

VOLUME 4: APPENDIX V1-6.4: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TABLES

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- 1.1.1 The Appendix presents the assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development with the Proposed Alignment on the six Landscape Character Types (LCTs) present in the 5 km study area (see **Volume 2: Figure V1-6.3**). All effects are adverse unless otherwise stated.

Table 6.4.1: LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this LCT which could be affected by the Proposed Alignment comprise: • The importance of the meandering River Strathy; • The strength of the low, isolated hills in their providing local landform features; • The long, low and largely uninterrupted skylines; and • The strong sense of remoteness which is already diminished to some extent by the presence wind turbines, forest plantation, forest tracks and timber harvesting activity.
Landscape Sensitivity	Medium - High: The landscape is reasonably – highly valued (by walkers on Scottish Hill Track 344; parts of the LCT east of the Proposed Alignment coincide with the East Halladale Flows WLA; parts of this LCT along the coast coincide with the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA and has a composition (generally smooth and gently undulating landform) and characteristics (the presence of existing wind turbines at Strathy North, Strathy Wood and Strathy South, the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection, wood pole mounted OHLs and the potential screening effects of forest plantations) tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.
Potential Effects	Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: • The temporary loss of moorland/grassland to working areas (50 m x 50 m for each suspension tower, 70 m x 70 m for L7c angle towers, 80 m x 80 m for L8c angle towers) and access tracks (5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage); • The permanent loss of moorland/grassland to permanent tracks (3.5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage); • The extension north and east of taller OHL towers (steel lattice in place of timber trident poles) leading to an increased influence of this type of development on the landscape character of the area; • The increase in infrastructure in the eastern section of the line, east of the Achridigill Burn, where the existing wood pole OHL would remain in situ, leading to an amplification of the influence of this type of development on the landscape character of the area; • The introduction of the Proposed Alignment in the foreground of views towards the River Strathy from areas to the east; • The diminishment in the perceived scale of low hills which form local landform focal points by the introduction of large vertical man-made structures; • The appearance of the Proposed Alignment breaking the skyline; and • A further diminishment of the sense of remoteness by the introduction of additional activity during construction and further man-made objects during operation.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	The Proposed Alignment would lie almost entirely within this LCT and would result in direct and indirect effects during both construction and operation.

	Direct temporary effects within this LCT would result from the loss of vegetation cover as a result of the working areas at the tower locations (approximately 14.22 hectares (Ha) in total), the existing upgraded access tracks (approximately 11.76 km length), new permanent access tracks (approximately 6.39 km length) and new temporary access tracks (approximately 5.81 km length at 5 m running width with an additional 1.5m for drainage), cable sealing end (CSE) compound and underground cables (UGC), and an increase in the level of vehicle movements and activity. Direct permanent effects within this LCT would result from the presence of the Proposed Alignment, and associated permanent access tracks (new and upgraded) . Indirect temporary effects would arise from construction operations being visible on the skyline in some locations and in views towards the River Strathy, and a further reduction in the sense of remoteness influenced by the presence of turbines at Strathy North, Strathy Wood and Strathy South wind farms and grid infrastructure associated with Strathy Wood Wind Farm. Indirect permanent effects would include changes to the perceived scale of the low hills with the towers providing scale comparators where none presently exist. Views towards the River Strathy would be interrupted by the Proposed Alignment when seen from areas to the east. From lower lying parts of this LCT, towers would be seen breaking the skyline and the existing sense of remoteness, already reduced by the presence of Strathy North wind farm, forest tracks and existing OHL infrastructure, plus Strathy Wood wind farm and grid connection, and Strathy South wind farm, would be further diminished. Direct changes during construction would be perceptible over the route of the Proposed Alignment (loss of land cover to temporary working areas (approximately 14.22 Ha in total), and new and upgraded temporary and permanent access tracks (approximately 23.87 km at 5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage) and the magnitude of change would be Medium. Indirect changes during construction would be perceptible with theoretical visibility (bare ground – i.e. taking no account of the screening effects of forestry) of increased activity from the addition of construction operations over approximately 100 km² (77.24%) of the LCT from which existing forest extraction and vehicle movements associated with Strathy North, Strathy South and Strathy Wood wind farms and substations would also be visible; and notable in localised areas at each tower location. Works associated with the dismantling of the existing OHL would be visible in the western part of this LCT. The magnitude of change would be Medium. Direct changes during operation would result from the presence of towers and associated new permanent access tracks (approximately 6.39 km at 3.5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage) which would be perceptible over the LCT and notable over the route of the Proposed Alignment and the magnitude of change would be Low - Medium. Indirect changes during operation would be perceptible with theoretical visibility (bare ground – taking no account of the screening effects of forestry) of the Proposed Alignment over approximately 100 km² (77.24%) of the LCT and notable in localised areas where towers and conductors would breach the skyline and interrupt views from areas of higher ground in the context of the wind turbines at Strathy Wood, Strathy North and Strathy South. The magnitude of change would be Low - Medium.
Effect and Significance	The Proposed Alignment would be locally prominent and would result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area during construction and a perceptible change during operation. The level of effects during construction would be Moderate direct and indirect adverse and significant. The levels of effect during operation would be Minor - Moderate direct adverse and not significant and Moderate indirect adverse and significant.

Table 6.4. 2: LCT 136: Rocky Hills and Moorland

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this LCT which could be affected by the Proposed Alignment comprise: The sense of remoteness perceived as a result of the lack of habitation.
Landscape Sensitivity	Low - Medium: Parts of this LCT along the coast lie within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA. It is experienced by forest employees, walkers and estate workers in the interior and by visitors to the coast. It has a composition (low lying moorland and the presence of forest cover) tolerant of a degree of change of the type proposed.
Potential Effects	The Proposed Alignment would not lie within this LCT, and potential effects would be limited to indirect effects. Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: The introduction of further man-made objects into the eastern landscape context which already include forestry, forest tracks and wind turbines, diminishing the sense of perceived remoteness due to the lack of habitation.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	Indirect temporary effects within this LCT would arise from construction operations being visible from 8.13 km² (42.54%) of the LCT in the context of other activity associated with Strathy North, Strathy South and Strathy Wood wind farms, Strathy Wood Forest plantation and Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection. Visibility would be limited to areas of elevated ground and would be likely to be less than that indicated on the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) due to the screening effects of Strathy Forest. Works associated with the dismantling of the existing trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be unlikely to be visible from this LCT. The magnitude of change during construction would be Low. Indirect permanent effects within this LCT would arise from the Proposed Alignment being visible from 8.13 km² (42.54%) of the LCT in the context of the turbines at Strathy North, Strathy Wood and Strathy South wind farms, Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection and Strathy Forest. The magnitude of change during operation would be Low.
Effect and Significance	Construction and operation of the Proposed Alignment would result in inappreciable reduction in scenic quality and change to the intrinsic landscape character. The level of effect during both construction and operation would be Minor indirect and not significant.

Table 6.4.3: LCT 140 Sandy Beaches and Dunes

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this LCT which could be affected by the Proposed Alignment comprise: • Strong sense of space, light and exposure, and extensive visibility on the larger and more open stretches of sandy beach; and • Relatively wild character.
Landscape Sensitivity	High: The majority of this LCT lies within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA and it has a particularly distinctive character which is susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.
Potential Effects	The Proposed Alignment would not lie within this LCT, and potential effects would be limited to indirect effects. Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: • The introduction of further man-made objects into the southern landscape context diminishing the sense of perceived wildness.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	Indirect temporary effects would arise from construction operations being visible from 0.2 km² (42.55%) of the LCT. Visibility would be limited to areas of elevated ground in the vicinity of the Portskerra Drownings Memorial, areas west of Bighouse and northeast of the North Coast Touring Park where the focus of views are generally northwards over the bay and north eastwards over the river. Works associated with the dismantling of the existing trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be unlikely to be visible from this LCT. The magnitude of change during construction would be Low. Indirect permanent effects would arise from the Proposed Alignment being visible from 0.2 km² (42.55%) of the LCT. Visibility would be limited to areas where the focus of views are generally northwards over the bay and north eastwards over the river from elevated ground in the vicinity of the Portskerra Drownings Memorial, areas west of Bighouse and north-east of the North Coast Touring Park. The Proposed Alignment would not affect the key characteristics of dune systems, machair, camp site, strong sense of space, the beach or the relatively wild character. The magnitude of change during operation would be Low.
Effect and Significance	The Proposed Alignment may be locally intrusive but would not result in an appreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area. The level of effect during both construction and operation would be Minor indirect and not significant.

Table 6.4.4: LCT 141 High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspect of this LCT which could be affected by the Proposed Alignment comprises: The absence of development and a strong sense of naturalness creating a wild landscape character.
Landscape Sensitivity	High: The majority of this LCT lies within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA. It is a highly valued landscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed and is experienced by residents and visitors to coast.
Potential Effects	The Proposed Alignment would not lie within this LCT and potential effects would be limited to indirect effects. Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: The introduction of further man-made objects into the southern landscape context diminishing the sense of perceived wildness.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	Indirect temporary effects would arise from construction operations being visible from 0.48 km² (30.77%) of the LCT. Visibility would be limited to areas of elevated ground north of Strathy Bay, north of Baligill, around Rhua Beag and north of Rhuba an Tuir where the focus of views are generally out to sea. Works associated with the dismantling of the existing trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be unlikely to be visible from this LCT. The magnitude of change during construction would be Low. Indirect permanent effects would arise from the Proposed Alignment being visible from 0.48 km² (30.77%) of the LCT. Visibility would be limited to areas where the focus of views are generally out to sea from elevated sections of the coastline north of Strathy Bay, north of Baligill, around Rhua Beag and north of Rhuba an Tuir. The magnitude of change during operation would be Low.
Effect and Significance	The Proposed Alignment may be locally intrusive but would not result in an appreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area. The level of effect during both construction and operation would be Minor indirect and not significant.

Table 6.4.5: LCT 142 Strath – Caithness and Sutherland

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspect of this LCT which could be affected by the Proposed Alignment comprises: • Strong north – south linear pattern. • Linear settlement pattern along communication routes. • Larger scale enclosed pastures and smaller strip fields. • Strongly channelled views along the strath.
Landscape Sensitivity	Medium: No landscape designation, but valued by residents, visitors and road users on the A897. Composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.
Potential Effects	The Proposed Alignment would cross this LCT west of Connagill and potential effects would include direct and indirect effects during construction and operation. Potential effects to landscape receptors may include those arising from: • The introduction of construction activity and further, taller man-made objects west of Connagill 275/132 kV substation. • The introduction of construction activity associated with improvements to existing tracks and new sections of track and the presence of tracks. • The presence of the CSE compound.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	A short section of the Proposed Alignment would cross this LCT west of Connagill and the CSE compound would be located on the edge of the LCT and would result in direct and indirect effects during both construction and operation. Direct temporary effects would result from the loss of vegetation cover as a result of the working areas at the tower locations (approximately 2.92 Ha); existing upgraded access tracks (approximately 1.71 km); new permanent access tracks (approximately 0.99 km) (5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage); and an increase in the level of vehicle movements and activity. Direct permanent effects would result from the presence of the Proposed Alignment, including the CSE compound and associated permanent new access tracks (approximately 0.99km @ 3.5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage). Indirect temporary effects would arise from construction operations being visible on the skyline from some locations and in views along the River Halladale. Works associated with the dismantling of the existing trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be unlikely to be visible from this LCT other than from the most northerly parts near the estuary of the river. Indirect permanent effects would include changes to the perceived scale of the low hills west of the Strath with the towers being seen in addition to the existing trident 'H' wood poles east of the Achridigill Burn. Many towers would be seen breaking the skyline and from some locations these would be seen in addition to the existing steel lattice towers which lie to the east of the Strath. Direct changes during construction would be perceptible over the route of the Proposed Alignment (loss of land cover to temporary working areas (approximately 2.92 Ha) and upgraded and new access tracks (approximately 2.7km at 5 m running width plus 1.5 m for drainage) and the magnitude of change would be Medium. Indirect changes during construction would be perceptible with theoretical visibility (bare ground – i.e. taking no account of the screening effects of forestry and scrub woodland) activity from the addition of construction operations over 10.08 km² (94.38%) of the LCT, and notable in localised areas at each tower location. Actual visibility can be expected to be substantially less due to the screening effects of scrub woodland and small forest plantations within the Strath. The magnitude of change would be Medium. Direct changes during operation would result from the presence of towers and associated permanent access tracks (0.99 km at 3.5 m running width plus 1.5 m for

	drainage) which would be perceptible over the LCT and notable over the route of the Proposed Alignment and the magnitude of change would be Medium. Indirect changes during operation would be perceptible with theoretical visibility (bare ground – taking no account of the screening effects of forestry) of the Proposed Alignment over 10.08 km² (94.38%) of the LCT and notable in localised areas where towers and conductors would breach the skyline. Actual visibility can be expected to be substantially less due to the screening effects of scrub woodland and forest plantation within the strath particularly for parts of this LCT south. The magnitude of change would be Medium.
Effect and Significance	The Proposed Alignment would be locally prominent and would result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area during construction and a perceptible change during operation. The level of effects during construction would be Moderate direct and indirect adverse and significant. The level of effect during operation would be Moderate direct and indirect adverse and not significant.

Table 6.4.6: LCT 144 Coastal Crofts and Small Farms

Landscape Receptors	The principal aspect of this LCT which could be affected by the Proposed Alignment comprises: Complex visual composition of views tending to focus on the detail of houses, field patterns and crops, yet with the wider context of backdrop hills and sea adding diversity.
Landscape Sensitivity	Medium - High: Parts of this LCT lie close to the coast within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA. It has composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.
Potential Effects	The Proposed Alignment would not lie within this LCT, and potential effects would be limited to indirect effects. Potential effects to landscape receptors may include: The introduction of further man-made objects into the southern wider landscape context (views) which already includes forestry, forest tracks, trident wood pole mounted overhead lines and wind turbines.
Nature and Magnitude of Change	Indirect temporary effects would arise from construction operations being visible from 3.22 km² (51.71%) of the LCT. There would be no visibility from the instance of this LCT at Armadale. Theoretical visibility from the instances of this LCT at Strathy and Ballagill is relatively widespread at distances in excess of around 2 km. Theoretical visibility from the instance of this LCT at Portskerra and Melvich would be limited to areas of elevated ground at Portskerra and lower lying locations at Melvich. Actual visibility from these settlements is likely to be less due to the screening effects of buildings and vegetation. Works associated with the dismantling of the existing trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be unlikely to be visible from this LCT. The magnitude of change during construction would be Low. Indirect permanent effects would arise from the Proposed Alignment being visible from 3.22 km² (51.71%) of the LCT. There would be no visibility from Armadale. There is theoretical relatively widespread visibility from Strathy and Baligill. Theoretical visibility at Portskerra and Melvich would be limited to areas of elevated ground at Portskerra and lower lying locations at Melvich. Actual visibility from these settlements is likely to be less due to the screening effects of buildings and vegetation. The key characteristics related to topography, land use, settlement, history and visual focus would not be affected by the Proposed Alignment. The magnitude of change during operation would be Low.
Effect and Significance	The Proposed Alignment may be locally intrusive but would not result in an appreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area. The level of effect during both construction and operation would be Minor indirect and not significant.

