track (SHT 198)	Minor Adverse (not significant)
O1: Cairn o`Mount	Minor Adverse (not significant)

6.10 Mitigation

Embedded Mitigation: Approach to Routeing and Alignment

- 6.10.1 Much of the mitigation for landscape and visual purposes has been embedded in the design of the Proposed Development, in the form of the route and alignment selection process. This process is discussed in detail within **Chapter 2 – The Routeing Process and Alternatives**. In general, the alignment has been designed to conform with topography and minimise potential prominence on ridgelines or fragmentation of areas of distinctive landscape character where possible. Care has also been given to minimise the potential prominence of the Proposed Development in views from properties, routes and outdoor locations.

Embedded mitigation: Implementation Stage Mitigation – Best Practice

- 6.10.2 Mitigation measures to be considered during the implementation of the Proposed Development would include the use of best practice construction and restoration techniques, as would be detailed within the finalised CEMP.
- 6.10.3 The sensitive reinstatement of areas disturbed during construction would be fundamental to ensuring the Proposed Development would be successfully accommodated into the existing landscape in the longer term. The construction methods for steel trident poles generally result in limited disruption to the existing vegetation. However, where relevant, natural regeneration would be the preferred method for the restoration of any vegetated areas disturbed during the construction works. This would require the careful stripping, separation, storage and handling of turves and soil / peat prior to construction works commencing, and careful restoration in the correct horizons once works have completed. It is proposed that wherever possible, slopes would be carefully graded to marry smoothly into the adjacent landform and avoid abrupt changes in slope. As far as possible, gradients would be suitable for the replacement of excavated soils.
- 6.10.4 Given the generally upland and forest setting of the Proposed Development, and the absence of longer-term significant effects, no specific mitigation planting is considered necessary.

6.11 Residual Effects

- 6.11.1 The assessment of operational effects takes into account the likely benefits of the embedded mitigation measures discussed above and therefore the operational effects identified can be considered representative of residual effects.

6.12 Summary

- 6.12.1 This Chapter has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape (including character, designated or protected sites) and on views (experienced by residents, recreational users and road users) within a 1.5 km study area, as well as the consideration of cumulative effects as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline.
- 6.12.2 A small number of limited landscape and visual effects are predicted within 1.5 km of the Proposed Development, but in general, the Proposed Development is not likely to lead to any notable degree of change to the existing landscape and visual resource either during its construction or operation. The potential for cumulative effects with other developments proposed within the local area has been considered and is unlikely to lead to any significant landscape or visual effects.
- 6.12.3 The LVIA has concluded that there would be temporary significant visual effects arising from the Proposed Development during its construction, affecting the views obtained from the R1 (B974 Road) and from some properties within receptor groups B1 (Bogburn, Corsebauld, and West Bogton) and B3 (Mains of Inchbreck, Bogton, Brawliemuir, Bogjurgan, and Cleuchhead). However, with successful restoration of construction areas, the operational effects of the Proposed Development are predicted to be **not significant**. Consequently, no significant operational landscape and visual effects have been identified.