

3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) with the aim of identifying the predicted landscape and visual effects of the Project, comprising Proposed Development and Associated Development, as described in **Chapter 2: Project Description**. The LVA is augmented by supporting text and graphics within the following annexes.

- Annex C – Landscape Assessment Methodology
- Annex D – Landscape Character Sensitivity Table
- Annex E – Photomontages and figures

- Figure E.1 – Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoints;
- Figure E.2 – Landscape Character;
- Figure E.3 – Landscape Designations and Recreational Routes; and
- Figure E.4 – Landscape Mitigation Plan.

Study Area

Taking a proportionate approach, a 5 km radius Study Area has been adopted from the Project for the assessment of landscape and visual effects (“the Study Area”). This has been informed by analysis of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps and an early appraisal of potential effects for a development of this scale. It is considered that any notable landscape or visual effects would be confined within this geographical area.

3.2 Guidance and Methodology

3.2.1 Guidance

The methodology presented here is based on the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3); Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal and the Landscape Institute, 2013;
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland; Prepared on behalf of the Countryside Agency and NatureScot, Land Use Consultants, 2002;
- Landscape Sensitivity Assessment - Guidance for Scotland (Consultation Draft); NatureScot, 2020; and
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals; Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/2019 (2019).

In addition, reference has been made to other published guidance and the appraisal work has drawn on the following relevant baseline information:

- National Landscape Character Assessment (web-based interactive map), NatureScot, 2019;
- Ordnance Survey Land ranger (1:50 000) and Explorer (1:25 000) maps;
- Field surveys; and
- Aerial photography.

3.2.2 Methodology

The LVA aims to identify and evaluate the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Project. This includes discrete analysis of i) effects resulting specifically from the addition of the Proposed Development; ii) effects arising specifically from the Associated Development; and iii) the combined effects of both of these elements based on the addition of the Project to the baseline landscape.

Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, albeit the nature of landscape and visual appraisal requires interpretation by professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the prediction of magnitude and appraisal of the residual landscape and visual effects have been based on pre-defined criteria. The complete appraisal methodology is set out in **Annex C**.

3.3 Planning Policy Context

The following section identifies the planning policy and other planning guidance material specifically relevant to the LVA. This includes consideration of the following:

- Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan, Argyll and Bute Council, 2015;
- Argyll and Bute Supplementary Guidance, Argyll and Bute Council, 2016;
- Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers, Argyll and Bute Council, 2017; and
- Woodland and Forestry Strategy, Argyll and Bute Council, 2011.

3.3.1 Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015

The Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the Council's vision for the area alongside planning policy to guide development. Relevant landscape-related policies from the LDP are summarised as follows:

- Policy LDP 3—Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment, which seeks to protect established character and local distinctiveness of the landscape, the special qualities of landscape designations, and landscape features such as woodland. This encompasses consideration of potential cumulative effects.
- Policy LDP 9—Developing Setting, Layout and Design, which promotes high standards of design, with reference to site location, scale and density, and the sensitivity of the receiving landscape.

The LDP is augmented by further policy within the Supplementary Guidance 2016, which sets out additional information in relation to the interpretation of key policies.

3.3.2 Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Supplementary Guidance 2016

The following landscape-related supplementary guidance clauses are linked to the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015:

- SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and our Biodiversity: this outlines relevant legislation, policies and conservation objectives that will be consulted in regards to development proposals.
- SG LDP ENV 6 – Development Impact on Trees/Woodland: this outlines that the Council will protect trees and woodland by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), and will resist development likely to have adverse effects on trees, with mitigation plans required.
- SG LDP ENV 8 – Protection and Enhancement of Green Networks: this highlights that the Council will encourage developments that contribute towards the overall health of green infrastructure.
- SG LDP ENV 13 – Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs), states that the Council will resist development in, or affecting, an APQ where its scale, location or design will have a significant adverse impact, unless these are outweighed by wider benefits.
- SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape: this outlines that the Council will consider landscape impact when assessing development proposals, and will look for development that has correct scale, location and design in relation to the site context.
- SG LDP ENV 15 – Development Impact on Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, seeks to protect heritage assets and their setting.

3.3.3 Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers 2017

The Technical Note states that the Council encourage high quality development that will make a positive contribution towards biodiversity within the local environment. The overall aims include the conservation and enhancement of existing biodiversity, as well as improving connectivity between key habitats. The Technical Note incorporates lists of suggested plant species, including native tree species, and their suitability for specific soil conditions and habitat types.

3.3.4 Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy 2011

This document outlines the prevalence of woodland and forestry across Argyll and Bute and sets out a vision of how this resource can best contribute to the economy, communities and environment. The strategy aims to ensure native woodland expansion is integrated with other land uses including agriculture, improves connectivity between woodland areas, and contributes towards biodiversity. Across Kintyre, the strategy states that any loss of woodland will require compensatory planting elsewhere.

3.4 Landscape Baseline Environment

3.4.1 Local Landscape Context

Figure E.1 illustrates the geographic location of the Project, which is located in an undulating, rural landscape 4.1 km south west of Inveraray. The local landscape comprises expansive areas of forestry, rough pasture and craggy moorland, with localised parcels of broadleaved tree cover.

The rolling topography rises to the west / north west of the Project Site towards the summits of Beinn Dearg and Beinn Mheadhon (which reach 482 m AOD and 396 m AOD respectively). To the east / north east, the landform falls towards the Douglas Water Valley, before rising on the far side towards the summit of Cruach Leistir (at 325 m AOD), and the uplands beyond. The Project Site is located at approximately 180-190m AOD.

The Project Site and its immediate environs are influenced by existing infrastructure in the form of the existing An Suidhe Substation located approximately 270 m to the south. Other existing infrastructure, in the form of overhead power lines, extend outwards from the existing substation and traverse the surrounding landscape on a north east to south west orientation. In addition, the operational An Suidhe Wind Farm is located 3.9 km to the north west. These elements are connected by a series of unsurfaced tracks that traverse the rolling landform.

Other built form in the locality is limited to dispersed dwellings and farmsteads, which are primarily focused along the route of the A83, and accessible via adjoining minor roads and farm tracks.

3.4.2 Landscape Character

Figure E.2 illustrates the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area, as defined within the National Landscape Character Assessment¹, which represents the most up-to-date assessment of landscape character across the Study Area. The Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The key characteristics and sensitivities are listed below.

Key Characteristics of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT

- 'Upland plateau with rounded ridges, craggy outcrops and an irregular slope profile;
- Upland Lochs;
- Winding narrow glens and wider glens with rivers;
- Extensive, large-scale mosaic of open moorland and forestry;
- No field boundaries;
- Very few buildings; occasional isolated dwellings on edges of moor;

¹ National Landscape Character Assessment, NatureScot, 2019

- Small enclosed pastures and occasional farms and houses on lower hill slopes at the transition with adjacent character types and within the narrow glens which dissect these uplands; and
- Little access; roads follow shorelines.'

The sensitivity of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT specific to the Project and its locality is assessed within **Annex D** as being Medium.

Relationship to Adjacent LCTs

The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT adjoins the Craggy Upland LCT 250 m to the north west of the Proposed Development Site, the Rocky Coastland LCT 1.7 km to the east, and the Steep Ridges and Mountains LCT 4.6 km to the east. The key characteristics of these LCTs are listed below.

Key Characteristics of the Craggy Upland LCT

- 'Upland moor with irregular, rather amorphous landform;
- Rounded knolls, rock outcrops and numerous lochs in low-lying hollows and glens;
- Open moorland predominates, but extensive conifer plantations camouflage the landscape pattern in some areas;
- Oak-birch woodland on lower slopes;
- Stone walls enclose an irregular patchwork of pastures within glens on margins of moorland;
- Isolated farmsteads and small villages in sheltered sites within glens;
- Numerous archaeological remains, often concentrated on rounded knolls on lower slopes; and
- Historic intricate, irregular landscape pattern in glens.

Key Characteristics of the Rocky Coastland LCT

- 'Uneven, hummocky landform with rocky outcrops and narrow glens;
- Raised benches, cliffs and distinctive rounded knolls;
- Rocky, indented coastlines with offshore islands and small sandy bays;
- Relatively small-scale landscape with a diverse mix of colours and textures;
- Steep wooded cliffs with hummocky, gorse-covered slopes;
- Stone walls provide partial enclosure;
- Relatively well-settled, with scattered isolated farm buildings and small villages in sheltered sites;
- A wide variety of archaeological sites; and
- Complex transitional landscape.'

Key Characteristics of the Steep Ridges and Mountains LCT

- 'Dramatic mountain ridges with steep, plummeting slopes and numerous rocky outcrops;
- Ribbon lochs and meandering rivers on narrow floodplains form dramatic contrast to surrounding slopes;
- Extensive conifer forests on lower slopes and open moorland, with bare rock faces on upper slopes and summits;
- Contrast between open land on upper slopes beyond the head dyke, and large fields enclosed by stone walls within lower glens;
- Scattered birch woodland alongside burns and on upper slopes and oak woodland on sheltered lower slopes; and
- Settlement confined to narrow strip along loch edge and concentrated in small bays and at heads of lochs.'

3.4.3 Landscape Designations

Landscape planning designations and policies are considered in the determination of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as they provide an indication of value ascribed to the landscape or visual resource.

With reference to **Figure E.3**, the Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are not located within a landscape designation. However, the coastline to the east is designated as an Area of Panoramic Quality (specifically the West Loch Fyne APQ located 1.8 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point, and the East Loch Fyne APQ located 4.4 km to the east). In addition, the Inveraray Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) is located 3.2 km to the north east of the Proposed Development Site. There are no other landscape designations or GDLs within the Study Area.

3.5 Visual Baseline and Receptors

The following section describes the visual receptors within the Study Area. In each case, distances are listed in ascending order from the Proposed Development Site.

3.5.1 Local Residents

With reference to **Figure E.1**, settlement within the Study Area is limited to the town of Inveraray, 4.1 km to the north east of the Proposed Development Site, and the small coastal hamlet of Hazelbank / Ardnagowan on the opposite side of Loch Fyne, 4.6 km to the east.

Other residents within the Study Area are limited to dispersed dwellings and farmsteads. Those within 2.0 km of the Proposed Development Site comprise:

- Killean, 670 m to the south;
- Achnagoul, 670 m to the east;
- Old School House, 680 m to the south;
- Armarlen Cottage, 860 m to the south;
- Claonairigh House, 1.0 km to the south east;
- Saunach, 1.1 km to the south east;
- Dalavoullin Cottage, 1.6 km to the south east; and
- Douglas Lodge, 1.9 km to the east.

3.5.2 Recreational Receptors

With reference to **Figure E.3**, recreational routes and outdoor destinations / attractions within the Study Area are listed below:

- Core Path network, 1.9 km to the east at the closest point;
 - C199 Furnace to Inveraray, 1.9 km to the east;
 - C206 - Leacainn Walk Furnace, 2.9 km to the south west;
 - C200 - Coille Bhraghaid-Queens Drive-Inveraray, 3.5 km to the north east;
 - C203 - Bealach an Fhuarain, Inveraray (circular), 3.6 km to the north east;
 - C119 - Braevallich, Loch Awe to Furnace, 3.7 km to the south west;
- Argyll Caravan Park, 1.9 km to the east; and
- Inveraray Golf Club, 3.7 km to the north east.

3.5.3 Road and Rail Receptors

The Potential vehicular receptors within the Study Area are limited to road users on the following roads:

- A83, located 700 m to the south of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point; and
- A815, located 4.4km to the south east at the closest point.

There are no other roads or railway lines that run within the immediate or wider context of the Project.

3.6 Embedded Mitigation

The location of the Project has been chosen to avoid any notable ridgelines or visually prominent sections of skyline. The undulating landform in the locality in combination with extensive areas of forestry and scattered tree cover would restrict views of the Project across wider parts of the Study Area.

Furthermore, the Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are located in close proximity to existing electricity infrastructure, comprising the existing An Suidhe Substation and nearby overhead lines to the south east. As such, the Project would exert its primary influence over a local landscape already partially characterised by existing development, and avoids the spread of infrastructure into wider parts of the surrounding landscape.

In terms of design, the proposals seek to incorporate a comprehensive mitigation strategy to effectively integrate the Project into the surrounding landscape. This involves consideration of the most appropriate methods of lessening its potential influence on landscape and visual amenity. To this end, the Project has been designed to achieve the following landscape objectives:

- Land clearance and occupation would be limited to necessary areas only to minimise the geographic spread of the infrastructure and limit the potential impact on the local landscape fabric;
- The Proposed Development and Associated Development access tracks would utilise existing forestry tracks to minimise effects associated with peripheral parts of the Project;
- The number of new towers comprising the Associated Development has been limited as far as possible (six towers in total) to minimise the effects resulting from this component of the Project;
- Temporary tracks (for construction purposes) would be reinstated at the end of the construction phase, thereby further limiting the geographic extent of potential residual effects;
- In terms of colour and materials, the buildings would be painted with a recessive colour (mid-brown, such as RAL 8008: Olive Brown or similar approved) to assist blending in with the surrounding landscape, incorporating rough moorland and forestry;
- Proposed planting would incorporate the creation of new parcels of native woodland edge tree/scrub around peripheral parts of the Proposed Development Site (see **Figure E.4**). This would provide a natural context to the proposed built form, whilst also providing additional habitat type and further visual screening;
- Species-rich grassland / meadow (comprising upland wet-meadow mix in accordance with the context) would be introduced within the Proposed Development Site and along the route of the Associated Development. This would further soften the appearance of the Project and provide enhancement to local biodiversity;
- A SuDS basin would be created in the northern part of the Proposed Development Site, providing both sustainable drainage and additional wetland habitat; and
- Peat restoration could be introduced as a further means of increasing biodiversity value. Any peatland restoration works would be undertaken in line with the process set out in Schedule 1, Part 6, Class 20A in the T&CP(GPD) (S) O 1992 (as amended).

3.7 ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis

The potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Project have been analysed in two ways:

- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map analysis, to provide a general overview of the geographical extent of visibility of the Proposed Development and Associated Development within the Study Area; and
- Analysis of the potential effects at key viewpoints.

3.7.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Analysis

Theoretical visibility mapping of the Proposed Development and Associated Development is illustrated in **Figure E.1**. The ZTV illustrates the maximum overall visibility of the Proposed Development, with buildings to the top height of 22 m; and of the Associated Development with towers 57.4 m maximum height. The ZTV has been prepared on the basis of 'bare ground' and does not take into account the potential screening effects of surrounding vegetation / forestry.

With reference to the ZTV, the geographical extent of potential visibility of the Proposed Development would be predominantly focused within approximately 800 m of the Proposed Development Site, encompassing moorland and forestry. To the east / north east the ZTV extends further across areas of higher ground and summits. These include Cruach Leistir to the north east and Creag a' Ghilleachain to the east. Further to the east, the ZTV also encompasses the open water of Loch Fyne and the rising landform on the far side. To the south, potential visibility is curtailed abruptly on the edge of the Proposed Development Site by the undulating landform.

The ZTV illustrates that potential views of the Associated Development would be more widespread, in accordance with the increased height of this infrastructure. In particular, there would be increased potential visibility to the south west across the slopes of Creagan Craoibhe-caorainn and Dun Leacainn. There would also be further (fragmented) ZTV coverage across south-facing slopes of Beinn Dearg. These areas primarily comprise upland areas of moorland and forestry, with limited public access.

3.7.2 Viewpoint Analysis

Viewpoint analysis has been carried out on a selection of key viewpoint locations to assess the likely level of effects arising as a result of the Project. These locations were verified via consultation with the local planning authority (phone call Oct 2021). With reference to the geographical extent of visibility illustrated within the ZTV, a total of three viewpoints have been selected as being representative of the main views from publicly accessible locations within the Study Area (see **Figure E.1** for locations).

Table 3.1 Viewpoint Analysis

| Viewpoint | Description |
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| 1. View north east from forestry track | <p>Existing View (Figure E.5a) This viewpoint is located on the unsurfaced track 0.25 km south west of the Proposed Development Site, within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. It represents views experienced by recreational hillwalkers on an informal path that is not actively promoted as a long distance route or as part of the wider Core Path network. The existing views to the north east are characterised by the rolling landform with parcels of rough grassland and craggy moorland broken up by extensive areas of forestry. The landscape is rural in character, albeit there are clear views of the existing section of overhead line associated with the existing An Suidhe substation extending to the east.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.5b – E.5c) The Proposed Development would be experienced at close proximity, and would represent an additional element of built form in the landscape (experienced within the same sector of view as the existing OHL). The proposed infrastructure would be located in a lower-lying position relative to the footpath, and as such would be experienced below the distant horizon, where it would account for a narrow angle of view, back-clothed by moorland and forestry beyond. The recessive colours of the buildings and back-clothing by the distant landscape would soften its appearance.</p> <p>The towers that comprise the Associated Development would also be visible at close proximity, directly in line with the existing towers located to the east. The net result would be additional, large-scale towers at closer proximity to the viewpoint, albeit no notable increase in the spread of towers across wider parts of the view.</p> <p>Effects on Visual Amenity The sensitivity of hillwalkers is assessed as being High.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be experienced at close proximity, incorporating all built form and the surrounding compound. The magnitude of change at completion would be High and the resultant level of effect would be Major. The level of effect would</p> |

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| | <p>reduce slightly over time in accordance with the establishment of perimeter planting, which would gradually screen the lower elements of the Proposed Development from view. However, given the close proximity at this viewpoint location, the magnitude of change at Year 12 would remain High, and the corresponding level of effect would be Major.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would extend above the horizon, albeit the visual influence of the towers would be limited by their open, latticework structure, the narrow angle of view, and their location directly in front of existing towers. The magnitude of change at completion would be Medium/Low and the resultant level of effect would be Moderate. The magnitude of change at Year 12 would remain Medium/Low, and the corresponding level of effect would be Moderate.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be High based on the close proximity and open nature of the view. The resultant level of effect would be Major. As mitigation planting establishes, views would become slightly more restricted and the influence of the Project on the view would diminish slightly. The combined magnitude of change at Year 12 would be High/Medium and the level of effect would be Major.</p> <p>Landscape Effect The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project.</p> <p>i) At this proximity, the Proposed Development would represent a recognizable new element within the local landscape. The magnitude of change at completion would be High and the effect on local landscape character would be Major/Moderate. As mitigation planting establishes over time the Proposed Development would soften in appearance and its characterising influence on the local landscape would reduce slightly accordingly. The magnitude of change at Year 12 would reduce to High/Medium, and the corresponding level of effect would be Moderate.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would augment the existing towers within the local area. The magnitude of change based in this incremental addition would be Medium/Low and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate/Minor. The magnitude of change at Year 12 would remain Low, and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor.</p> <p>iii) The Project would introduce additional elements of built form to the local landscape, albeit in the context of existing elements of infrastructure (towers) and human activity (commercial forestry). At this proximity, the magnitude of change would be High and the level of effect resulting from the addition of the Project would be Major/Moderate upon completion. By Year 12, the screening influence of mitigation planting would slightly reduce these effects; the magnitude of change would reduce to High/Medium and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate.</p> |
| <p>2. View south from forestry track</p> | <p>Existing View (Figure E.6a) This viewpoint is located on the forestry track 0.45 km to the northwest of the Proposed Development Site, within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. It represents views experienced by recreational hillwalkers on an informal path that is not actively promoted as a long distance route or as part of the wider Core Path network. The existing views to the southeast are characterised by the rolling landform, with a patchwork of rough grassland, forestry and broadleaved woodland / scrub. The open water of Loch Fyne is visible in the middle distance, with the rising landform on the opposite side forming the distant horizon. Built form within the view comprises an existing section of overhead line associated with the existing An Suidhe substation.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.6b – E.6c) The Proposed Development would be experienced on the hillside to the southeast, where it would account for a relatively narrow angle of view in the context of nearby forestry. The buildings would be part-screened by intervening tree cover, albeit there would be views to parts of the compound. This new built form would contrast with the more rural characteristics of the receiving landscape, albeit would be experienced within the same sector of view already influenced by existing towers.</p> <p>The towers that comprise the Associated Development would be visible beyond the substation building, with the upper parts experienced against the skyline. The proposed</p> |

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| | <p>towers would be experienced in the same field of view as exiting towers. The net result would be a slight increase in the number / spread of towers in the view.</p> <p>Effects on Visual Amenity The sensitivity of hillwalkers is assessed as being High.</p> <p>i) The Proposed Development would be experienced at close proximity, accounting for a narrow angle of view. The magnitude of change at completion would be Medium and the resultant level of effect would be Major/Moderate. As mitigation planting within the Site establishes over time the Proposed Development would be subject to increased screening, and predominantly limited to the upper-most part of the substation building. The resultant magnitude of change at Year 12 would reduce to Low and the level of effect would be Moderate at most.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would extend above the horizon, albeit the visual influence of the towers would be limited by their open, latticework structure, and presence of similar existing infrastructure within the view. The magnitude of change at completion would be Medium/Low and the resultant level of effect would be Moderate. At Year 12 the magnitude of change and corresponding level of effect would remain unchanged.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be High/Medium at completion based on the close proximity of the view balanced by the presence of existing infrastructure to the south. The resultant level of effect would be Major/Moderate. By Year 12, the screening influence of mitigation planting would slightly reduce these effects; the magnitude of change would reduce to Medium and the effect would be Major/Moderate.</p> <p>Landscape Effect The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project.</p> <p>i) At this proximity, the Proposed Development (in particular the substation building) would represent a recognizable new element within the local landscape, albeit part-screened by intervening tree cover. The magnitude of change at completion would be Medium and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate. As mitigation planting establishes over time the Proposed Development would be subject to increased screening, thereby reducing its influence on landscape character. By Year 12 the magnitude of change would reduce to Low and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would augment the existing towers within the local area, which exert their own characterising influence. The magnitude of change based in this incremental addition would be Low and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate/Minor. The magnitude of change at Year 12 would remain Low, and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor.</p> <p>iii) The Project would introduce additional elements of built form to the local landscape, albeit in the context of existing elements of infrastructure (towers) and human activity (commercial forestry). The rolling landform and varied ground cover of rough grassland, forestry and broadleaved woodland / scrub would continue to exert a strong characterising influence. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate. By Year 12, the screening influence of mitigation planting would slightly reduce these effects; the magnitude of change would reduce to Medium/Low and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate/Minor.</p> |
| <p>3. View north west from the A83</p> | <p>Existing View (Figure E.7a) This viewpoint is located at the side of the A83 near the junction to Achnagoul, 1.35 km to the south east of the Proposed Development Site (within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT). It represents views experienced by road users. The existing views are characterised by pastoral farmland with post and wire fencing in the foreground, backed by parcels of broadleaved tree cover in the middle distance. The rising landform of Beinn Mheadham rises to form the distant horizon, incorporating forestry on the lower slopes, which transitions to open moorland with craggy outcrops across the upper slopes. Built form comprises telecoms lines in the foreground, and the cluster of residential dwellings at Achnagoul in the middle distance (filtered by trees). The upper</p> |

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| | <p>part of towers associated with the existing An Suidhe Substation are also visible along the skyline, signifying further human activity within the locality.</p> <p>Predicted View (Figures E.7b – E.7c) Potential views of the Proposed Development would be subject to screening by the intervening landform, and further restricted by intervening vegetation. As a result, there would be no views of the Proposed Development. The six towers that comprise the Associated Development would be partly-visible along the ridge in the middle distance. The lower parts of the towers would be screened by intervening landform and forestry. The upper parts would be predominantly experienced well below the horizon, and back-clothed by the craggy moorland beyond. The Associated Development would be experience in the same sector of view as existing towers, and would be located at greater distance.</p> <p>Effects on Visual Amenity The sensitivity of road users at this location is assessed as being Medium.</p> <p>i) There would be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would extend across the ridge in the middle distance. The visual influence of the towers would be limited by the distance of view and back-clothing by the landform, as well as the presence of existing towers in closer proximity to the viewpoint. The magnitude of change at completion would be Low/Negligible and the resultant level of effect would be Minor. At Year 12 the magnitude of change and corresponding level of effect would remain unchanged.</p> <p>iii) The effects resulting from the addition of the Project would be the same as those described above in relation to the Associated Development. The magnitude of change would be Low/Negligible at completion, and the resultant level of effect would be Minor. At Year 12, the effects would remain unchanged.</p> <p>Landscape Effect The Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project.</p> <p>i) There would be no views of the Proposed Development and no effect.</p> <p>ii) The Associated Development would augment the existing towers within the local area. The magnitude of change based in this incremental addition to existing electrical infrastructure within the landscape would be Low/Negligible and the effect on landscape character would be Minor. At Year 12 the effects would remain unchanged.</p> <p>iii) The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low/Negligible based on the proposed towers. The resultant level of effect would be Minor. At Year 12, the effects would remain unchanged.</p> |
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3.8 Appraisal - Construction Effects

Whilst it is the operational stage of the Project that would give rise to prolonged landscape and visual effects, construction works detailed in **Chapter 2: Project Description** would give rise to medium-term temporary landscape and visual effects. The detailed construction programme is not known at this stage, although it is anticipated that construction of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would take approximately 30 months.

These effects would be temporary and would mainly arise through the gradual introduction of proposed buildings/infrastructure. The effects arising from other operations, including the vehicle movement, construction of the fencing and excavation works would be localised, and whilst potentially visible, would not appear prominently in views from the surrounding areas. As such, the construction phase effects would be limited in extent and duration.

3.8.1 Construction Landscape Effects

The Proposed Development Site is located in an area of (recently restocked) commercial forestry, with the Associated Development extending north east to south west across the adjoining landscape. During the

construction stage, the coniferous forestry within the Proposed Development Site would be removed, along with any groundcover and understorey planting to facilitate construction activities. There would also be localised areas of excavation required for the parking and access, SuDS basin, foundations of the buildings and cable routes, resulting in a change to the current landscape fabric. There would also be clearance activities along the route of the proposed overhead line and access tracks (temporary and permanent) for the Associated Development, as well as a short term, temporary increase in vehicle movements to and from the Project Site.

In terms of landscape fabric; the existing ground cover is considered to be of Low sensitivity to the Project based on its common and widespread nature throughout the surrounding area and its ability to regenerate in a relatively short period of time.

The magnitude of change on existing landscape fabric based on the Proposed Development would be Medium, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The magnitude of change on landscape fabric based on the Associated Development would also be Medium based on the linear nature of the development, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change based on the addition of the Project would be High/Medium at most, resulting in a Moderate effect on landscape fabric.

In terms of landscape character; the construction stage effects would be limited to a very localised part of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to the Project with reference to **Annex D**. The magnitude of change associated with the localised areas of felling, disturbance of the existing ground cover and additional presence of vehicles and temporary access tracks within the Project Site would be tempered by the extensive spread of surrounding forestry that predominates throughout the local landscape, as well as the close geographical location of the Project in relation to the existing An Suidhe Substation and overhead lines. Within such landscapes, vehicle movements and localised tree felling is considered to be a standard occurrence.

On balance, the magnitude of change on landscape character during the construction stage would be Low based on the Proposed Development, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The magnitude of change on landscape character based on the Associated Development would be also be Low, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium/Low, resulting in a Moderate effect at most.

3.8.2 Construction Effects on Visual Amenity

The visual effects of the activities during the construction phase would be temporary and limited to localised areas in the vicinity of the Project due to the containing effect of the underlying landform and surrounding tree cover, in combination with the low-lying nature of activities associated with site clearance / excavation.

In more open views, the construction activities would be experienced within a local context comprising existing electricity infrastructure and forestry operations. The construction activities would typically be experienced below the skyline, backed by moorland and commercial plantation. Views would be predominantly limited to hillwalkers on informal paths that are not actively promoted as long distance routes or parts of the wider Core Path network. Taking a precautionary approach, these receptors are considered to be of High sensitivity.

The influence of construction activities on existing views would be tempered by the introduction of new areas of planting within the Proposed Development Site, and the gradual reinstatement of ground cover along the route of the Associated Development as works progress. The effects would be further reduced through good site management and the temporary nature of the construction activities.

On balance, the visual magnitude of change during the construction phase would be Low based on the Proposed Development, resulting in a Moderate effect at most on hillwalkers. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would also be Low, resulting in a Moderate effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium/Low. The resultant effect on views would be Moderate.

3.9 Appraisal - Operational Landscape Effects

This Section examines the effects arising as a result of the Project with reference to landscape fabric, landscape character and landscape designations.

3.9.1 Effects on Landscape Fabric

The landscape features within the Proposed Development Site and surrounding context comprise (recently restocked) coniferous forestry with localised areas of rough grassland, which is assessed as being of Low sensitivity to the Project.

The Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of a small area of existing vegetation and its replacement with the proposed buildings, site services and control equipment, electrical switchgear and associated infrastructure. The Associated Development would also result in localised loss of ground cover along the permanent access tracks and overhead line route, as well as the introduction of the proposed towers. In both cases, the proposed infrastructure would account for a relatively small parcel of land within an expansive area of surrounding forestry and rough grassland. Upon completion of the works, any areas of disturbed ground would be reinstated to native species-rich grassland / meadow at the first available season, and would establish rapidly thereafter. In accordance with **Figure E.4: Landscape Mitigation**, the Proposed Development would also incorporate new areas of native tree planting, which would represent the addition of beneficial landscape features to the locality that would exert increasing influence over time as they become more established.

On balance, the magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development would be Medium, giving rise to a Moderate/Minor effect on landscape fabric. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would also be Medium due, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be High/Medium, resulting in a Moderate effect. Whilst the replacement of existing rough grassland and parcels of forestry with hard-standing and built form is regarded as adverse, the introduction of additional new areas of native broadleaved trees represents beneficial change.

3.9.2 Effects on Landscape Character

The effect of the Project on landscape character largely depends on the key characteristics of the receiving environment; the degree to which the development may be considered to be consistent with or at odds with it; and how the proposal would be perceived within its setting.

Plateau Moor and Forest LCT

The Project would be located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, which is described previously in this Chapter (see Section 3.4: Landscape Baseline Environment). With reference to sensitivity analysis within **Annex D**, the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Project. The effects on this LCT would be direct (affecting the Proposed Development Site and route of the Associated Development) and indirect (affecting the visual and perceptual characteristics of the wider landscape).

In terms of direct effects, there would be some loss of natural features to facilitate introduction of the proposed buildings, permanent access tracks and associated infrastructure (primarily localised areas of existing forestry). However, the proposed access routes would make use of existing forestry tracks, thereby reducing the requirement for new permanent track. The short sections of new permanent access track required would be assimilated with the existing pattern of development and would not result in any notable loss of landscape elements.

In terms of indirect effects, ZTV coverage for the Proposed Development is relatively continuous across local parts of the LCT within approximately 800 m. Beyond 800 m, ZTV coverage is more fragmented and predominantly limited to more elevated geographic areas to the east / north east. This incorporates the summits and upper slopes of Cruach Leistir to the north east and Creag a' Ghilleachain to the east. This reflects the characteristic '*rounded ridges, craggy outcrops and... irregular slope profile*' of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, and signifies that views of the Proposed Development would be partially or completely screened across the vast majority of the LCT. Furthermore, these areas are generally well-forested, thus further limiting the extent of intervisibility across the LCT. There would be no views of the Proposed Development from expansive parts of the

LCT to the south or south west. As such, indirect effects resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development would be limited to relatively localised geographic areas. Theoretical views of the Associated Development would be more widespread based on the higher height of the towers, albeit these areas predominantly coincide with plantation forestry, which would restrict intervisibility. Furthermore, the visual influence of these elements would steadily reduce at increasing distance based on the open, latticework nature of these structures.

Within more open views the Project would represent a new element of built form within the landscape (refer to Viewpoints 1 and 2). This contrasts with the rural characteristics of the LCT as a whole, which is described as having '*very few buildings*' other than '*isolated dwellings on edges of the moor*'. However, the local landscape is influenced by existing electricity infrastructure in the form of overhead power lines and the operational An Suidhe Substation to the south, as well as the network of forestry tracks that extend across the local hillside. As such, the introduction of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would exert limited influence on local landscape character. Instead, they would augment the existing built form in the vicinity and further reinforce the presence of electrical infrastructure as a characteristic within the immediate locality.

With reference to the characteristic '*large-scale mosaic of open moorland and forestry*', the Project would exert limited influence. The undulating landform and forestry would restrict views of the Proposed Development across the vast majority of the LCT, including the '*occasional farms and houses on lower hill slopes*' and the roads that '*follow shorelines*'. The Associated Development would also be subject to screening by the underlying landform and forestry. There would be no effect on the '*upland lochs*', '*craggy outcrops*', or the '*small enclosed pastures*'. As a result, the majority of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT would be completely unaffected.

In summary, based on the addition of the Proposed Development, the main effects would be focused within approximately 400 - 500 m. At a localised level the magnitude of change would typically be Medium and the level of effect would be Moderate. The effects would diminish abruptly at greater distances due to the containing influence of the existing landform and surrounding forestry. Accordingly, across wider parts of the LCT the magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development would typically be Negligible or less, and the resultant effect would be Minor/Negligible. Extensive parts of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT would be completely unaffected.

The main effects resulting from the Associated Development would also be focused within the surrounding locality, within approximately 500 - 600 m of the towers, reducing to approximately 300m to the south where the landscape is dissected by the existing overhead line. The Associated Development would represent an incremental increase in the number of towers within the local landscape, rather than the addition of elements that are completely new to it. As such, the magnitude of change would be Medium/Low and the effect would be Moderate/Minor. Across wider parts of the LCT the magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would be Negligible, and the resultant effect would be Minor/Negligible.

The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Medium across the local landscape (out to 500 - 600 m), resulting in a Moderate effect. Across wider parts of the LCT the combined magnitude of change based on the Project would be Negligible, and the resultant effect would be Minor/Negligible.

Craggy Upland LCT

The Craggy Upland LCT is located 250 m to the north west of the Proposed Development Site and is considered to be of High sensitivity to the Project with reference to its openness and upland characteristics, which confer a strong relationship with the skyline in views from neighbouring LCTs.

ZTV coverage is extremely limited across the LCT and primarily focused across the easterly-facing lower slopes of Beinn Mheadhon, as well as the south east facing slopes of Bein Dearg (where views would be restricted to the Associated Development only). From these slopes the Project would represent a new element of built form in the lower-lying forested landscape to the south east. It would be experienced in close proximity to existing electricity infrastructure comprising overhead power lines and the existing An Suidhe Substation. Accordingly, the

Proposed Development and Associated Development would exert limited influence upon the characteristic ‘*open moorland*’, ‘*irregular patchwork of pastures*’, or the ‘*historic intricate, irregular landscape pattern*’. There would be no loss of characteristic ‘*archaeological remains*’.

On balance, based on the addition of the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change would be Low/Negligible across localised parts of the LCT within 500 m and the effect on landscape character would be Moderate/Minor. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would also be Low/Negligible across localised areas within 500 – 600 m, resulting in a Moderate/Minor effect. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low, resulting in a Moderate effect at most across very localised parts of the LCT in closest proximity to the Project (within approximately 500 - 600 m). The vast majority of the Craggy Upland LCT would be completely unaffected.

Rocky Coastland LCT

There are two discreet areas of Rocky Coastland LCT within the Study Area. The closest area is located 1.7 km to the east (along the western shore of Loch Fyne), with the second area located on the opposite side (eastern shore) of Loch Fyne, 4.4 km to the east. The LCT considered to be of High sensitivity to the Project with reference to its small scale and the association with the West Loch Fyne APQ and East Loch Fyne APQ.

ZTV coverage is very limited across the closest area, and is restricted to the northern-most edge of Creag a’ Ghilleachain and nearby coastal areas. Potential views of the Project from these areas would be extremely limited due to the presence of intervening forestry.

ZTV coverage is more extensive across the geographically separate area on the eastern side of Loch Fyne, albeit from this spatially separate area the Proposed Development and Associated Development would represent very distant elements in the background landscape.

In summary, there would be minimal influence on the ‘*hummocky landform*’, ‘*raised beaches*’, ‘*indented coastline*’ or ‘*wooded cliffs*’ and no loss of ‘*archaeological sites*’.

The magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Minor/Negligible level of effect in each case. Given the limited visibility and spatial separation, the combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined effect on landscape character would be Minor/Negligible.

Steep Ridges and Mountains LCT

The Steep Ridges and Mountains LCT is located on the opposite side of Loch Fyne, 4.6 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site. Despite ZTV coverage, the Proposed Development and Associated Development would exert minimal influence on the existing characteristics of the LCT due to the distance of view and geographically separate landscape context of the Project (separated from the Steep Ridges and Mountains LCT by the open water of Loch Fyne). The Project would represent a barely discernible component in the background landscape.

In summary, the magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined effect on landscape character would be Negligible.

3.9.3 Effects on Landscape Designations

West Loch Fyne APQ

The West Loch Fyne APQ is located 1.8 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point, where it follows the lower lying coastal edge of the landscape. ZTV coverage across the APQ is extremely limited and focused on the northern-most edge of Creag a’ Ghilleachain and nearby coastal areas. Potential views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development from these areas would be extremely limited due to the

presence of intervening forestry. As such, the Project would exert minimal influence on the special qualities of the APQ.

The magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Minor/Negligible level of effect in each case. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined effect on the West Loch Fyne APQ would be Minor/Negligible.

East Loch Fyne APQ

The East Loch Fyne APQ is located 4.4 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site. ZTV coverage is relatively continuous across parts of the APQ within the Study Area. However, due to the distance of view and its geographical separation, the Project would represent a very distant element in the background landscape on the far side of Loch Fyne. As such, the Proposed Development and Associated Development would exert minimal influence on the special qualities of the APQ.

The magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined effect on the East Loch Fyne APQ would be Negligible.

Inveraray GDL

Inveraray GDL is located 3.2 km to the north east of the Proposed Development Site. It is located outside the ZTV, hence there would be no views and no effect.

3.10 Appraisal - Operational Visual Effects

This Section examines the visual effects based on changes to the existing view as experienced by people within the surrounding landscape (as described within Section 3.5: Visual Baseline and Receptors). This process draws on the results of the ZTV and viewpoint analysis.

3.10.1 Visual effects experienced by Local Residents

The Appraisal below considers the effects experienced by local residents in settlements, as well as those in isolated residential dwellings / steadings in closest proximity to the Project. In all cases, sensitivity is deemed to be High.

Inveraray

Inveraray is located 4.1 km to the north east of the Proposed Development Site, completely outside the ZTV. There would be no views and no effect.

Hazelbank / Ardnagowan

The coastal hamlet of Hazelbank / Ardnagowan forms a small linear settlement on the eastern side of Loch Fyne, 4.6 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site. ZTV coverage is continuous across the settlement and there are open outward views across Loch Fyne. However, potential views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be tempered by the distance of view and presence of intervening forestry on the rising landform on the opposite side of Loch Fyne. As a result, the Proposed Development would represent a very distant and barely discernible element in the background landscape. The Associated Development would also be subject to partial screening and experienced in the context of existing towers.

The magnitude of change would be Negligible based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible and the combined level of effect experienced by residents would be Negligible.

Isolated Residential Dwellings / Steadings

Killean is located 670 m to the south of the Proposed Development Site. With reference to the ZTV, there would be no views of the Proposed Development due to the intervening landform. Potential views of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening tree cover, hence there would be no views and no effect.

Achnagoul comprises a cluster of five detached dwellings located 670 m to the east of the Proposed Development Site. The dwellings are predominantly north west to south east orientated, hence views towards the Project would typically be oblique to the primary direction of view. With reference to the ZTV, potential views of the Project would be focused across dwellings on the western side of this cluster. These views would be subject to screening by garden vegetation and established trees on the north western side of the properties. In more open views from parts of the curtilage, there would be partial views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development, primarily comprising the upper parts of the proposed infrastructure, which would be located beyond the existing overhead line on the intervening ridgeline. The Proposed Development would account for a narrow angle of view, in a relatively visually discreet location below the skyline (back-clothed by the craggy moorland on the southerly facing slopes of Beinn Mheadhon). The Associated Development would extend over a wider angle of view, albeit augment the presence of existing towers within the view. The magnitude of change experienced by residents on the western edge of the cluster would be Negligible based on the Proposed Development, leading to a Minor effect. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would be Low, and the level of effect would be Moderate at most. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Low and the combined level of effect experienced by residents would be Moderate. There would be no views and no effect from the dwellings on the eastern side of the cluster due to surrounding tree cover.

The Old School House is a two storey south-facing dwelling located 680 m to the south of the Proposed Development Site. The ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development (and no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening tree cover, hence would be limited to the upper-most tips of the towers at most, during periods of leaf-fall. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

Armarlen Cottage is a single storey west-facing dwelling located 860 m to the south of the Proposed Development Site. The ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development (and no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by tree cover along the A83 and forestry along the intervening ridgeline. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

Claonairigh House is located 1.0 km to the south east of the Proposed Development Site. The ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development (and no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening tree cover and forestry. The clearest views would be experienced in winter months, albeit would be limited to the tops of the towers at most, which would be located in the middle distance beyond the existing overhead line. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

Saunach is located 1.1 km to the south east of the Proposed Development Site. The two-storey property is primarily east-west facing, albeit also has a window on its northern façade. Potential views towards the Project would be oblique to the primary orientation of view from the property and would be subject to screening by intervening tree cover, including garden vegetation and roadside tree cover along the A83. With reference to Viewpoint 3, potential views of the Proposed Development would be fully screened by the intervening landform and vegetation (no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be filtered by intervening garden vegetation. In clearer views from parts of the curtilage, the towers would be visible on the ridge in the middle distance, beyond the existing overhead line, and predominantly back-clothed by the craggy moorland beyond. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Low/Negligible at most, and the level of effect would be Moderate/Minor.

Dalavoullin Cottage is located 1.6 km to the south east of the Proposed Development Site. Potential views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be restricted by intervening tree cover and forestry. The clearest views would be experienced during winter months, albeit would remain limited to the upper-most parts of the Substation and towers, in the background landscape beyond the existing overhead line. Based on the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development would also be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would be Low/Negligible at most and the combined level of effect experienced by residents would be Moderate/Minor.

Douglas Lodge is located 1.9 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site. The ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development (and no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be subject to screening by intervening tree cover, hence would be limited to the upper-most tips of the towers at most, during periods of leaf-fall. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

3.10.2 Visual effects experienced by Recreational Receptors

Recreational receptors are of High sensitivity in all cases. The Appraisal is described below, listed in order of increasing distance from the Project.

Core Path network

The Core Path network within the Study Area is primarily focused around the settlement of Inveraray, albeit also encompasses the western coast of Loch Fyne. The C199 Furnace to Inveraray path represents the Core Path in closest proximity to the Project, and extends within 1.9 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. The ZTV illustrates there would be no views of the Proposed Development (and no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development (based on ZTV coverage) would be limited to a 500 m section in the vicinity of Douglas Lodge and a further 300 m section located further south, between Douglas Lodge and the Coast. From these localised sections of the path views would be screened by intervening woodland and forestry hence limited to the upper-most tips of the towers at most, during periods of leaf-fall. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

There would be no views of the Project from any other Core Paths within the Study Area due to screening by intervening landform and forestry.

Argyll Caravan Park

Argyll Caravan Park is located 1.9 km to the east of the Proposed Development Site. ZTV coverage is fragmented, and focused on the southern edge of the campsite. Distant views towards the Proposed Development from the Caravan Park would be fully screened by intervening tree cover (no effect). Potential views of the Associated Development would be limited to the upper-most parts of the towers at most, during periods of leaf-fall. The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

Inveraray Golf Club

Inveraray Golf Club is located 3.7 km to the north east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. The golf course is located completely outside the ZTV, hence golfers would experience no views of the Project and no effect.

3.10.3 Visual effects experienced by Road Receptors

The sensitivity of road users is considered to be Medium in all cases unless otherwise stated.

A83

Within the Study Area the A83 extends broadly south westerly from Inveraray, 700 m to the south of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point. ZTV coverage is fragmented across the route; potential views of the Proposed Development would be limited to a 500-600 m section south of Achmagoul, whilst potential views of the Associated Development would be focused on a 3 km section between Killean and Argyll Caravan Park.

For road users travelling south west, views of the Project would be subject to screening by roadside vegetation and intervening tree cover. The first open views towards the Project would be experienced from a 200 m section beyond the junction to Achmagoul. Within north westerly views (oblique to the direction of travel), there would be views of the towers, in the middle distance beyond the existing overhead line. Potential views of the Proposed Development would be screened by the combination of landform and vegetation (see **Viewpoint 3**). As the road user travels further to the south west, views would be fully screened by the intervening landform and tree cover. Upon passing Killean, there would be brief views once again of the Associated Development along a 500 m section. The towers would be experienced oblique to the direction of travel, in the same sector of view as the existing overhead line. Thereafter, the Project would be fully screened by the intervening landform.

For road users travelling north, there would be glimpsed views of the Associated Development along a 500 m section on approach to Killean, where the towers would be experienced oblique to the direction of travel, in the same sector of view as the existing overhead line. As the road user travels further to the north east, potential views would be restricted by intervening landform and tree cover, and thereafter the Project would be located behind the direction of travel.

In summary, views of the Project would be limited to very localised sections of the A83 (approximately 700 m in total) and would be primarily restricted to the upper parts of the Associated Development. The towers would be experienced transiently, oblique to the direction of travel, beyond existing electrical infrastructure. There would be no views of the Proposed Development (and no effect). The magnitude of change based on the Associated Development and the Project would be Low/Negligible at most along these localised sections, resulting in a Minor level of effect. For the vast majority of the route there would be no views and no effect.

A815

The A815 is located 4.4 km to the south east of the Proposed Development Site at the closest point, on the eastern side of Loch Fyne. ZTV coverage is continuous across the route, albeit views to the west are foreshortened by established roadside tree cover along the full length of the route within the Study Area. Potential views of the Proposed Development and Associated Development would therefore be limited to winter months during periods of leaf-fall, although would remain extremely filtered by foreground vegetation. Potential views would be further tempered by the distance of view and presence of intervening forestry on the rising landform on the opposite side of Loch Fyne. As a result, the Proposed Development and Associated Development would be barely discernible. The magnitude of change would be Negligible at most based on the addition of the Proposed Development or the Associated Development, resulting in a Negligible level of effect in each case. The combined magnitude of change resulting from the addition of the Project would also be Negligible, and the combined level of effect experienced by road users would be Negligible.

3.11 Appraisal - Cumulative Effects

This Section examines the potential cumulative effects of the Project in combination with other existing, consented and proposed power developments within the Study Area. In this instance, the assessment includes consideration of the following sites:

- Existing An Suidhe Substation (to the south);
- Existing overhead power lines extending broadly north east to south west from the substation; and
- Operational An Suidhe Wind Farm, comprising 23 turbines, located 3.9 km to the north west.

It is recognised that in addition to the above, there will be ongoing forestry activity within the surrounding locality in accordance with the Long Term Forestry Plan. Other proposals within the surrounding area comprise

upgrading of existing forestry tracks and associated extraction of stone from borrow pits. However, these activities and proposals are excluded from further consideration in the cumulative assessment based on their geographic separation from the Project, differing nature of development, and/or limited size. Similarly, proposals at pre-app or scoping stage are also excluded based on the uncertainty of these developments progressing to formal planning submissions and the potential changes to the proposals in the intervening time.

Landscape and visual receptors described within the main LVA as undergoing / experiencing a Low/Negligible magnitude of change (or less) are excluded from consideration in the cumulative assessment on the basis that the Project would exert such a limited effect in its own right that it would not meaningfully contribute to potential cumulative effects, and as such would not tip the balance from a minor cumulative effect to a notable cumulative effect. To this end, cumulative effects are considered in relation to those on landscape character, specifically the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT and Craggy Upland LCT, as well as local residents at Achnagoul. Cumulative effects on all other receptors are excluded from further consideration on the basis of the very limited influence of the Project as described above within the main assessment.

3.11.1 Cumulative Landscape Effects on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT

In addition to the Project, the existing An Suidhe Substation and sections of overhead power lines are located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, thus exert direct effects upon local landscape character in their own right. The operational An Suidhe Wind Farm is located within the neighbouring Craggy Upland LCT, hence exerts more limited influence on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT due to its geographical separation and presence of intervening forestry. With reference to the preceding assessment of effects on landscape character, the primary effects of the Project on the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT would be focused within approximately 500 m (due to the containing influence of the local landform, tree cover and presence of existing overhead lines) where the magnitude of change would be Medium and the level of effect would be Moderate.

There would be some coalescence of these effects with the characterising influence currently exerted by the existing infrastructure in the surrounding locality, comprising substation and overhead lines. The influence of the existing An Suidhe Substation is restricted to very localised parts of the LCT due to the containing influence of surrounding vegetation. The influence of the overhead power lines, which extend over larger areas, are more widespread. The Project would augment the presence of these existing elements of infrastructure within the landscape, and extend their influence very slightly to the north of the existing substation. Given the close proximity, the Project would not contribute towards more widespread effects across geographically separate parts of the LCT. As such, the combined cumulative effects would remain localised and largely contained within an area of actively managed forestry.

In summary, the Project would contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the existing An Suidhe Substation and associated overhead power lines. However, the net result would be very slight and localised, and equivalent to that of an extension of the existing substation. The localised loss of forestry within the Project Site would account for a small area within an extensively forested landscape. As such there would be no discernible adverse effects on the wider character of the LCT, which would remain predominately unchanged as a result. The cumulative magnitude of change across the LCT as a whole would be Low, and the cumulative level of effect would be Moderate/Minor.

3.11.2 Cumulative Landscape Effects on the Craggy Upland LCT

The Project is located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT, 250 m to the south of the Craggy Uplands LCT. As such, the effects on this LCT are indirect and focused across very localised parts of its outer edge, within 500 - 600 m of the Project. Similar parts of the LCT are already influenced indirectly by the existing overhead line that extends across the landscape to the south. As such, the Project would augment the presence of existing electrical infrastructure in outward views from localised parts of this LCT, rather than introducing completely new features, or extending the geographic spread of effects across wider parts of the LCT.

The existing An Suidhe Wind Farm is located within the Craggy Upland LCT, thus exerts direct effects upon local landscape character in its own right. These effects are relatively widespread across open areas of moorland

within central parts of the LCT based on the vertical scale of the turbines. However, due to the containing effect of the intervening landform and extensive areas of forestry, there would be no coalescence of these effects with those of the Project. Instead, the existing landscape characteristics would fully re-exert themselves across intervening areas.

In summary, the Project would contribute to very localised cumulative effects in combination with the existing overhead lines, and the operational An Suidhe Wind Farm. The cumulative magnitude of change across the LCT as a whole would be Low, and the cumulative level of effect would be Moderate. These cumulative effects are primarily attributed to the operational An Suidhe Wind Farm with reference to its scale. Conversely, the influence of the Project would be far more limited and localised in extent and would not notably contribute to cumulative effects on the wider LCT.

3.11.3 Cumulative Visual Effects experienced by Residents at Achnagoul

With reference to the main assessment, views of the Project would be primarily limited to residents on the western edge of this cluster of properties. The same residents experience oblique views of the existing An Suidhe Substation and overhead power lines, subject to partial screening by intervening landform and vegetation. The Project would be experienced in the same field of view and would be subject to the same screening influences. As such, there would be no increase in the geographic spread of infrastructure and no effect on views to the south east.

In summary, the Project would contribute to cumulative visual effects in combination with the existing overhead power lines and substation. However, the net result would be a very limited increase to infrastructure within a relatively localised part of the landscape, oblique to the primary direction of view. On balance, the cumulative magnitude of change would be Low, and the cumulative level of effect would be Moderate.

3.12 Summary of Effects

In summary, the Project (comprising Proposed Development and Associated Development) would be located in an area of actively managed commercial forestry, 4.1 km south west of Inveraray, on the western side of Loch Fyne. The Project would result in the permanent loss of a localised area of forestry and rough grassland, which represents an extremely small parcel of land within an expansive area of surrounding forestry, in close proximity to existing electricity infrastructure. Electricity infrastructure in the surrounding landscape context comprises the existing An Suidhe Substation and associated high voltage overhead power lines.

In terms of landscape effects; the location of the Project in close proximity to the existing An Suidhe Substation within an area of commercial plantation means that landscape effects would be limited. The main effects of the Proposed Development would be primarily focused within 400-500 m. The main effects of the Associated Development would be focused within approximately 500 - 600 m of the towers (reducing to approximately 300 m to the south). This accounts for a small part of the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The effects on the LCT as a whole would be limited. There would be no notable effects on surrounding landscape character areas or designations.

Visual effects would also be extremely restricted based on the geographic location of the Project, which exhibits a high degree of visual enclosure due to the surrounding forestry and the undulating nature of the local topography, and is spatially separate from any major settlements, recreational attractions or transport routes. As such, the Proposed Development would represent a very minor element within wider vistas. The Associated Development would be visible over slightly wider geographic areas (reflecting its height), although would be experienced in the context of existing towers (typically located in the foreground). On balance, there would be no notable effects on the views experienced by residents, recreational receptors or road users.

In terms of cumulative effects; the Project would augment the presence of existing power-related infrastructure in the locality, in particular the existing An Suidhe Substation and associated overhead power lines. The net result would be to very slightly increase the influence of this infrastructure in a northerly direction (further into more upland areas of commercial forestry). The containing effect of surrounding tree cover would prevent the

geographic spread of potential cumulative effects across wider parts of the surrounding landscape. As such, there would be very limited cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity. The Project would not notably contribute to cumulative effects on any landscape designation or views experienced by residents, recreational receptors or road users.

In conclusion, it is assessed that the Project could be accommodated with very limited and localised effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

Table 3.2 Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Impact

| Receptor | Project Interaction | Receptor Sensitivity | Magnitude (Project) | Effect (Project) |
|---|--|----------------------|--|--|
| Landscape Fabric | Direct effects within Proposed Development Site | Low | Medium | Moderate/Minor |
| Plateau Moor and Forest LCT | Direct Effects within Proposed Development Site, and indirect across wider LCT based on views. | Medium | Medium within 500 - 600 m Negligible across wider LCT | Moderate within 500 - 600 m Minor/Negligible across wider LCT |
| Craggy Upland LCT | Indirect effects based on views | High | Low within 500 - 600 m Negligible across wider LCT | Moderate within 500 - 600 m Negligible across wider LCT |
| Other LCTs | Indirect effects based on views | High to Medium | Negligible | Minor/Negligible to Negligible |
| Landscape Designations | Indirect effects based on views | High | Negligible | Minor/Negligible to Negligible |
| Inveraray | Views experienced by Residents | High | No Views | No Effect |
| Hazelbank / Ardnagowan | Views experienced by Residents | High | Negligible | Negligible |
| Isolated Dwelling: Achnagoul (western edge of cluster) | Views experienced by Residents | High | Low | Moderate |
| All other Isolated Dwellings | Views experienced by Residents | High | Low-Negligible to Negligible | Moderate/Minor or less |
| Core Path C199 | Views experienced by Recreational Walkers | High | Negligible | Negligible |
| Other Core Paths | Views experienced by Recreational Walkers | High | No Views | No Effect |
| Argyll Caravan Park | Views experienced by Recreational Visitors | High | Negligible | Negligible |
| Inveraray Golf Club | Views experienced by Recreational Golfers | High | No Views | No effect |
| Road Users on A83 | Transient views experienced from A road | Medium | Low/Negligible (localised sections) | Minor (localised sections) |
| Road Users on A815 | Transient views experienced from A road | Medium | Negligible | Negligible |

3.13 References

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