

Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Works

Consideration of the Highland Council's OWESG Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Study

October 2022



CONSIDERATION OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL'S OWESG LOCH NESS LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY STUDY

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 *The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)*¹ details The Highland Council (THC) policy and guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual amenity, ten criteria are identified in the OWESG to be used by THC as a framework and focus for assessing wind energy development proposals. These criteria are specific to wind energy development and are therefore not directly relevant to the Proposed Development, and therefore are not detailed in this appendix. They have nevertheless been considered through the design and assessment process as informative background for landscape and visual considerations, in highlighting key constraints and sensitivities to development.

1.1.2 Section 5.2 of the OWESG includes the *Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Study* which identifies Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. These aspects are considered in this appendix in relation to the Proposed Development, as requested by THC in their pre-application advice.

1.2 Key Views

1.2.1 Key Views identified in the OWESG are detailed in **Table 1** which identifies those of potential relevance to the Proposed Development and potential for effects.

Table 1: Appraisal of Key Views included in the OWESG Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key View (as noted in OWESG: p39-41)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Loch Ness West: "End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking southwest"	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Loch Ness East: "End-to-end Views over Loch Ness looking Northeast"	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Urquhart Castle from Loch: "Water-level views looking up at Castle"	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Urquhart Castle Land Based: "Generally elevated views looking towards the castle from above"	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Loch Ness from Urquhart Castle: "Views primarily towards the North east and Urquhart Bay"	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh: "Principal views are NE and SW up and down the Great Glen"	The Proposed Development would not be perceptible from the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, whereby it would either be screened by landform, or very distant (over 8.5 km) and likely screened by forestry (near Dundreggan).	No

¹ The Highland Council (2017). *Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance*. November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017)

Key View (as noted in OWESG: p39-41)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Loch Tarff 'Local Hero' location: "View west-north-west from "passing place east of Loch Tarff"	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
A87 viewpoint above Loch Garry: "Panoramic views, easily accessible by tourists. Across Great Glen, east to the rolling uplands"	As above.	No
A887T Views west: "Not a 'point view' but a corridor from which the sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience", relevant to "views west from points west of Achlain", which is situated in Glenmoriston.	The Proposed Development would not result in significant effects for receptors on the A887 (see Appendix 4.2: Visual Assessment Tables for assessment of A887 as Route R1). It would not change the overall "transitional experience" of travelling west on the A887, given that it would be barely perceptible for the majority of the route, and perceptible from a few short sections in fleeting views, and in the context of other OHLs and forestry.	Very limited and not significant.

1.3 Key Routes

- 1.3.1 Key Routes identified in the OWESG are detailed in Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference. which identifies those of potential relevance to the Proposed Development and potential for effects.

Table 2: Appraisal of Key Routes included in the OWESG Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Routes (as noted in OWESG: p42-43)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
A82 T	The Proposed Development may be visible from parts of the A82 southwest of Fort Augustus, but would be barely perceptible at a distance of 3.5 km at its closest, alongside existing OHLs.	Very limited and not significant
B862 Stratherrick	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
B851 Strathnairn and Loch Ness side	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
A9 T	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
A833 Glen Convinth	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
A831 Glen Urquhart	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
A887 T Glen Moriston	The Proposed Development would not result in significant effects for receptors on the A887 (see Appendix 4.2: Visual Assessment Tables for assessment of A887 as Route R1). It would be	Very limited and not

Key Routes (as noted in OWESG: p42-43)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
	barely perceptible for the majority of the route, and perceptible from a few short sections in fleeting views, and in the context of other OHLs and forestry.	significant
A87 above Loch Garry	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
B861 Tombreck – Inverness	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
B852 South Loch Ness shore	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Dunain – Blackfold – Abriachan	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Minor Road – Caiplich (UC1072)²	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Minor Road – Bunloit	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
Great Glen Way	Limited visibility of the Proposed Development would exist from the Great Glen Way north of Invermoriston, and where visible it would be barely perceptible at a distance of over 3.5 km at the closest point, where it would be backclothed against forestry and seen in the context of wind turbines (of operational Bhlaraidh Wind Farm and consented Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm).	Very limited and not significant
Great Glen Canoe Trail	The Proposed Development is unlikely to be perceptible from this route.	No
Caledonian Canal and lochs / open water	The Proposed Development is unlikely to be perceptible from this route.	No

1.4 Gateways

- 1.4.1 Gateways identified in the OWESG are detailed in **Table 3** which identifies those of potential relevance to the Proposed Development and potential for effects.

Table 3: Appraisal of Gateways included in the OWESG Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Gateways (as noted in OWESG: p45-68)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Glen Urquhart <i>"forms a transitional corridor, contributing to a gateway sense of arrival at Drumnadrochit, where the landform opens out ..."</i> (OWESG: p45) and <i>"Drumnadrochit – marking transition from LCA1 Wooded Glen, to Broad Wooded Glen"</i> (OWESG: p66)	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No

² It is suggested that the reference in the OWESG is to the C1072 road (Abriachan – Foxhole Road), rather than the UC1072.

Key Gateways (as noted in OWESG: p45-68)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
<i>“Transitional corridor between A887 and A87 at Bun Loyne Junction and Achlain” where “the sequence of westward views forms a significant transitional experience which cannot be pinpointed to one ‘Gateway location’” (OWESG: p46)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in westward views between A887 and A87 at Bun Loyne Junction and Achlain.	No
<i>“A87 - above Loch Loyne” (OWESG: p49 and 67)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
<i>“A9 at Inshes: Sense of arrival at Inner Moray Firth and Inverness” (OWESG: p52)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
<i>“Abriachan – marks approximate transition of the higher ground of the Aird to the Great Glen when travelling south-east” (OWESG: p53)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
<i>“Moniack Mhor – locally significant gateway area where views open out towards Beauty strath” (OWESG: p53 and 64)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
<i>“Loch Dochfour – marking transition between lochside landscapes and LCA7, Rolling Farmland and Woodland” (OWESG: p66)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
<i>“Invermoriston – marking transition from LCA2 Wooded Glen, to Broad Wooded Glen” (OWESG: p66)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views, due to screening from forestry.	No
<i>“Fort Augustus – arrival at Loch Ness from south” (OWESG: p66)</i>	The Proposed Development may be visible from some open areas of Fort Augustus, but would be barely perceptible in the distance (approximately 3.5 km) and alongside existing OHLs. It would not be present in views <i>“upon arrival at Loch Ness from south”</i> .	No
<i>“Dores – arrival at Loch Ness from Inverness hinterland” (OWESG: p66)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No
<i>“Invergarry – transition into great glen from Glen Garry” (OWESG: p66 and 67)</i>	The Proposed Development would not be visible in these views.	No

1.5 Landscape Character Guidance

1.5.1 The OWESG *Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Study* describes different Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and identifies sensitivities of landscapes around Loch Ness to wind farm development and provides guidance for their siting. Within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, there are four LCAs: LN2, LN5, LN10 and LN19. Although written with wind development in mind, the OWESG appraisal of LCAs does highlight key landscape and visual sensitivities, which have been taken into consideration in the design and assessment of the Proposed Development. Through the route selection process, potential effects on sensitive landscape and visual receptors have been appraised, and where possible, decisions made to minimise potential for adverse effects. Where relevant, receptors have been assessed and detailed in the LVIA. For example, views

from the Great Glen, Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA are identified as particularly sensitive and therefore the chosen route has sought to avoid these.

1.6 Conclusion

- 1.6.1 A review of the Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways set out within the OWESG *Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity Study* has identified that, for the majority, the Proposed Development is not likely to have any potential effects. Very limited, non-significant effects have been identified for one Key View (the A887T Views West) and three Key Routes (the A82 T, the A887 T Glen Moriston and Great Glen Way). Overall, the Proposed Development is not considered likely to result in any notable adverse effects on the Key Views, Key Routes or Key Gateways detailed within the OWESG.