

## VOLUME 5: CHAPTER 8: CULTURAL HERITAGE – ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENT

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### Figures (Volume 2 of this EIA Report)

Figure V5-8.1: Cultural Heritage – Alternative Alignment

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

Figure V5-VL7a-c: Visualisation Location 7 – Bighouse Garden Pavilion

### Visualisations to The Highland Council (THC) Guidelines (Volume 3b of this EIA Report)

Figure V5-VL7a-e: Visualisation Location 7 – Bighouse Garden Pavilion

### Appendices

There are no appendices associated with this Chapter.

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## 8. CULTURAL HERITAGE – ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENT

### 8.1 Executive Summary

- 8.1.1 This Chapter assesses the potential for both direct and indirect impacts on cultural heritage assets from both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development with the Alternative Alignment and reaches conclusions as to the predicted likely significance of effects. The effects associated with the construction phase can be considered to be representative of worst-case decommissioning effects, and therefore no separate assessment of decommissioning has been undertaken as part of this assessment. However, dismantling works associated with the redundant parts of the existing overhead line (OHL) have been considered as part of this assessment.

#### *Cultural Designated Sites*

- 8.1.2 Within a 3 km outer study area for the Alternative Alignment, 14 designated heritage sites were identified, which are of National heritage importance (High sensitivity) to indirect visual impacts or impacts on setting. The designated heritage sites identified comprise of 11 listed buildings and three scheduled monuments. The majority of these designated heritage sites would not be subject to visibility of the Alternative Alignment, or are in practical terms of low sensitivity to indirect impacts and as such have been scoped out of detailed assessment as agreed with statutory consultees, and are therefore not addressed in this Chapter. Potential indirect impact on one Category A Listed Building (Bighouse Garden Pavilion and Walled Garden) has been examined in more detail, and the assessment has concluded that indirect effects on this designated site as a result of construction or operation of the Alternative Alignment would be **Minor Adverse** and **not significant**.

#### *Cultural Heritage Assets*

- 8.1.3 Seven non-designated heritage assets were identified within or immediately outside an inner study area, defined by the Limits of Deviation of the Alternative Alignment, along sections of the alignment which are consistent with the Proposed Alignment. These heritage assets date from the prehistoric period to the era of commercial sheep farming in the early 19th century. The potential for unidentified archaeological remains is considered to be low to negligible. A number of other minor features of Local or Negligible heritage importance (Low or Negligible sensitivity) were identified within the inner study area, comprising dykes and areas of peat cutting, but are not addressed in detail in this evaluation as any indirect impact from the Alternative Alignment would be considered to be of negligible significance.
- 8.1.4 The assessment concluded that there would be **no significant direct or indirect effects** on any of the heritage assets identified within or immediately outside the inner study area as a result of the construction or operation of the Alternative Alignment. Nevertheless, the implementation of best practice mitigation measures would still be applied to ensure the heritage assets are not vulnerable to accidental damage during construction.

### 8.2 Introduction

- 8.2.1 This Chapter assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development with the Alternative Alignment on designated and non-designated cultural heritage assets and reaches conclusions as to the predicted likely significance of effects. It details the results of desk-based and field survey and draws on information and comments provided by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and The Highland Council (THC) during the scoping process.
- 8.2.2 The Proposed Development with the Proposed Alignment is assessed in **Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**. Where relevant, this Chapter refers to **Volume 1: Chapter 10** where the text applies to both the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment.

- 8.2.3 This assessment considers the potential for both direct impacts, meaning those that have potential to physically disturb or damage heritage features within or immediately outside an inner study area, defined by the Limits of Deviation (LoD) of the Alternative Alignment, and indirect impacts, meaning those which can adversely affect the historic setting of heritage features via the Alternative Alignment's visibility from each feature or its curtilage (within the inner and outer study areas).

*Statement of Qualifications*

- 8.2.4 The assessment has been undertaken by field archaeologist and cultural heritage consultant Catherine Dagg who is an Associate of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. A table presenting relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Volume 4: Appendix V1-5.1: EIA Team Details**.

### 8.3 Scope of Assessment

- 8.3.1 This Chapter considers effects on designated sites which are taken to include Scheduled Monuments; Listed Buildings; Inventory gardens; Designed landscapes; and Inventory battlefields. It also considers non-designated heritage assets which are taken to include recorded and unrecorded archaeological sites and areas of archaeological, historical and cultural significance; previously unevaluated policies and designated landscapes; and other elements of cultural heritage.

*Study Area*

- 8.3.2 Two study areas appropriate to the scale and nature of the Alternative Alignment have been adopted for the cultural heritage assessment, as shown on **Volume 2: Figure V5-8.1: Cultural Heritage – Alternative Alignment**, and set out below. The inner study area considers both direct and indirect effects, whilst the outer study area considers indirect effects only.

Outer Study Area

- 8.3.3 Following review of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) model for the Alternative Alignment, the outer study area for indirect effects (i.e. effects on setting) extends to 3 km either side of the OHL. This was considered appropriate to identify those heritage sites with statutory or non-statutory designations that could have their setting adversely affected by the Alternative Alignment.

Inner Study Area

- 8.3.4 The inner study area, to locate and define archaeological features with the potential for direct impacts, was formed by the location of the Alternative Alignment infrastructure and set as a corridor within the defined LoD, as set out in **Volume 5: Chapter 3: The Proposed Development – Alternative Alignment**. This includes 100 m steel lattice OHL LoD (50 m either side of the centreline of the OHL), 50 m track LoD (25m either side of the centreline of proposed new access tracks), 100 m cable sealing end compound LoD (from the outer edge), 100 m underground cable (UGC) LoD (50 m either side of the centreline of the UGC), and 100 m temporary wood pole OHL (50 m either side of the centreline of the OHL).
- 8.3.5 The potential for previously unrecorded minor features of land use within the inner study area, which may be associated with recorded cultural heritage assets, but are located immediately outside the inner study area has been taken into account in the assessment.

*Effects Scoped Out of Assessment*

- 8.3.1 The issues scoped out of the assessment are the same as detailed within **Section 10.3 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.

## 8.4 Consultation and Scoping

- 8.4.1 Full details of the consultation process and responses are included in **Volume 1: Chapter 4: Scope and Consultation** and associated appendices.
- 8.4.2 Further details on consultation and scoping responses for cultural heritage, which are common to both the Proposed and Alternative Alignments of the Proposed Development are summarised in **Table V1-10.1 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.
- 8.4.3 **Table V5-8.1** sets out additional comments received from consultees in relation to cultural heritage for the Alternative Alignment, and the actions taken to address them within this assessment.

**Table V5-8.1: Consultation Responses**

Organisation & Date	Summary of Consultation Response	EIA / Design Response to Consultee
<b>Historic Environment Scotland</b> 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2024	HES require that a photomontage of vistas from the Bighouse garden pavilion and walled garden category A Listed Building be provided to enable an informed evaluation of potential visual impacts and impacts on setting.	This has been produced and included in <b>Volume 3a: Figure V5-7a-c: Visualisation Location 7 – Bighouse Garden Pavilion</b> and <b>Volume 3b: Figure V5-7a-e: Visualisation Location 7 – Bighouse Garden Pavilion</b> and is referred to in section 8.9 below.

## 8.5 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 8.5.1 This assessment has been undertaken with reference to relevant national and local legislation, policy and guidance, which are set out in **Section 10.5 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.

## 8.6 Methodology

### *Desk Based Evaluation*

- 8.6.1 The desk study methodology is set out in **Paragraph 10.6.2 in Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.

### *Field Survey*

- 8.6.2 A summary of the field surveys that have been used to inform this cultural heritage assessment is provided in **Paragraphs 10.6.3 to 10.6.5 in Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.

### *Assessment of Effects*

- 8.6.3 This assessment has been undertaken in accordance with current guidance and further details are provided in **Paragraphs 10.6.6 to 10.6.14 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**.
- 8.6.4 The purpose of the Alternative Alignment is to avoid conflict with the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub by providing an alignment that goes around rather than through this development. This assessment therefore assumes a baseline with the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub being present.

## 8.7 Baseline Conditions

### *Overview*

- 8.7.1 The Alternative Alignment would be located within three distinct areas in terms of cultural heritage assets. The western and eastern extents of the Alternative Alignment are located within sheltered and relatively fertile river valleys which were settled continuously from the prehistoric period but mostly depopulated in the 19th century, the lack of subsequent development leaving a relict landscape of monuments and settlements. The higher

moorland between the two straths has provided little opportunity for historic land use other than summer grazing and peat cutting.

- 8.7.2 The western strath, that of the River Strathy, provides a relatively narrow corridor of settlement where both prehistoric structures, in the form of hut circle settlements dating back to the Bronze Age, and Early Modern townships, occupy the same ground, exploiting the same resources. This pattern is repeated on the east side of the strath, that of the Halladale River. By contrast, the western slopes of Strath Halladale have, for the most part, been avoided by early Modern settlement, but allow for scattered prehistoric remains including defensive sites such as Melvich Broch (CANMORE id. 6904) and Havaig Fort (CANMORE id. 6898), which were both strategically located to control movement through the strath. A mediaeval cross slab (CANMORE id. 6929) is located on the hillside to the west of the River Strathy indicating a mediaeval Christian presence but with no associated ecclesiastical structures or traditions.
- 8.7.3 The central section of high moorland contains, in terms of cultural heritage, a small number of individual shieling structures, generally constructed of turf and poorly defined within the landscape, large areas of peat cuttings and associated peat tracks and ephemeral turf dykes which probably date to the 19th century period of commercial sheep farming. Only one heritage site, at Airigh an Leathaid (CANMORE id. 86986), suggests a possibly short-lived attempt to utilise the moorland for cultivation.
- 8.7.4 After the clearance of the population of both straths to make way for commercial sheep farming, only shepherd's cottages were established and occupied, contemporary with stells, fanks, enclosures and the many long banks and dykes that rise from the rivers to divide the higher ground. Subsequent to this, the only impact on this landscape has been afforestation with the first commercial forestry block at Strathy North planted in the early 1970s. While most of the archaeological record relating to the periods of settlement and land use listed above survive outwith the planted areas, some minor features have been completely covered by coniferous planting. However, the archaeological landscape of the two straths, and the high ground between, survives for the most part in open ground, unaffected by more modern development.
- 8.7.5 The mid-18th century mansion house of Bighouse, with its associated formal gardens and other features, was built for the Mackays of Strath Halladale and Bighouse at a date when social ostentation became more important than defence. The formal placing of garden features would possibly have incorporated a relationship with features in the wider natural landscape.

#### *Designated Cultural Heritage Assets*

- 8.7.6 Although there are 14 designated sites within the 3 km outer study area, as discussed in **Paragraphs 10.3.6 to 10.3.8 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**, the majority of these sites have been scoped out of detailed assessment as they either would have no direct or insignificant visibility of the Alternative Alignment, or are considered to be of low practical sensitivity to indirect impacts, being place in the landscape for practical purposes such as accessibility of resources (hut circle settlement), or proximity to the local population (schools, churches, manse). The exception to these criteria has been identified as:
- **Bighouse, Garden Pavilion and Walled Garden** Listed Building, Category A (LB7160): This small building, located on the east wall of the walled garden associated with Bighouse, has a west-facing front facade and there may have been an original purpose to include vistas towards the hills to the west into its design. However, these vistas are now almost entirely screened by later buildings and mature trees. The height of the garden wall, primarily providing shelter, also has the effect of blocking views from the garden to the surrounding hills, the only open view having been originally through the west gate which is located directly opposite the garden pavilion. To the south of the gateway a short section of western horizon is visible over the buildings and in a gap between the trees; this would be increased in winter when the trees are bare of leaves. This asset is of National importance and high sensitivity to impacts on setting.

### *Non-Designated Cultural Heritage Assets*

8.7.7 All recorded heritage assets located within or just outside the inner study area are listed below and displayed on **Volume 2: Figure V5-8.1**.

- **Site 1: Bowside Lodge**, cairnfield (Canmore id. 6930). An area of prehistoric cultivation consisting of approximately ten disturbed field clearance piles with no associated hut circle or other settlement features, centred on NC 8312 6094. Local importance and low sensitivity.
- **Site 2: Clais Fearna**, hut circle (MHG 9673 and Canmore id. 6921). One isolated prehistoric hut circle prominently located on a slight knoll on the hillside rising from the Alltan nam Muc, at NC 8352 6207. Scattered features of cultivation in the form of small field clearance piles have been noted to the north of the hut circle. Regional importance and medium sensitivity.
- **Site 3: Airigh an Leathaid**, farmstead (MHG 13407 and Canmore id 86986). Substantial footings of three rectangular drystone buildings at NC 8419 6230 with a low length of field boundary wall extending eastwards and an area of improved ground to the north. The possible presence of a corn kiln would suggest year-round Early Modern occupation although an alternative interpretation would be an early 19th century shepherd's station. Regional importance and medium sensitivity.
- **Site 4: Allt na h'Eaglais**, cairnfield (MHG 9697 and Canmore id. 6897). Area of prehistoric cultivation marked by scattered field clearance cairns centred on NC 8843 6105. There are no associated hut circles or other contemporary features. Local importance and low sensitivity.
- **Site 5: Havaig Fort**<sup>1</sup> (MHG 9696 and Canmore id.6898). Occupying the southern end of a narrow ridge are the faint traces of walling of a possibly Iron Age fortification. This would appear to be prominently placed to control Strath Halladale, with clear intervisibility with Melvaig broch to the north and a distant view of Ben Grianm Beag hillfort to the south. The small internal area would suggest a signalling station rather than an occupied fort. Regional importance and medium sensitivity.
- **Site 6: Allt na h'Eaglais**, field system (MHG 19731). Located on a relatively steep east facing slope immediately to the west of the existing access track, is an unusual set square and rectangular field enclosure. There is no known parallel to this type of field system in the Highland region and the site is of unknown date. As a non-designated asset it would be assigned a category of Regional importance and medium sensitivity, but the potentially unique nature of the feature would give it a potential National importance, and high sensitivity to direct impacts.
- **Site 7: Kirkton** township, enclosure, burial ground and chapel site<sup>2</sup> (MHG 18610 and Canmore id. 86996). Early mapping would suggest there was a township in this general location although the visible archaeology is probably all 19th century or later. This broad area would be considered to be of Regional importance and Medium sensitivity to both direct and indirect impacts.

8.7.8 A number of other minor features of Local or Negligible heritage importance (low or negligible sensitivity) were identified within the inner study area, as displayed on **Volume 2: Figure V5-8.1**. These heritage assets comprise dykes, areas of peat cutting and associated access tracks. The dykes are interpreted as being of early to mid-19th century in date, associated with the division of the hill grazing during the period of commercial sheep farming. The peat cuttings and tracks are likely to have been in use into the 20th century. Any direct impact from the Alternative Alignment on these features would be considered to be of negligible significance.

## **8.8 Embedded Mitigation**

8.8.1 Details are provided in **Section 10.8** of **Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage** and are applicable to the Alternative Alignment.

<sup>1</sup> Referred to as Loch A' Bhealaich on the Canmore database

<sup>2</sup> **Volume 5: Chapter 4: Landscape and Visual – Alternative Alignment** is of relevance to this asset because it identifies and assesses potential visual effects on Kirkton Cemetery.

8.8.2 Subsequent sections of this Chapter assume that the embedded mitigation would be fully implemented.

## 8.9 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

### *Direct Impacts - Inner Study Area*

8.9.1 The potential for direct impacts on non-designated cultural heritage assets during the construction phase of the Alternative Alignment are set out below:

8.9.2 **Site 1: Bowside Lodge** and **Site 4: Allt na h'Eaglais**. Both heritage assets represent areas of prehistoric cultivation with no associated settlement, considered to be of local importance and low sensitivity to direct impacts. The Alternative Alignment would pass directly through these two areas and it is assumed that there may be a degree of direct damage to some visible features of these heritage assets. Any damage to these two heritage assets would be considered to be of Low magnitude and the significance of potential direct impact is considered to be **Negligible** and **not significant**.

8.9.3 **Site 2: Clais Fearna** (hut circle) and **Site 3: Airigh an Leathaid** (farmstead) are located immediately outwith the inner study area and no direct impacts are predicted for these regionally important (with medium sensitivity) heritage assets during construction or operation of the Alternative Alignment. As such the significance of potential direct impact is considered to be **Negligible** and **not significant**. There is potential that minor unrecorded associated features (in the form of cultivation) with these two heritage assets may be located within the inner study and there may be potential for a degree of direct damage to some of these features during construction of the Alternative Alignment. Therefore, the implementation of best practice mitigation measures (as detailed in **Section 10.8 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**) would still be applied to Sites 2 and 3 to ensure heritage assets are not vulnerable to accidental damage during construction.

8.9.4 **Site 5: Havaig Fort** is of Regional importance and therefore medium sensitivity and is located outwith the inner study area. As direct damage or destruction is not anticipated, the magnitude of impact is therefore considered to be negligible. Nevertheless, the implementation of best practice mitigation measures (as detailed in **Section 10.8 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**) would still be applied to ensure this heritage asset is not vulnerable to accidental damage during construction. The significance of this potential impact is considered to be **Negligible** and **not significant**.

8.9.5 **Site 6: Allt na h'Eaglais** field system is located immediately to the west of proposed upgrade of an existing access track. This heritage asset is considered to be potentially of national significance and high sensitivity, and thus the significance of any direct impact would be Major and significant. However, implementation of mitigation measures, as detailed in **Section 10.8 of Volume 1: Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage**, would ensure that direct impacts are avoided and the significance of potential direct impacts is therefore considered to be **Negligible** and **not significant**.

8.9.6 **Site 7: Kirkton** township, enclosure, burial ground and chapel site located near an existing track proposed to be upgraded. The likelihood of sub-surface features being located along the area proposed for the track upgrade is considered to be low. This heritage asset is considered to be of Regional importance and medium sensitivity and therefore the significance of potential direct impact is considered to be **Minor** and **not significant**. However, the potential for archaeological remains in the broader area is higher and any use of this area, particularly to the east near the burial ground and chapel site, has greater potential for negative direct impact on sub-surface features and indirect, visual impact on the setting of the burial ground.

8.9.7 Direct impacts are predicted on a number of unrecorded archaeological features of local significance or less, considered to have negligible sensitivity to direct impacts. These impacts would consist of damage to small sections of linear dykes, upgrade of existing access tracks and crossing of areas of former peat cuttings. The significance of these direct impacts is considered to be negligible.



- 8.9.8 No direct impacts on cultural heritage assets are anticipated from the dismantling works of the redundant parts of the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL or the temporary diversion works required to construct the Alternative Alignment.

*Indirect Impacts – Inner Study Area*

- 8.9.9 There may be a degree of indirect visual impact on the setting of **Site 5: Havaig Fort**, from built elements of the Alternative Alignment during the operational phase. Vistas northwards from the fort to Melvaig broch have been identified as key elements in the setting of this heritage asset. This was taken into consideration during the design stage when considering the siting of individual towers to minimise impacts. While the vista northwards would be narrowed, it would not be directly obstructed by the location of towers 56 and 57 to the north of the fort, and towers would be located at a lower elevation (see **Volume 2: Figure V5-8.1**). Havaig Fort is considered to be of Regional importance (medium sensitivity) to indirect impacts. The magnitude of this potential indirect impact is considered to be Low. The significance of potential indirect impact is considered to be **Minor Adverse** and **not significant**.

*Indirect Impacts – Outer Study Area*

- 8.9.10 One designated site, the Category A Listed Building Bighouse Garden Pavilion and Walled Garden (LB7160) is of High sensitivity to indirect effects and has been considered for potential visual impact. Views towards the Alternative Alignment are for the most part screened by intervening buildings and vegetation. Only one narrow section of western horizon is visible from the garden pavilion, with potential partial visibility of two towers at a distance of 2 km in addition to partial visibility of one turbine associated with the Melvich Wind Energy Hub (see **Volume 3a: Figure V5-7a-c: Visualisation Location 7: Bighouse Garden Pavilion** and **Volume 3b: Figure V5-7a-e: Visualisation Location 7: Bighouse Garden Pavilion**). Significance of this visual impact would depend on the degree to which visibility of this section of horizon and hillside was incorporated as a design feature of the garden pavilion and the garden itself. The height of the garden walls and planting of trees would suggest that this was not the case and that the proposed significant vistas from the garden pavilion were either restricted to the garden itself or opened in a limited fashion to the wider landscape through the gateways. As the Alternative Alignment is not visible through the west gateway, the magnitude of indirect impact is therefore considered to be Negligible. The significance of potential indirect impact is considered to be **Minor Adverse** and **not significant**.

**8.10 Cumulative**

- 8.10.1 Cumulative indirect effects on one designated site, the Category A Listed Building Bighouse Garden Pavilion and Walled Garden (LB7160), are considered only in relation to the vista westwards where a gap in the intervening trees allows a narrow view of the western horizon. In addition to the partial view of two towers of the Alternative Alignment, the blades of one wind turbine associated with the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub would also be visible. However, for the same reasons as given above in Paragraph 8.9.10, the magnitude of a cumulative indirect impact of both the Alternative Alignment and Melvich Wind Energy Hub is considered to be Negligible. The significance of potential cumulative indirect impact is therefore considered to be **Minor Adverse** and **not significant**.

**8.11 Summary and Conclusions**

- 8.11.1 An assessment has been made of the predicted significance of effects of the Alternative Alignment on cultural heritage interests. This assessment identified no significant direct or indirect effects, assuming the application of best practice mitigation measures.

**8.12 References**

CFA Archaeology Ltd (2006). Cultural Heritage, Strathy North Wind Farm Environmental Statement. Prepared for Scottish and Southern Energy Generation Limited.

Headland Archaeology Ltd (2011). Cultural Heritage, Strathy Wood Wind Farm Environmental Statement. Prepared for RWE Renewables

Dagg C. (2012). Cultural Heritage, Strathy North Wind Farm. Prepared for Scottish and Southern Energy Generation Limited.

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Dagg C. (2012) Strath Halladale to Dallangwell 132 kV OHL. Prepared for Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc