Novar 1 Wind Farm Repowering

Chapter 5 - Landscape and Visual Amenity

September 2026



5. Landscape and Visual Amenity

5.1 Executive Summary

5.1.1 This chapter describes a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) of the Proposed Development and the cumulative landscape and visual effects arising from its addition to other onshore wind farms that are consented, in planning or at scoping stage. The assessment uses a Study Area of 35 km. The approach and scope of the LVIA were agreed with consultees through a Scoping Opinion request and subsequent correspondence.

5.1.2 The Site is located to the northwest of Evanton and west of Alness where Novar 1 Wind Farm is operational and adjacent to the operational Novar 2 Wind Farm. Most of the Site coincides with an open area of moorland in NatureScot Landscape Character Type (LCT) 329 Rounded Mountain Massif which is modified by Novar 1 and Novar 2 Wind Farms. The access route to the Site passes through NatureScot LCT 345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross and Cromarty, LCT 330 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes - Ross and Cromarty and LCT 341 Forest Edge Farming. Landcover at the Site is mainly heather moorland associated with traditional sporting estate activities. Novar 2 Wind Farm is adjacent to the Site to the south.

5.1.3 The Proposed Development would be located 17.5 km to the southwest of Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area (NSA). It was agreed with NatureScot that an assessment of effects on the special qualities of Dornoch Firth NSA was required. There are several Wild Land Areas (WLA) in the study area and although the Proposed Development would not be situated in a WLA, an assessment of effects in the nearest of those: WLA 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis has been undertaken and effects on WLA have been a consideration in design of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would also be located within 25 km of three Highland Council Special Landscape Areas (SLA): Ben Wyvis SLA, Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA and Sutors of Cromarty, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA. An assessment of effects on special qualities of these three SLA has been undertaken.

5.1.4 The focus of the LVIA has been on the operational effects of the Proposed Development. The assessment focuses on effects arising from the wind turbines as they are the more noticeable components. Tracks are modelled in nearby views and are assessed as part of the Proposed Development. Other components are mentioned where they have a bearing on the assessment of effects judgements.

5.1.5 As this is a repowering project, the Proposed Development involves removing 34 smaller turbines and replacing these with nine larger turbines. To understand the impacts fully, the landscape and visual impact assessment considers two scenarios:

- The comparative scenario whereby the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against a baseline that includes the existing Novar 1 Wind Farm; and
- The restored scenario whereby the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against a baseline that assumes the Novar 1 Wind Farm site is undeveloped.

5.1.6 A key aspect of the LVIA has been design iteration underpinned by assessment findings and collaboration with other technical disciplines in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) team. The key embedded mitigation factors are:

- Placing the proposed turbines slightly downhill from the ridge crest to minimise the disparity in scale between Novar 2 and the proposed turbines;

- Aligning the proposed turbines along the ridge to create a simple composition within the landscape and a more balanced and coherent array;
- Locating the proposed turbines largely within the footprint of Novar 1 Wind Farm to minimise the horizontal extent of the array;
- The height of the proposed turbines Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the array corresponds to underlying landform while avoiding markedly differing elevations;
- The spacing between turbines is consistent without large gaps between groups of turbines or the presence of outliers; and
- A reduced lighting scheme comprising of nacelle lights on T1, T5, T7 and T9 only with no mid-tower lights.

5.1.7 During decommissioning of Novar 1 and construction of the Proposed Development, ground level construction activities would be visible. Due to the temporary and reversible nature of effects arising from ground level construction activities and the very limited extent of impacts, there would be no significant effects on landscape and visual receptors during decommissioning and construction.

5.1.8 During operation of the Proposed Development there would be significant effects on landscape character within approximately 8 km of the Proposed Development. Where significant effects are predicted this is a result of a small number of key characteristics being affected in a small part of the affected LCT.

5.1.9 Effects on LCT in the wider Study Area would be not significant due to the intervening distance or limited visibility of the Proposed Development.

5.1.10 During operation there would be significant adverse effects on the following visual receptors:

- The scattered settlement of Boath;
- Core paths:
  - RC05.02: Tollie to Lealty;
  - RC16.01: Swordale Hill;
  - RC05.03: Dam Wood; and
  - RC05.04: Dublin to Ardross Mains.

5.1.11 During operation, significant adverse effects are predicted at the following viewpoints used in the LVIA:

- Viewpoint 2: Carn Salachaidh;
- Viewpoint 3: Loch Glass, Wyvis Lodge;
- Viewpoint 4: Strath Rusdale;
- Viewpoint 5: A9 between Duncanston and Causeway
- Viewpoint 6: Boath;
- Viewpoint 7: Minor Road at Inchlumpie;
- Viewpoint 8: Minor Road by Ardross Distillery;
- Viewpoint 10: Beinn Tharsuinn;
- Viewpoint 16: Beinn Wyvis; and
- Viewpoint 20: Glen Glass.

5.1.12 No significant effects are predicted on any key settlements or transport routes.

5.1.13 There would be no significant effects on the special landscape qualities (SLQ) of Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area (NSA), and the integrity of the NSA would not be compromised.

5.1.14 There would be significant effects on one special quality (SQ) of Ben Wyvis Special Landscape Area (SLA). Overall integrity of the SLA would not be compromised. There would not be a significant effect on the SQ of any of the three other SLA assessed and the overall integrity of the three other SLA would not be compromised.

5.1.15 There would be significant effects on one wild land quality (WLQ) of Wild Land Area (WLA) 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis. There would not be significant effects on WLA 29 overall.

5.1.16 The assessment identified geographically restricted significant effects on WLA29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis. Significant effects would be restricted to a small number of summits within 10 km of the proposed turbines and the overall effect on relative wildness of WLA29 would not be significant and the integrity of the WLA would not be undermined.

5.1.17 No significant night-time effects are identified on Dornoch Firth NSA and the integrity of the designation would not be undermined.

5.1.18 No significant night-time effects are identified on Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA or Ben Wyvis SLA and the integrity of these designations would not be undermined.

5.1.19 No significant night-time effects are identified on visual receptors in the Study Area.

5.1.20 The main cumulative interaction would be with the proposed Ceislein Wind Farm, which is the subject of a S36 application that is currently under determination. All cumulative sites within 35 km were considered in the assessment, but the focus was given to main cumulative interactions occurred within 20 km.

5.1.21 During construction there is the potential for significant cumulative effects on landscape and visual receptors arising from interactions of the Proposed Development with sites within 10 km. However, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding consenting and construction programmes for cumulative sites, and the assessment has taken a precautionary approach.

5.1.22 The assessment of cumulative operational effects focussed on in-addition effects arising from consented sites and sites in planning. Scoping sites were also considered. The assessment identified significant cumulative effects on the following landscape and visual receptors:

- LCT339 Inland Strath;
- Boath;
- Core path RC05.02: Tollie to Lealty;

5.2 Introduction

5.2.1 This chapter is intended to identify and assess potential significant effects on the landscape and visual resource associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The chapter comprises:

- A description of the scope and assessment methodology and significance criteria used in completing the impact assessment;
- A description of the existing landscape and visual baseline context and cumulative context against which to assess the effects of the Proposed Development, along with sensitive receptors that form priorities for consideration in the design and mitigation of the Proposed Development;

- A description of impact generators associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development as well as an analysis of potential landscape and visual effects;
- A description of the design and mitigation measures proposed to address potential significant effects; and
- An assessment of residual landscape and visual effects remaining taking account of proposed mitigation measures.

5.2.2 The assessment has been prepared by Ross Allan CMLI who is a Managing Consultant and Associate Landscape Planner at Ramboll. Technical review has been provided by James Welch CMLI, who is a Director at SLR Consulting Limited.

5.2.3 This chapter is supported by the following figures and technical appendices:

- Volume 3a: Figures:
  - Figure 5.1: Location Plan and LVIA Study Area;
  - Figure 5.2: Topography;
  - Figure 5.3: Landscape Character;
  - Figure 5.4: Landscape Character and Zone of Theoretical Visibility;
  - Figure 5.5: Zone of Theoretical Visibility - Bare Ground - Comparative - Tip Height;
  - Figure 5.6: Zone of Theoretical Visibility - Bare Ground - Tip Height;
  - Figure 5.7: Zone of Theoretical Visibility - Bare Ground - Hub Height;
  - Figure 5.8a: Visual Receptors and Tip Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility;
  - Figure 5.8b: Visual Receptors and Tip Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility;
  - Figure 5.9: Landscape Designations and Wild Land Areas with Tip Height Bare Ground ZTV;
  - Figure 5.10: Comparative Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Wildland Area;
  - Figure 5.11: Relative Wildness and Wildland Area
  - Figure 5.12: Tip Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Wildland Area;
  - Figure 5.13: Cumulative Location Plan;
  - Figure 5.14: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Operational Sites;
  - Figure 5.15: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Consented Sites;
  - Figure 5.16: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Abhainn Dubh (in Planning);
  - Figure 5.17: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Carn Fearna (in Planning);
  - Figure 5.18: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Ballach (in Planning);
  - Figure 5.19: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Balblair and Lairg 3 (in Planning);
  - Figure 5.20: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Achany Ext, Allt an Tuir, Strath Oykel, Coille Beith (in Planning);
  - Figure 5.21: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Ceislein (In Planning);
  - Figure 5.22: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Creachan (In Planning)
  - Figure 5.23: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with BTRP (Scoping)
  - Figure 5.24: Cumulative ZTV - Novar Repower with Glasa (Scoping);
  - Figure 5.25: Cumulative ZTV - Novar and Tarvie Wind Farm (Scoping);
- Volume 3b: NatureScot Visualisations:
  - Figures 5.26a to 5.55g Viewpoints 1-30.
- Volume 3c: The Highland Council Visualisations
  - Figures 5.26h to 5.55l Viewpoints 1-30.
- Volume 4: Technical Appendices:
  - Technical Appendix 5.1: Methodology;
  - Technical Appendix 5.2: Landscape Character Assessment;

- Technical Appendix 5.3: Landscape Designations Assessment;
- Technical Appendix 5.4: Viewpoint Assessment;
- Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Assessment;
- Technical Appendix 5.6: Wild Land Assessment; and
- Technical Appendix 5.7: Assessment of OWESG Criteria.

5.2.4 Figures and technical appendices are referenced in the text where relevant.

5.3 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

5.3.1 The LVIA has been undertaken within the context of, and in accordance with the principles contained within the following legislation, planning policies, and guidance documents:

Legislation

- Council of Europe (2000) European Landscape Convention (ELC), Florence, 20.X.2000, ETS No. 176. Strasbourg: Council of Europe[1]. The ELC covers all types of landscapes, and not just designated areas. It establishes principles for landscape protection, management and planning to ensure their quality and enhance the well-being of people who live in them. Although protection is a core theme, the ELC does not require the preservation of all landscapes. The principal requirements of the ELC underpin the current national policies and guidance on the assessment of landscape and visual effects; and
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017[2].

Policy

National Planning Policy

5.3.2 Scottish Government (2023) National Planning Framework 4[3] provides the overarching policy framework. Key polices of relevance to this assessment are described below.

POLICY 4: NATURAL PLACES

5.3.3 This policy states that development proposals which, by virtue of their type, location or scale will have an "unacceptable" impact on the natural environment will not be supported.

5.3.4 Regarding National Scenic Areas Policy 4, Paragraph c) states:

"Development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve will only be supported where:

i. The objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or

ii. Any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance."

5.3.5 Policy 4, Paragraph d) deals with local landscape designations:

"Development proposals that affect a site designated as …a local landscape area in the LDP will only be supported where:

[1] Council of Europe. (2000) European Landscape Convention

[2] The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations. (2017)

[3] Scottish Government. (2023) National Planning Framework 4.

- Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or
- Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance."

5.3.6 Regarding wild land the second half of NPF4 Policy 4, paragraph g) states that:

"Buffer zones around wild land will not be applied, and effects of development outwith wild land areas (WLAs) will not be a significant consideration."

POLICY 11: RENEWABLE ENERGY

5.3.7 Policy 11, Section d states that "development proposals that impact on international or national designations will be assessed in relation to Policy 4."

5.3.8 NPF4 Policy 11, Section e, goes on to require that "project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:

i. impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker;

ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable

and

xii. cumulative impacts."

Local Planning Policy

5.3.9 The Highland Council (2012) Highland Wide Local Development Plan[4] is the adopted Local Development Plan. Key policies of relevance for this assessment are described below.

5.3.10 Policy 67 Renewable Energy Developments. Policy 67 is the key policy and advises that THC will support proposals for renewable energy development "*where it is satisfied that they are located, sited and designed such that that will not be significantly detrimental overall, either individually or cumulatively with other developments*…" The policy states that the Council will evaluate proposals in relation to significant effects on a number of aspects including:

- visual impact and impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area (the design and location of the proposal should reflect the scale and character of the landscape and seek to minimise landscape and visual impact, subject to any other considerations);
- amenity at sensitive locations, including residential properties, work places and recognised visitor sites (in or outwith a settlement boundary);
- the amenity of users of any Core Path or other established public access for walking, cycling or horse riding;
- tourism and recreation interests; and
- land and water-based traffic and transport interests.

5.3.11 Policy 67 is supported by the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.

5.3.12 This assessment also refers to the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance 2016 and the Addendum Supplementary Guidance: 'Part 2b', December 2017. **Technical Appendix 5.7 (Volume 4)** evaluates the Proposed Development against the "key landscape and visual aspects" criteria that The Highland Council (THC) use to assess onshore wind development proposals.

4 The Highland Council. (2012) Highland Wide Local Development Plan.

5.3.13 The guidance includes a Spatial Framework for Onshore Wind Energy (updated in May 2020) which adopts a set of spatial criteria to determine areas with potential for wind farm development, areas of significant protection and areas where wind farms would not be acceptable. The site falls predominantly within an area of significant protection, with a few areas of potential for wind farm development on the site.

5.3.14 The OWESG identifies landscape character areas surrounding Loch Ness, The Black Isle, surrounding hills and the Moray Firth and for Caithness. The OWESG landscape character area boundaries coincide exactly with the NatureScot's 2019 Landscape Character Assessment. This LVIA refers to NatureScot's 2019 Landscape Character Assessment, informed by information on character and sensitivity from the OWESG.

5.3.15 The proposed Turbine Array is in THC Landscape Character Area BL41: Ben Wyvis Massif (South) which is the same as NatureScot (2019) LCT 329 Rounded Mountain Massif. The OWESG describes BL41 as being rated "1, most susceptible to change" with "no capacity for development."

5.3.16 Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage. This policy notes that "all development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting, in the context of the policy framework detailed in Appendix 2."

5.3.17 Table 5.1 of the **Planning Statement** provides further explanation of Policy 57 in the context of NPF4. This document sits outside of the EIAR but forms part of the application submission package.

5.3.18 Policy 61: Landscape. The policy advises that "landscape and scenic quality are very important in Highland, both within and outwith designated areas…" The policy states:

"New developments should be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed. This will include consideration of the appropriate scale, form, pattern and construction materials, as well as the potential cumulative effect of developments where this may be an issue. The Council would wish to encourage those undertaking development to include measures to enhance the landscape characteristics of the area. This will apply particularly where the condition of the landscape characteristics has deteriorated to such an extent that there has been a loss of landscape quality or distinctive sense of place. In the assessment of new developments, the Council will take account of Landscape Character Assessments, Landscape Capacity Studies and its supplementary guidance on Siting and Design and Sustainable Design, together with any other relevant design guidance."

Technical Standards and Guidance

5.3.19 The following guidance and data sources have been considered in preparation of this LVIA and supporting material:

- Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3);
- Landscape Institute (2019a). Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19;
- Landscape Institute (2019b). Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment;
- Landscape Institute (2021). Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations;

- Landscape Institute (2024). Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01;
- NatureScot (October 2025). NatureScot pre-application guidance for onshore wind farms;
- NatureScot (January 2025), Special Landscape Qualities – Guidance on assessing effects;
- NatureScot; (2020/2023). Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas Technical Guidance Revised August 2023 to reflect NPF4;
- NatureScot (2021). Guidance - Assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of onshore wind energy developments;
- NatureScot (2024). Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment;
- SNH (June 2014). Map of Wild Land Areas;
- SNH (2017b). Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Version 3a;
- SNH (2017c). Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2;
- The Highland Council in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage (2011). Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas;
- THC (November 2016). Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017); and
- THC (July 2016). Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.

5.4 Assessment Methodology

Overview

5.4.1 The Landscape and Visual Assessment methodology is detailed in **Technical Appendix 5.1 Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology (EIAR Volume 4)** and follows the principles set out in GLVIA3.

5.4.2 The assessment is presented with reference to specific 'areas' of the Site. These areas comprise the turbine array, access route and internal access tracks as described in **Chapter 3: Site Description and Proposed Development (EIAR Volume 2)**.

5.4.3 Effects considered to be significant for the purposes of the EIA Regulations are those classified as being 'Major' or 'Major/Moderate'. Where 'Moderate' effects are predicted, professional judgement is used to assess whether the effect is Significant or Not Significant thereby ensuring that the potential for significant effects is robustly considered. Justification has been provided for the judgement reached.

Scope of Assessment

EIA Scoping Opinion

5.4.4 An EIA Scoping Report (presented in **Technical Appendix 1.3 Scoping Report (EIAR Volume 4)**) was submitted to the ECU on 23rd January 2025 with a formal request for a Scoping Opinion on the proposed scope of the EIA and assessment methodologies. The ECU subsequently issued their Scoping Opinion on the proposed scope and methodology of the topics for assessment within the EIA on 23rd May 2025. A copy of ECU's Scoping Opinion is provided in **Technical Appendix 1.4 Scoping Opinion (EIAR Volume 4)**.

5.4.5 A summary of the key points raised in ECU's Scoping Opinion, relevant to Landscape and Visual, is presented in Table 5.1, including a response which identifies where the comments have been addressed.

5.4.6 A summary of the additional engagement undertaken since the scoping opinion was issued is provided in Table 5.2, including a response which identifies where the comments have been addressed.

Table 5.1: Summary of ECU Scoping Opinion Comments	
Summary of Comment	**Response or location within the EIAR where comments are addressed**
ECU	
The Study Area in kilometres from the outermost turbines of the proposed Development and final list of viewpoints and visualisations should be agreed following discussion between the Company, the Highland Council, HES and NatureScot (NS).	A Study Area of 35 km was agreed with THC and NS. Viewpoints were agreed with THC and NS.
As the maximum blade tip height of turbines exceeds 150 m the LVIA must include a robust Nighttime Assessment with agreed viewpoints to consider the effects of aviation lighting and how the chosen lighting mitigates the effects.	A night-time assessment is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
THC	
THC considers that the EIA LVIA should consider both the comparative scenario (i.e., an LVIA that assumes the presence of the existing Novar Wind Farm (including turbines and associated infrastructure) as a baseline feature), and the restored baseline scenario (i.e., an LVIA that assumes an undeveloped baseline on the Site and does not consider any comparison with the effects of the existing Novar turbines).	A comparative scenario and restored scenario have been assessed and are reported in this chapter.
THC considers that the restored baseline LVIA is the more realistic assessment of effects on receptors for proposals to repower wind farms.	Noted.
We note that the visualisation viewpoints for the hours of daylight and darkness are yet to be agreed between THC, NatureScot, and the applicant. We consider that the scope and presentation of supporting visual information for each of the two scenarios will be agreed with the applicant at a future date.	THC and NatureScot were consulted in December 2025. Responses provided in Table 5.2 Additional Engagement. NatureScot has responded. Responses provided in Table 5.2 Additional Engagement.
The Council require single frame images with different focal lengths taken with a 35 mm format full frame sensor camera – not an 'equivalent.'	The LVIA is accompanied by visualisations in accordance with THC's standards and NS guidance (as published).

Table 5.1: Summary of ECU Scoping Opinion Comments	
Summary of Comment	**Response or location within the EIAR where comments are addressed**
The focal lengths required are 50 mm and 75 mm. Photomontages should follow the Council's Visualisation Standards and are subject an independent verification check upon receipt.	NS visualisations are provided in **EIAR Volume 3b**. THC visualisations are provided in **EIAR Volume 3c**.
Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance.	The LVIA is accompanied by visualisations in accordance with THC's standards and NS guidance (as published). NS visualisations are provided in **EIAR Volume 3b**. THC visualisations are provided in **EIAR Volume 3c**.
All elements of a development are important to consider within any EIAR and the assessment must include the expected landscape and visual impact of on-site BESS, borrow pits, access roads, compounds including substations and battery storage, this is despite the fact that the principal structures will be a primary concern. All elements of the proposal are to be rendered into photomontages.	A BESS does not form part of the Proposed Development. All elements of the Proposed Development have been assessed and are reported in this chapter and **Technical Appendices 5.1-5.7**. Where clearly visible, other elements are shown on the photomontages provided in EIAR Volume 3b (NS) and 3c (THC).
There are a number of wind farm applications in this area that are yet to be determined/concluded in the vicinity of this application.	A cumulative assessment has been undertaken and reported in this chapter. It is based on cumulative data gathered up to the end of July 2026.
The finalised list of Viewpoints (VP) and wireframes for the assessment of effects of a proposed development must be agreed in advance of preparation of any visuals with THC and NatureScot.	Noted. Responses provided in Table 5.2 Additional Engagement.
We acknowledge that there will be some micrositing of the viewpoints to avoid intervening screening of vegetation boundary treatments etc. We would recommend that the photographer has in their mind whether the VP is representative or specific and also who the receptors are when they are taking the photos it would be helpful. We have also found that if the photographer has a 3D model on a laptop when they go out on site it helps the orientation of the photography.	Photography has been undertaken in accordance with NatureScot and Landscape Institute guidance. Viewpoints have been selected by the LVIA technical lead and the reason for their selection is described in **Technical Appendix 5.3: Viewpoint Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
As far as possible, the viewpoints should correspond with the viewpoints used for existing wind energy schemes within the area.	This has been taken into consideration.

Table 5.1: Summary of ECU Scoping Opinion Comments	
Summary of Comment	**Response or location within the EIAR where comments are addressed**
The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints shall be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information.	The rationale for viewpoint selection is described in **Technical Appendix 5.3: Viewpoint Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
The Study Area will be 35 km, given the scale of the turbines. Given the size of the turbines and the landscape sensitivities of this site and the surrounding area, we would expect a detailed assessment of effects should be undertaken for the whole Study Area, including for Cumulative Impact Assessment, which should also include an assessment of sequential effects as the receptor moves through the landscape.	A 35 km Study Area has been used. The LVIA adopts a proportionate approach to assessment of the Proposed Development and cumulative effects including sequential effects.
The LVIA Chapter of the EIAR should clearly set out the methodology.	The LVIA methodology is described in detail in **Technical Appendix 5.1: LVIA Methodology (EIAR Volume 4)**.
Given the cumulative impact of renewable energy in this area it is expected that the applicant should present images for presentation within the Panoramic Digital Viewer deployed by the Council.	THC has confirmed that images for the panoramic digital viewer will only be requested prior to the Planning Committee date if officers deem it to be necessary.
We expect the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to refer to the Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance and expect an assessment of the proposal against the criterion set out in the Council's OWESG at pages 19 and 20 to be included within the LVIA chapter of the EIAR.	An assessment of the Proposed Development against the 10 criteria of the OWESG is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.6: Assessment of OWESG Criteria (EIAR Volume 4)**.
LVIA should include consideration of the impact of the proposals on the visual amenity of key transport routes in the area. Recreational routes - all core paths and long-distance trails should be assessed. Assessments of routes should include a sequential assessment of how the development will be experienced in relation to existing and consented wind farms. We expect an assessment of the development's visual impacts on surrounding settlements	Recreational routes, long distance trails and core paths have been assessed and are reported in this chapter. A proportionate assessment of core paths with 20 km has been undertaken as it is unlikely that significant effects would occur beyond this distance. A sequential assessment of key routes has also been provided.
Landscape Impact Assessment should focus on individual Landscape Character Types/individual Units, and the local landscape character composition within which these	A detailed assessment of effects on Landscape Character Types has been undertaken and is reported in this chapter.

Table 5.1: Summary of ECU Scoping Opinion Comments	
Summary of Comment	**Response or location within the EIAR where comments are addressed**
elements which come together to define a particular sense of Place.	
Assessment should assess the impacts on any landscapes designated at a national and local scale.	An assessment of effects on national and local landscape designations in accordance with current guidance is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. It assesses the following: • Dornoch Firth NSA; • Ben Wyvis SLA; • Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie SLA; and • Sutors of Cromarty, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA.
Assessments of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) must utilise the SLA citations available on the Council's website.	**Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)** uses information in Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (2011).
Applicants should consider the contents of the Black Isle, Surrounding Hills, and Moray Firth Coast Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal, particularly the description of sensitivities and development scope in area BL41 and take note of relevant details regarding Key Views and Routes.	This has informed the assessment of effects and consideration is given in **Technical Appendix 5.6: Assessment of OWESG Criteria (EIAR Volume 4)**.
The area is also defined as having a sensitivity of '1' to large scale wind farms (in a scale of 14; 1 being the most susceptible to change), and a conclusion is drawn of 'No Scope for Large or Medium Turbines'. Attention is drawn to the Key Routes from which development in the LCA may be prominent or significant in the view, such as the A9 Cromarty Causeway, where development may be seen framed by the Peffery Strath, The A835 Leanaig junction, where development may be relevant to the perception of landscape scale and distance with particular reference to Ben Wyvis. The ZTV indicates potential visibility from the Garden and Designed Landscapes Inventoried sites at Ardross castle and Novar House Gardens. Potential effects on the design qualities of these sites should be considered and mitigated, where significant.	THC was consulted on viewpoints to be included in the LVIA. All viewpoints are assessed in **Technical Appendix 5.3: Viewpoint Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. VP5: A9 between Duncanston and Causeway and VP17: A835 at Leanaig Junction are situated on Key Routes. VP8: Minor Road by Ardross Distillery is situated adjacent to Ardross Castle GDL. An assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on GDL is described in **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage (EIAR Volume 2)**.
As the heights of the proposed turbines are above 150 m, aviation lighting is required.	A night-time assessment is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.

Table 5.1: Summary of ECU Scoping Opinion Comments	
Summary of Comment	**Response or location within the EIAR where comments are addressed**
Hours of Darkness VPs should be representative of commutes and communities, as well as Wild Land.	Night-time photomontages are provided for the following viewpoints: • Viewpoint 3: Loch Glass by Wyvis Lodge. Edge of WLA 29 Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis and representative of recreational users; • Viewpoint 4: Strath Rusdale. Representative of communities and road users; • Viewpoint 7: Minor Road at Inchlumpie. Representative of communities and road users; and • Viewpoint 16: Ben Wyvis Lower Summit of An t-Socach. Representative of hillwalkers.
The residential visual amenity impact should be assessed for all properties, settlements, housing groups within 2 km of the turbines within the LVIA.	There are no residential properties within 2 km of the nearest proposed turbine. A residential visual amenity assessment is therefore not included in the LVIA.
NatureScot	
We note from the Gate Check Report that a wild land assessment for WLA 29 is not intended to be included in the LVIA (with the applicant's referencing Policy 4(g) of NPF4). We also note that Ben Wyvis SLA is scoped into the LVIA (as outlined in the January 2025 Scoping Report). The SLA is partly nestled within the southern part of WLA 29 to the southwest/west of the proposed development. In consideration of daytime and night-time effects on the Ben Wyvis SLA we would therefore encourage the applicants to consider underlying/overlapping key attributes and qualities of WLA 29.	Overlapping wild land attributes with Ben Wyvis SLA have been considered and are reported in this chapter and **Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
Proposed development would introduce some additional visibility and influence of wind farm development within areas currently unaffected by the operational Novar wind farm. This is likely to include areas within Wild Land Area (WLA) 29: Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis, the Cromarty Firth and Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area (NSA). The proposed development individually and cumulatively (with application stage Abhainn Dubh and scoping Ceislein wind farms) may result in significant and adverse effects on the distinctive landscapes of the Ben Wyvis massif and the Cromarty Firth.	This chapter and **Technical Appendices 5.2-5.7 (EIAR Volume 4)** provide a full assessment of effects of the Proposed Development.

Table 5.1: Summary of ECU Scoping Opinion Comments	
Summary of Comment	**Response or location within the EIAR where comments are addressed**
As the proposed turbines would be over 150 m in height visible aviation lighting would be required.	A night-time assessment is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
We note that effects of the proposed development on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the Dornoch Firth NSA will be scoped into the LVIA. We request a full assessment of effects on SLQs in accordance with NatureScot Guidance Special Landscape Qualities - Guidance on assessing effects.	An initial assessment has been undertaken and is described in **Technical Appendix 5.4 Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. The initial assessment indicated that effects on SLQ would be Negligible and a full detailed assessment has therefore not been undertaken.
The applicant proposes to scope out a Wild Land Impact Assessment for WLA 29 which is located approximately 800 m west of the proposed development. Given the proximity of the proposed development and number of receptors within WLA 29 proposed to be scoped into the LVIA, and the potential for significant adverse effects on these receptors, we again encourage the applicant to undertake a Wild Land Impact Assessment for WLA 29.	A Wild Land Impact Assessment is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.6 Wild Land Area Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. Wild land attributes have been a consideration in the evaluation of sensitivity and assessment of effects on landscape character types and landscape designations described in **Technical Appendix 5.2: Landscape Character and Sensitivity and Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
We request that cumulative effects with scoping stage Ceislein wind farm (Energy Consents Unit (ECU) Reference: ECU00005174).	Ceislein Wind farm is included in the cumulative assessment which is reported in this chapter and **Technical Appendices 5.1-5.7 (EIAR Volume 4)**.
We consider that lighting affects both landscape character and visual receptors and recommend assessment in line with the jointly drafted Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment	A full Aviation Lighting Assessment has been provided in accordance with the "Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment" and is described in **Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
An assessment of the effects of decommissioning should be included in the LVIA.	Decommissioning effects have been assessed and are reported in this chapter.

Table 5.2: Additional Engagement				
Consultee	**Date**	**Format**	**Summary of comment**	**Response or location in EIAR where comments are addressed**
THC	26/02/2026	Response to email from Applicant dated 22/12/2025 requesting agreement on proposed	THC agreed on night-time viewpoints from VP3 Loch Glass, by Wyvis Lodge and VP4 Strath Rusdale or VP7 Minor Road at Inchlumpie.	Night-time effects on VP3, VP4, VP7 and VP16 are assessed in **Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Impact**

Table 5.2: Additional Engagement				
Consultee	**Date**	**Format**	**Summary of comment**	**Response or location in EIAR where comments are addressed**
		approach to night-time assessment and agreement on viewpoints.		**Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. Visualisations are shown on **Figures 5.28i, 5.29i and 5.32i (EIAR Volume 3b)**.
			THC advised that it would be better to swap VP7 for a night-time viewpoint to the south such as Culbokie (VP19).	Due to the influence of existing lighting at the settlement of Culbokie the Applicant advised that the contrast with baseline arising from the proposed lights would be limited. A night-time viewpoint at Culbokie is not included.
			All day-time viewpoints should have an indication of lighting on wirelines.	Shown on all wirelines on **Figures 5.26a to 5.55g (EIAR Volume 3b)**.
			The two lighting scenarios should be assessed and shown on the visuals.	A reduced lighting scheme has been agreed with consultees. Therefore, only one lighting scheme is represented on the visualisations.
			Effects of hours of darkness on Ben Wyvis SLA SLQ should be assessed.	Effects are assessed in Technical **Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
			Effects of lights on Jim Savage-Lowden Observatory at Culloden Battlefield should be considered.	Culloden Battlefield is 32 km from the proposed turbines. At that distance, which lies beyond the 20 km night-time Study Area, a significant effect would be very unlikely.
THC	02/04/2026	Email	In relation to Jim Savage-Lowden Observatory at	Culloden Battlefield was visited during the day-time

Table 5.2: Additional Engagement				
Consultee	**Date**	**Format**	**Summary of comment**	**Response or location in EIAR where comments are addressed**
			Culloden Battlefield, it would be useful for the EIAR to include hand-held night-time photographs from this location.	assessment prior to receiving the comment from THC.
			THC request that a daytime viewpoint is included from Culloden Battlefield.	A wireline is included and is shown on **Figure 5.56 (EIAR Volume 3b)**.
			It would be helpful if the Applicant could confirm if VP4 Strath Rusdale or VP7 Minor Road at Inchlumpie are being used for the night-time assessment. These viewpoints are similar and THC expect that an alternative is used from the south.	See comments above.
			The Applicant's comments regarding baseline lighting at Culbokie are noted and it would be useful if the EIAR included hand-held night-time photographs from this location.	Hand-held night-time photographs are not included. However, an assessment of effects is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.
			An hours of darkness viewpoint is requested from Ben Wyvis.	A night-time viewpoint and photomontage are provided for Ben Wyvis and is shown on **Figures 5.41h-i (EIAR Volume 3b)**.
NatureScot	30/01/2026	Email	NatureScot agreed with the proposed night-time viewpoints at VP3 Loch Glass, Wyvis Lodge, VP4 Strath Rusdale and VP7 Minor Road at Inchlumpie.	Night-time effects on VP3, VP4 and VP7 are assessed in Technical Appendix 5.5: Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4). Visualisations are shown on **Figures 5.28i, 5.29i** and

Table 5.2: Additional Engagement				
Consultee	**Date**	**Format**	**Summary of comment**	**Response or location in EIAR where comments are addressed**
				5.32i (EIAR Volume 3b).
			A night-time viewpoint from Viewpoint 16 Ben Wyvis should be included for assessment. This is within Wild Land Area (WLA) 29. Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis and the Ben Wyvis Special Landscape Area (SLA). This recommendation also reflects the 'landmark' status of Ben Wyvis, which is acknowledged in the Gate Check Report. We have recommended that the applicants also seek advice from the Highland Council on the selection of night-time viewpoints.	A night-time viewpoint and photomontage are provided for Ben Wyvis and shown on **Figures 5.41h-i (EIAR Volume 3b)**.
			NatureScot advised consideration of "underlying/ overlapping" key attributes and qualities of WLA with respect to Ben Wyvis SLA.	Overlapping wild land attributes with Ben Wyvis SLA have been considered and are reported in this chapter and **Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. A wild land impact assessment is described in T**echnical Appendix 5.6: Wild Land Area Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**.

Potential Impacts Scoped In

5.4.7 The scope of this chapter is to identify and assess the landscape and visual receptors within the 35 km Study Area. The scope of the assessment has been informed by consultation

responses detailed in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 above. A summary of the scope of the assessment is provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Impacts Considered in the Assessment

Impact	Phase*		
	C	O/M	D
Impacts on Landscape fabric	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on Landscape Character	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on Dornoch Firth NSA	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on Ben Wyvis SLA	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie SLA	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sutors of Cromarty, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on settlements and communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on recreational routes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on key transport routes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on agreed viewpoints and visual amenity	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts of aviation obstacle lighting	No	Yes	No

* C=construction, O/M=operation and maintenance and D=decommissioning.

5.4.8 The chapter assesses cumulative effects as arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to other cumulative developments, which are the subject of a valid planning application. The cumulative development list includes projects:

- Where an application for consent has been submitted to the relevant authorities but is under determination;
- Where consent has been refused but an appeal against that decision has been submitted and is under determination;
- Where there is an approved consent, but construction has yet to commence;
- Where there is an approved consent and construction has commenced; and
- That are operational.

5.4.9 The wind developments that are at the scoping stage are shown on the wirelines and in **Technical Appendix 3b (EIAR Volume 3)**.

5.4.10 The assessment is based on the Proposed Development as described in **Chapter 3: Site Description and Proposed Development (EIAR Volume 2)**.

5.4.11 As this is a repowering project, the Proposed Development involves removing 34 smaller turbines and replacing these with nine larger turbines. To understand the impacts fully, the landscape and visual impact assessment considers two scenarios:

- The comparative scenario whereby the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against a baseline that includes the existing Novar 1 Wind Farm; and

- The restored scenario whereby the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against a baseline that assumes the Novar 1 Wind Farm site is undeveloped.

5.4.12 When considering the effects of the proposed larger turbines, it is also relevant to appreciate the effect of losing 34 smaller turbines. This is not always apparent from all receptors given the nature of the development and the size of the Study Area. It is mentioned where relevant within the LVIA.

Potential Impacts Scoped Out

5.4.13 The assessment focusses on likely significant effects and as such impacts that are not likely to result in significant effects have been scoped out of the assessment.

5.4.14 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been used in the first instance to reduce the 45 km Study Area to 35 km since theoretical visibility in the wider area is limited.

5.4.15 The ZTV is also used to scope out potential landscape and visual receptors in the 35 km radius Study Area that would experience no visibility of the Proposed Development.

5.4.16 Effects relating to the decommissioning of the repowered wind farm have also been assessed although such effects are anticipated to be equivalent or less than those expected to occur during its construction.

Method of Baseline Characterisation

Extent of the Study Area

5.4.17 The Study Area of 35 km (**see Figure 5.1 EIAR Volume 3a**) has been established by considering the ZTV as noted earlier. This study area accords with NatureScot guidance[5]. It has been agreed with consultees and is used as the basis for the proportionate assessment described in this Chapter and associated technical appendices.

Desk Study

5.4.18 Initially a desk study was undertaken to establish the baseline context of the Proposed Development, including physical components of the landscape (i.e. landscape fabric) as well as the distinctive recognisable patterns of elements that form the landscape character of the area and of designated and classified landscapes. Visual elements and receptors/ receptor locations were also identified including settlements, transportation corridors and recreational trails and summits (i.e., walkers/cyclists/tourists/general road users), as well as specific landscape character types and designated areas.

5.4.19 Landscape character types (LCTs) considered in the baseline and subsequent assessment were derived from the Scottish Landscape and Character Types Map and Descriptions, NatureScot, digital mapping published in 2019[6].

5.4.20 Other data sets used in the preparation of this LVIA include:

- Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 and 1: 250,000 mapping;
- Ordnance Survey 50 m and 5 m Digital Terrain Model;
- Scottish Landscape Character Assessment data - NatureScot datasets;
- Gardens and Designed Landscapes - Historic Environment Scotland datasets;
- National Scenic Areas - Scottish Government datasets;

[5] Scottish Natural Heritage Visual Representation of Wind Farms Guidance, Version 2.2, February 2017

[6] https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions, [Accessed in October 2025]

- Wild Land Areas - NatureScot datasets; and
- Road network - Ordnance Survey Meridian 2 datasets.

Field Survey

5.4.21 To verify the findings of the desktop study and to capture relevant photography, field reconnaissance was undertaken during the winter of 2024, spring and summer 2025 and in the winter of 2025. The site visits were used to:

- Augment and verify published descriptions of landscape character with fieldwork observations;
- Undertake an assessment of the quality or condition of baseline landscape and visual resources;
- Identify any significant features and elements in the landscape such as vegetation or built form that would screen the Proposed Development and thereby verify or refine the ZTV;
- Visit each viewpoint location to microsite each location in accordance with good practice guidance and obtain accurate coordinates;
- Undertake photography at each viewpoint location. The selected viewpoints were visited and evaluated using draft wirelines, mapping, GIS & GPS data collection systems, and augmented reality tools such as Venture TrueView; and
- Identify landscape features and elements that may be altered or removed as a result of the Proposed Development.

5.4.22 The baseline fieldwork also allowed the 45 km wider Study Area to be refined and therefore focus the assessment stage of the LVIA on receptors with the most potential for a significant effect. Fieldwork during the assessment stage included an assessment of effect on the following receptors:

- Landscape receptors including landscape fabric, landscape character, and landscape designations and classifications;
- Residential receptors (including settlements), road users, recreational receptors (including hill walkers and users of core paths, other footpaths/cycleways), and recreational areas; and
- Night-time effects through a dawn/dusk and night-time survey within a 20 km radius of the proposed turbines.

Illustrative materials

5.4.23 The LVIA is illustrated by a range of tools including ZTV plans, photographs, wirelines, and photomontages. All outputs have been prepared in accordance with current best practice comprising:

- Visual Representation of Wind Farms Guidance, version 2.2, NatureScot 2017;
- Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments, The Highland Council (2016), and
- Landscape Institute (2019) Technical Guidance Note – 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals.

5.4.24 ZTVs have been prepared to assist in the identification of areas from where there is potential visibility of the Proposed Development, illustrated in **EIAR Volume 3a**. ZTVs are based on Ordnance Survey (OS) digital terrain data supplied as a mixture of gridded height data at 5 m and 50 m interval resolution. This data does not reflect the screening effect of vegetation or built structures and so the visibility shown on the ZTVs is more extensive than

would be experienced in reality. Where the ZTV shows no visibility, it is predicted that no turbines would be seen.

5.4.25 The blade tip ZTV (**Figure 5.6 in EIAR Volume 3a**) illustrates the extent of the Proposed Development viewshed based on the visibility of turbines from base to maximum blade tip height, whilst the hub height ZTV shown on **Figure 5.7** indicates locations from the proposed turbines would be visible at hub height or above. This makes it possible to identify locations from where the Proposed Development would be seen as blade tips only and would therefore be less prominent.

5.4.26 To establish the cumulative theoretical visibility, ZTVs have been prepared for all operational, consented and application stage wind farm projects within 40 km of the Site (**EIAR Volume 3a: Figures 5.14-5.22**). ZTVs are also included for sites at scoping within 20 km including Beinn Tharsuinn Repowering, Glasa and Tarvie wind farms. The cumulative ZTVs are included in **EIAR Volume 3a: Figures 5.23 to 5.25**.

5.4.27 Wireline visualisations (**Figures 5.26a to 5.55g in EIAR Volumes 3b**) illustrate both the baseline wind farms (i.e., existing and consented) from each viewpoint, and the cumulative wind farms, which includes application stage, and the scoping stage wind farms.

Method of Assessment

Overview

5.4.28 The LVIA considers effects on the following:

- Landscape fabric, caused by changes to the physical form and elements of the landscape;
- Landscape character, caused by changes in the pattern of key characteristic features and elements of the landscape as a result of the Proposed Development;
- Designations and classifications, caused by changes to the special qualities of such landscape as a result of the Proposed Development and whether effects would affect the integrity of designations; and
- Visual amenity, caused by changes in the composition and scenic qualities of views on visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development.

5.4.29 Wherever possible, identified effects have been quantified, but the nature of landscape and visual assessment requires interpretation by professional judgement. To provide a level of consistency to the assessment, landscape sensitivity to change, the prediction of magnitude of impact and assessment of significance of the residual effects has been based on pre-defined criteria. The level of effects is determined by a comparison of the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of impact arising from the Proposed Development.

5.4.30 Thirty representative viewpoints were chosen in consultation with THC and NatureScot. These viewpoints are considered to be representative of the main sensitive receptors in the 35 km Study Area (see **Figure 5.1 EIAR Volume 3a**). The viewpoints have also been checked against the cumulative ZTVs for existing/consented and proposed wind farms within the Study Area to ensure that they provide representative coverage of potential cumulative visibility and related effects. Viewpoint locations are detailed in **Technical Appendix 5.3 (EIAR Volume 4)** and are included in **EIAR Volume 3b: Figures 5.26a to 5.55g**.

Assessment of Potential Effect Significance

5.4.31 Initially an appraisal of potential impact generators and significant landscape and visual effects was undertaken for both the decommissioning, construction and operational phases

of the Proposed Development to identify key priorities for both the assessment and for mitigation.

Requirements for Mitigation

5.4.32 Based on the initial baseline analysis and assessment of potential effects, embedded design and mitigation measures were generated for both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. This was undertaken in an iterative fashion, as reported in **Chapter 3: Site Description and Proposed Development (EIA Report Volume 2)**.

Assessment of Residual Effect Significance

5.4.33 Following the finalisation of the Proposed Development an assessment of residual landscape and visual effects was undertaken for the decommissioning, construction and operational phases, taking account of the embedded mitigation applied.

5.4.34 The LVIA considers the landscape and visual effects on landscape designations and classifications within the Study Area that have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development.

5.4.35 Analysis of the potential effects on the landscape and visual amenity arising from the Proposed Development at each of these viewpoints has been undertaken. This analysis has involved the production of computer-generated wirelines and/or photomontages to predict the operational views of the Proposed Development from each of the agreed viewpoints. The existing and predicted views from each of these viewpoints have been analysed to identify the magnitude of change and the residual effects on landscape character and visual amenity at each viewpoint location.

5.4.36 Detailed information on the assessment methodology, including criteria for assessing sensitivity of receptors, magnitude of change and cumulative effects, as well as overall significance criteria, is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.1 (EIAR Volume 4)**.

Cumulative Assessment

5.4.37 The operational baseline and the potential future cumulative baseline including consented, in-planning and in-scoping wind farm developments are listed in Table 5.4 below. The cumulative assessment considers the Proposed Development ('En Solo') within the baseline that may include existing operational wind farms (Scenario 1) and three future cumulative scenarios as follows:

- Scenario 2: The Proposed Development in conjunction with existing and consented (wind farms);
- Scenario 3: The Proposed Development in conjunction with existing, consented and in planning (wind farms); and
- Scenario 4: The Proposed Development in conjunction with existing, consented, in planning and a selection of in-scoping wind farms within proximity to the Proposed Development (Beinn Tharsuinn Repowering and Glasa Wind Farms). These in-scoping schemes have been included as they have potential to contribute to a significant increase in the influence of wind energy to the north and east of the Site, but it should be noted that their current scoping layouts are likely to change.

5.4.38 This approach is intended to reflect the differing degrees of certainty in each future Scenario. Scenario 2 has the highest degree of certainty and forms the most likely development context in which the Proposed Development would be seen. In contrast, there is a high degree of uncertainty regarding the final design or likely consenting success of in-planning and in-scoping schemes (within Scenarios 3 and 4). Of the two, Scenario 4 has the highest

degree of uncertainty as scoping schemes are highly likely to undergo changes to layout and a reduction in the number of turbines.

5.4.39 The consideration of potential cumulative landscape and visual effects reflect the 'In-Addition' effects attributable specifically to the Proposed Development, as well as its 'In Combination' effects, where the combined effect of the Proposed Development and all other cumulative schemes are taken into account. A distinction is made, in the assessment, between In-Addition effects (i.e., the additional effect attributable specifically to the Proposed Development in the context of cumulative developments) and In-Combination effects (i.e., the effect arising from the Proposed Development taken together with other wind energy development) as is recommended in guidance.

Limitations and Assumptions

5.4.40 The main impacts of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual resources would be during the operational stage when construction has been completed, and the wind farm is operational. An operational lifetime of 35 years is assumed. While the operational effects would be largely reversible on decommissioning of the Proposed Development, for the purposes of this LVIA, effects have been assessed as permanent. The LVIA has therefore focused upon any significant residual effects arising during the operational stage.

5.4.41 Decommissioning an existing wind farm and constructing a new wind farm on the same Site is a complex operation and the exact phasing is currently unknown, but it is anticipated that the process would take up to 36 months to complete. This is longer than the industry recognised 18-24 months to construct a wind farm, but it reflects the logistical challenge of removing existing infrastructure from the Site whilst constructing a new wind farm. The decommissioning and construction phasing is currently unknown and potentially some of the existing turbines may be in place whilst the repowered wind farm is being constructed. This would be for a temporary period and the potential effects of this have been considered in the LVIA.

5.4.42 The field work was undertaken from publicly accessible locations. At times this resulted in being unable to visit a few locations. The nearest and most representative publicly accessible locations have been used, and further information has been garnered using other sources such as aerial photography.

5.4.43 The data used in completion of the LVIA has a number of inherent limitations related to data tolerances and levels of accuracy. The most notable of these is the terrain data used to generate wirelines, which has the effect of 'smoothing out' contours so that small, localised landforms such as man-made banks and embankments, do not show on ZTVs or wirelines. This results in a slight over-emphasis of the theoretical visibility. Professional judgement has been used to offset this in assessing impacts within the assessment.

5.4.44 Photographs and other graphic material such as wirelines and photomontages used in the assessment are for illustrative purposes only and, whilst useful tools in the assessment, are not considered to be completely representative of what will be apparent to the human eye. For example, the 65.5 degree visualisations (for which photomontages are provided) allow focus but lack the context. The assessment itself is carried out from observations in the field and therefore may include contextual elements that are not readily visible in the photographs.

5.4.45 The limitations noted above are compensated by professional experience and knowledge of the Study Area gained through field work to ensure that the assessment is robust.

5.4.46 A micrositing allowance of 100 m is proposed. While the final location of infrastructure may vary within this tolerance, any such changes would remain within the parameters assessed in the EIAR and would not give rise to materially different environmental effects. Therefore, the conclusions of this assessment would remain unchanged.

5.5 Baseline Conditions

Current Baseline - Landscape

Topography and Hydrological Features (Overview of Landscape Resource)

5.5.1 The Study Area comprises of undulating and mountainous topography with open hills rising to the north, west and south of the Site. Elevation ranges from mean high-water level at the valley bottoms and coastal outer edges, to over 1,100 m AOD. Notable summits in the Study Area include Ben Wyvis (1,046 m AOD) and Beinn Dearg (1,081 m AOD), with prominent hydrological features including the Cromarty Firth, Dornoch Firth, Loch Glass, Loch Morie, the River Averon and the River Glass.

5.5.2 The Site is located between Glen Glass and Strath Rusdale and comprises a combination of open peat moorland, typified by rough grassland and heathland species being occupied by the existing Novar 1 and Novar 2 Wind Farms. Turbines of Novar 1 are situated along the ridgeline connecting Meall Mor, Meall an Tuirc, Bendeallt and Cnoc Gille Mo Bhrianaig. Topography descends from the ridge in all directions to Loch Glass, Loch Morie and Strath Rusdale. Elevation ranges within the Site from 310 m AOD to 625 m AOD. Hydrological features in the Site include numerous small streams that generally flow in a north easterly direction towards the River Averon located approximately 2 km to the northeast of the Site. Loch Glass, a large loch is located approximately 1 km to the west of the Site in Glen Glass.

Landcover and Land Use

5.5.3 The predominant land cover and land use in the 35 km Study Area comprise:

- Moorland habitats;
- Open waters on the outer edges of the Study Area, including the Cromarty and Dornoch Firths to the east, and Loch Broom and Little Loch Broom on the west;
- Large freshwater lochs and reservoirs including Loch Glass, Loch Luichart and Loch Glascarnoch;
- A diverse coastline of open water, coastal crofts and farms, moorlands, woodlands, sandy beaches, dunes, and rocky knolls;
- A mosaic of coniferous forest blocks, rough grazing, open moorland, and pastoral farmland, the forestry blocks often concentrated along glen and straths, and on low undulating hills and slopes;
- Hamlets, steadings and scattered residential properties, crofts and settlements situated within straths and glens and along the coast; and
- Operational wind farms in the wider Study Area including Beinn Tharsuinn, Coire na Cloiche, Lochluichart and Lochluichart Extension in addition to the Novar 2 turbines which will remain abutting the Proposed Development.

Landscape Character Types

5.5.4 There are 37 Landscape Character Types (LCT) in the 35 km Study Area, of which 24 would be subject to some theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be situated mainly in LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif.

5.5.5 The location and extent of LCTs is illustrated in **Figures 5.3 and 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)** and the full descriptions of LCTs assessed are provided in **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** which also identifies LCTs to be assessed and those which have not been included due to lack of, or virtual lack of, potential visibility.

5.5.6 A sensitivity rating is allocated to each LCT in accordance with the GLVIA3 guidance, as noted in **Technical Appendix 5.2: Landscape Character Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. Where LCTs coincide with a landscape designation or classified wild land, this is reflected in the evaluation of sensitivity.

Landscape Designations and Wild Land Areas

5.5.7 The Site is not subject to any landscape designation.

5.5.8 The location and geographical extent of landscape designations and Wild Land Areas within the 35 km Study Area are shown on **Figure 5.9 (EIAR Volume 3a)**. Landscape designations of relevance refer to National Scenic Areas (NSA) which are statutory designations and Special Landscape Areas (SLA) which are local non-statutory designations. Wild Land Areas are non-designated landscapes recognised for qualities of wildness and remoteness. Landscape designations in the LVIA are described in **Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. An assessment of Wild Land Area 29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg and Ben Wyvis is described in **Technical Appendix 5.6: Wild Land Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)**. Those landscapes that have no, or very limited or distant theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development have been excluded from this LVIA as significant effects are unlikely.

5.5.9 Designated landscapes with theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development include:

- Dornoch Firth NSA, which lies approximately 17.5 km northeast of the Site;
- Ben Wyvis SLA, which is approximately 3 km west of the Site;
- Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie SLA which lies approximately 11.5 km northwest of the Site; and
- Sutors of Cromarty, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA, which lies approximately 17.5 km southeast of the Site.

5.5.10 Nationally important designations such as the NSAs are allocated a High sensitivity. Regionally important designations (SLAs) are considered to be High/Medium sensitivity.

5.5.11 Inventory listed Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) are not assessed in this LVIA. The assessment of effects on GDLs is reported in **Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage (EIAR Volume 2)**. GDL are considered in the context of sensitivity of LCTs, national and local landscape designations rather than an assessment of them as cultural heritage assets.

Wild Land

5.5.12 Five Wild Land Areas coincide with the LVIA Study Area. The Site is not located in a WLA. The closest is WLA29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis the southeastern boundary of which is approximately 1.2 km northwest of operational Novar 1 Wind Farm. The operational Novar 1 Wind Farm was constructed in 1997, and Novar 2 was constructed in 2010 before the boundary of WLA29 was drawn in 2014.

5.5.13 NPF4 Policy 4 paragraph (g) advises that "buffer zones around wild land will not be applied and effect of development outwith wild land area will not be a significant consideration." In terms of NPF4 insofar as the Proposed Development is outside WLA29, effects on the WLA have been minimised. However, in order to assess the degree of change and describe the

geographical extent of effects, a high level WLA assessment has been undertaken of WLA 29 and is described in **Technical Appendix 5.6 Wild Land Impact Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)** and limiting effects on wild land attributes have been a consideration in design. WLA29 has also been a consideration in evaluating sensitivity and effects on landscape character and SLA that coincide with the WLA. A comparative ZTV has been prepared **Figure 5.10 (EIAR Volume 3a)** to understand any additional visibility arising from the larger turbines of the Proposed Development and visualisations from viewpoints in WLA29 are provided in **EIAR Volumes 3b and 3c**.

Current Baseline - Visual

Transport Routes

5.5.14 The Study Area is bisected by various regionally important as well as minor local roads, most of which follow the valleys or lower elevations. These roads follow the eastern coastline from Inverness northwards to Wick, as well as linking to the west coast of Scotland. **Figures 5.8a-b (EIAR Volume 3a)** shows the main roads within the Study Area.

5.5.15 The key roads from which there is the potential for significant effects include:

- A9 is the primary trunk road linking north and central Scotland via Inverness, providing the main access route to Thurso and Wick;
- A835 is the primary trunk road that links Tore near Inverness with Ullapool;
- A832 Cromarty to Moy Bridge, at the junction with the A835. This route keeps close to the northern shore of the Moray Firth running east to west;
- A836 from Tralogie (near Tain) to Lairg;
- A862 from Muir of Ord to Dingwall;
- B9165 runs eastwards from the A9 at Loandhu to Portmahomack in Easter Ross;
- B9169 runs from Muir of Ord to Shoreton on the Black Isle; and
- B9176 starts near Alness on the A9 and follows a high elevation route to Easter Fearn to the north.

5.5.16 The sensitivity of these roads is generally considered to be Medium for commuters as views are transient and the primary focus of attention is likely to be on the direction of travel.

5.5.17 The Inverness to Wick railway line is routed through the 35 km Study Area and has potential for views. The sensitivity of passengers on this route is High/Medium as the attention of passengers may be focussed on the landscape and views.

Recreational Routes and Summits

SCOTLAND'S GREAT TRAILS

5.5.18 The Great Glen Way and the Great Glen Canoe Trail are in the southern part of the study area. However, since both routes terminate at Inverness, and are routed through glens and alongside waterways, they would not have potential for significant visual effects and are therefore scoped out of this assessment.

NATIONAL CYCLE ROUTES

5.5.19 There are three National Cycle Network (NCN) routes in the Study Area:

- NCN1. The northern terminus of this route is at Tain with the route originating in Dover, England;
- NCN7. This route runs between Sunderland in England and Inverness; and

- NCN78. This is also known as the Caledonia Way and runs from Campbeltown to Inverness.

5.5.20 NCN7 and NCN78 are scoped out of this assessment since both routes pass no closer than 28 km from the Site and significant effects are unlikely.

5.5.21 NCN1, which is routed through the Study Area between Inverness and Tain has been assessed, and the sensitivity is High as cyclists would be focussed on the landscape and views.

CORE PATHS

5.5.22 There are core paths throughout the 35 km Study Area as shown on **Figure 5.8a-b (EIAR Volume 3a)**. The most relevant to this LVIA are those within approximately 10 km of the Site as these have greatest potential to experience significant visual effects.

5.5.23 Core paths within 10 km that have no views, or from which very few or constrained views of the Proposed Development would be experienced, and therefore, could not be significantly affected, have been scoped out. The ZTVs shown on **Figures 5.8a-b (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicate theoretical visibility from the following core paths within 10 km:

- Tollie to Lealty Path (RC05.02) – 4 km to the northeast. An estate track running for 2.4 km;
- Swordale Hill (RC16.01) – 4.6 km to the south: A forested track encircling Swordale Hill approximately 4.8 km in length;
- Dam Wood (RC05.03) – 4.8 km to the northeast. A forest track running for 1.7 km;
- Fyrish Path (RC05.01) – 5 km to the east southeast. A constructed path 3.7 km in length;
- Dublin to Ardross Mains (RC05.04) – 5.6 km to the northeast. A forest track running for 0.6 km.

SUMMITS

5.5.24 There are eleven Munros in the Study Area which have potential for views of the Proposed Development. These are:

- An Coileachan (923 m) – 29.5 km to the west southwest;
- Meall Gorm (949 m) - 31 km to the west southwest;
- Sgurr Mor (1,110 m) - 32.5 km to the west southwest
- Beinn Liath Mhor Fiannaich (954 m) - 31 km to the west southwest;
- Meall a Chrasgaidh (934 m) - 31 km to the west southwest;
- Cona Mheall (980 m) – 27 km to the west;
- Beinn Dearg (1,084 m) 28 km to the west;
- Eididh nan Clach Geala (928 m) – 30 km to the west northwest;
- Am Foachagach (954 m) - 23 km to the west;
- Seana Bhraigh (927 m) - 28 km to the west northwest; and
- Ben Wyvis (1,046 m) – 8.5 km to the southwest.

5.5.25 The ZTV indicates that potential views from higher ground that includes the Munros is generally restricted to the summits. **Technical Appendix 5.3: Viewpoint Assessment (EIAR Volume 4)** describes views from notable summits in the Study Area and visualisations are shown in Volumes 3a and 3b. These viewpoints provide an indication of the likely effects on Munros and lesser summits in the wider area.

Settlement

5.5.26 The eastern coastal parts of the Study Area are well settled with towns and villages adjoining roads, many of which follow the line of valleys and are scattered along the coastline. Smaller groups of dwellings, farmhouses and individual dwellings are scattered across the agricultural lowland, and the uplands, forests and moorland are sparsely settled and largely uninhabited.

5.5.27 Inverness, the main city and cultural centre of the Highlands, has been scoped out of this assessment as there is limited theoretical visibility over much of the settlement, and it lies approximately 27 km away. The blade tip and hub height ZTVs shown on **Figures 5.6** and **5.7 (EIAR Volume 3a)** have been used to identify settlements which would have theoretical views of the Proposed Development, and potential for significant visual effects. These include:

- Boath is a dispersed hamlet just over 2.6 km east of the Site and there is the potential for significant effects due to the short distance to the proposed turbines;
- Alness is a town approximately 9 km east of the Site. The ZTV shown on **Figure 5.6 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates that up to six turbines could be visible to blade tip from the eastern parts of the settlement. Views would be screened/heavily filtered by the built form of the eastern part of the settlement. Significant effects could potentially arise in areas where there are uninterrupted views;
- Culbokie is a settlement on the north facing slopes of the Black Isle on the south side of the Cromarty Firth and approximately 12 km south southeast of the Site. The ZTV shown on Figure 5.6 indicates theoretical visibility from Culbokie. There is the potential for significant effects, and this settlement is considered further;
- Invergordon is a town, harbour and port in Easter Ross located on the northern shore of the Cromarty Firth. It is situated 12 km east of the Site and there is the potential for significant effects;
- Muir of Ord lies approximately 22 km from the Site. Although the ZTV shows theoretical views, the settlement is low lying with mature woods around the outer edges of the town. It is unlikely that there would be clear views towards the Proposed Development, and there would be no possibility of significant effects, and this settlement is not considered further;
- Cromarty is a town in Ross and Cromarty located approximately 23 km east of the Site, on the tip of the Black Isle on the southern shore of the Cromarty Firth. There are theoretical views from much of the settlement. However, given intervening distance and the industrial and marine activity in firth, significant effects are unlikely and this settlement has not been assessed further;
- Beauly is situated some 24 km south of the Site. Whilst the ZTV shows theoretical views from much of the settlement, the mature woodland setting would heavily filter/screen views of the Proposed Development. It is unlikely that there would be views of the Proposed Development and where visible, effects are unlikely to be significant, and this settlement has not been considered further;
- Kirkhill is a small village 8.5 km west of Inverness and close to the opening of the Beauly Firth. It is situated 25 km to the south of the Site and has theoretical views as illustrated on the ZTV. Given the intervening distance significant effects are unlikely and it has not considered further in this assessment;
- Dornoch lies approximately 29 km northeast of the Site. The ZTV shows that there are potential views of the Proposed Development. However, Viewpoint 15 from near

Dornoch demonstrates the type of view likely. There is no possibility of significant effects. Therefore, this settlement has not been considered further; and

- Balintore lies some 30 km east of the Site. The ZTV shows there would be few theoretical views from Balintore. Given the intervening distance and the limited theoretical views, there would be no potential for significant effects, so this settlement has not been considered further.

5.5.28 There are no dwellings within 2 km of the nearest proposed turbine, and a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has not been undertaken as effects on those private properties at distances greater than 2 km will not be of such nature and/or magnitude as to affect living conditions.

Cumulative Context

5.5.29 Table 5.4 summarises the cumulative context at the time of the LVIA. The location of these cumulative developments is shown on **Figure 5.13. (EIAR Volume 3a)**.

Table 5.4: Cumulative Wind Farms

Development name	Distant (approx.) and direction from the Site	Number of turbines	Maximum height to blade tip
Operational			
Achany	30.5 km N	19	100 m
Auchmore	23 km SSW	1	48 m
Auchmore 2	23 km SSW	1	48 m
Beinn Nan Oighrean	12 km NE	2	80 m
Beinn Tharsuinn	11 km NE	17	80 m
Coire Na Cloiche	8 km NNE	13	99.5 m
Corriemoillie	19 km WSW	17	126.25 m
Cullisse Farm	27.8 km ENE	1	66.5 m
Fairburn	22.9 km SW	20	100 m
Lairg	32 km NNE	3	100 m
Lochluichart	22 km WSW	17	125 m
Lochliuchart Extension	21.9 km WSW	6	125 m
Novar 2	0.1 km W	16	106 m
Rosehall	31 km N	19	90 m
Somerby Farm	12 km SSE	1	102 m
Yellow Wells	8 km SSE	1	78 m
Consented			
Garvary	27.5 km NNE	24	180 m
Kirkan	17.8 km WSW	17	175 m
Lairg 2	29 km NNE	10	200 m
Lochluichart Extension II	19.8 km WSW	5	149.9 m
Meall Buidhe	23 km NNW	8	149.9 m
Strathrory	9 km NE	7	180 m

Table 5.4: Cumulative Wind Farms			
Development name	**Distant (approx.) and direction from the Site**	**Number of turbines**	**Maximum height to blade tip**
In-planning			
Abhainn Dubh	4.8 km S	9	149.9 m
Achany Extension	34 km NNW	18	200 m
Allt An Tuir	33 km NNW	9	200 m
Balblair	24.8 km NNE	8	200 m
Ballach	26 km SW	20	230 m
Carn Fearna	14.9 km SW	9	200 m
Ceislein	1.3 km E	11	250 m
Colllie Beith	27.5 km NNW	11	200 m
Creachan	7.5 km N	13	200 m
Inveroykel	22.2 km NNW	20	230 m
Lairg III	29 km NNE	12	230 m
Strath Oykel	27.8 km NNW	11	200 m

5.5.30 In addition to the above listed cumulative developments, the following additional scoping stage developments have been considered:

- Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm Repowered and Extended (31 x 180 m to blade tip) 7 km to the north northeast; and
- Glasa (27 x up to 250 m to blade tip), 9.5 km to the northwest.

Future Baseline

5.5.31 In the event that the Proposed Development is not consented or progressed, the baseline landscape and visual context is expected to continue to contain a high degree of interest for wind energy development, including schemes that use turbines of a size similar to or exceeding that of the Proposed Development. It is also the case that the majority of such development would be concentrated in the Rounded Hills landscape type or similar, thereby minimising intrusion into more sensitive landscapes along the coast or the mountainous areas to the west. The Novar 1 Wind Farm planning permission is time limited and expires in 2031. If the project is not repowered, all 34 Novar 1 turbines would be removed and the land restored.

Summary of Sensitive Receptors

5.5.32 A summary of the receptors considered likely to be affected by the Proposed Development and therefore scoped into the assessment are set out in Table 5.5 together with their associated sensitivity.

Table 5.5: Summary of Sensitive Receptors		
Receptor	**Sensitivity**	**Justification**
Dornoch Firth NSA	High	Landscape designation of national importance
Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the Study Area	High/Medium	Landscape designation of regional importance

Table 5.5: Summary of Sensitive Receptors		
Receptor	**Sensitivity**	**Justification**
Recreational routes and tourist/visitor locations	High	Visual receptors most likely to be impacted by the Proposed Development
Settlements	High	Visual receptors most likely to be impacted by the Proposed Development
Key transport routes	Medium	Routes frequented by residents of the area and visitors

5.6 Embedded Mitigation

5.6.1 Embedded mitigation includes design/standard best practice measures as described in **Chapter 3: Site Description and Proposed Development (EIAR Volume 4)**.

5.6.2 As the embedded mitigation would form an integral part of the Proposed Development, there would be no consented scenario where the mitigation measures would not be implemented. As such, the assessment of likely significant effects assumes that these mitigation measures have been implemented.

5.6.3 The effects on the landscape and visual amenity of the Proposed Development can only be minimised through embedded mitigation which is incorporated into the layout of the proposed turbines. Embedded mitigation is described in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Summary of Embedded Mitigation			
ID	**Phase***	**Description**	**Purpose of Mitigation**
Embedded Mitigation			
LV01	O	The proposed turbine locations have been set slightly downhill from the ridge crest to minimise the disparity in scale between Novar 2 and proposed turbines (as seen from local area).	To minimise effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
LV02	O	The proposed turbines are aligned along the ridge to create a simple composition within the landscape and a more balanced and coherent array.	To minimise effects on landscape character and visual amenity. To present a more balanced design in views from Ben Wyvis.
LV03	O	The proposed turbines are within the footprint of the Novar 1 Wind Farm to minimise impacts.	To minimise the horizontal extent of the Turbine Array.
LV04	O	The height of the proposed turbines AOD in the array corresponds to underlying landform while avoiding markedly differing elevations.	To minimise effects on landscape character and visual amenity. To minimise effects on Strath Rusdale.
LV05	O	The spacing between turbines is consistent without large gaps between groups of turbines or the presence of outliers.	To minimise effects on landscape character and visual amenity. To present a more balanced and cohesive design in views from Ben Wyvis.
LV06	O	A reduced lighting scheme comprising of nacelle lights on T1,	To reduce effects on night-time views.

Table 5.6: Summary of Embedded Mitigation			
ID	**Phase***	**Description**	**Purpose of Mitigation**
		T5, T7 and T9 only with no mid-tower lights.	

PC=Pre-construction, C=construction, O=operation and maintenance and D=decommissioning.

5.7 Assessment of Likely Effects

Decommissioning of Novar 1 Wind Farm

5.7.1 The combined duration of the decommissioning of the Novar 1 Wind Farm and the construction of the repowered wind farm is anticipated to be approximately 36 months. The methods that would be utilised during decommissioning of the Novar 1 Wind Farm are detailed in **Chapter 3: Site Description and Proposed Development (EIAR Volume 2)**. The decommissioning elements with the potential to affect the landscape and visual amenity of the Study Area are:

- Temporary introduction of cranes and dismantling equipment;
- Temporary disturbance to landform and vegetation around turbine bases and internal access tracks;
- Potential soil compaction or scarring from heavy machinery;
- Temporary storage of turbine components creating localised clutter; and
- Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements to and from Site and movement of vehicles on-site.

5.7.2 Reinstatement work includes the removal of temporary compounds and laydown areas, and peatland restoration works. Decommissioning effects would be short-term adverse effects during dismantling due to the presence of cranes, heavy machinery and temporary disturbance, which would be temporary, limited in extent and reversible. The effects are **unlikely to be significant** due to the short duration of the works.

Construction of Repowered Wind Farm

5.7.3 The following elements and activities associated with the construction phase of the Proposed Development have the potential to result in effects on landscape and visual amenity of the Study Area:

- Construction of Site access tracks;
- Construction of temporary Site construction compounds incorporating Site offices;
- Removal or alteration of areas of moorland vegetation;
- Construction of Site infrastructure, including a mixture of upgraded existing tracks and new tracks between wind turbine locations;
- Construction of laydown areas and areas of hardstanding;
- Construction of substation and compound, incorporating control building;
- Excavation and construction of wind turbine foundations;
- Erection of wind turbines with external transformers;
- Excavations of trenches for underground cables;
- Excavations of temporary mineral extraction sites (borrow pits);
- Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) and abnormal indivisible load (AIL) deliveries to the Site and movement of vehicles on-Site; and

- Reinstatement work, including restoration of borrow pits and removal of temporary accommodation works.

Likely Effects on Landscape during Construction

5.7.4 The effect of construction on the landscape character would affect small areas around the construction locations and would be of relatively short duration. This would include some increased traffic on local roads and crane handling. Much of the disturbance associated with construction would be ameliorated or removed during subsequent reinstatement activities.

5.7.5 A large proportion of the construction effects would be managed through adoption of good practice and careful construction management and monitoring regimes (such as those presented in the Outline Decommissioning and Construction Environmental Management Plan (DCEMP), **Technical Appendix 3.1 (EIAR Volume 4)**. Given the small areas affected, short duration and partially reversible nature of construction impacts, and the medium/low sensitivity of the Site they are **not considered likely to constitute significant effects** on landscape fabric.

5.7.6 Whilst there is potential for construction works to impact on landscape character of the Study Area, the relatively short duration, limited geographical extents of works and largely reversible nature of construction impacts means that effects on sensitive neighbouring character types and landscape designations and WLA such as Ben Wyvis SLA and WLA29 Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis are **unlikely to be significant** due to the short duration and reversible nature of the construction activities**.**

Effects on Visual Amenity During Construction

5.7.7 Elements of construction that would impact on visual receptors would be taller plant such as cranes that may be visible over a wider area, and forestry removal where this is required. Other than cranes, construction would be limited to the local receptors with direct views of the Site. Effects would be restricted to a small area, of short duration and essentially reversible. Effects on receptors of high sensitivity would be **not significant** due to the short duration and reversible nature of the construction activities.

Operation of Repowered Wind Farm

5.7.8 The operational life of the Proposed Development is expected to be 35 years. Consequently, for the purposes of this assessment the operational life and corresponding effects are considered to be long term/permanent. The operational elements with the potential to affect the landscape and visual amenity of the Study Area are:

- Wind turbine generators;
- Wind turbine aviation warning lighting;
- Internal access tracks and hardstanding areas;
- Restored temporary mineral extraction area (borrow pit); and
- Substation/control building.

5.7.9 All the effects during operation of the Proposed Development would be residual effects. Consequently, residual effects are described in Section 5.9 of this chapter and in **Technical Appendices 5.2-5.6 (EIAR Volume 4)**.

Potential Landscape Effects

5.7.10 The fabric of the landscape within the Proposed Development has the potential to be impacted by the tracks and areas of hardstanding that would be retained during the operational phase. The borrow pit search area has the potential to affect the fabric of the

landscape. Effects on landscape fabric would occur primarily in LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif as that is where the Turbine Array would be located. There would also be effects on landscape fabric in LCT330 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes, LCT341 Forest Edge Farming and LCT345 Farmed and Forested Slopes resulting from upgrades to existing access tracks and minor modifications to adopted roads including the junction with the B817.

5.7.11 The wider character of the landscape and designated and classified landscapes have potential to be impacted by views of the Proposed Development which has potential to increase the influence of wind farm development on Ben Wyvis SLA, WLA29 Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis and the locality surrounding the Site. However, it is also the case that the Proposed Development is likely to be seen in an existing developed context with consequent implications for the degree of contrast and the magnitude of impacts attributed to it.

Potential Visual Effects

5.7.12 The operational Proposed Development including most of the associated development would be located within the footprint of Novar 1 Wind Farm which would be decommissioned. The Proposed Development would be situated on a broad ridge and although the proposed turbines would be large, they would be spaced widely apart creating a simpler image than that presented by the smaller 34 operational Novar 1 wind turbines. Potential effects are considered relative to the comparative scenario and the restored scenario. In both these scenarios Novar 2 turbines would be present.

5.7.13 The Proposed Development has the potential to affect visual receptors throughout the 35 km Study Area. However, significant effects are unlikely to extend to 35 km from the Proposed Development. The 35 km Study Area provides a large enough area in which the geographical extent of significant and not significant effects can be described. The embedded mitigation measures are described in **Chapter 4: Design Evolution and Alternatives (EIAR Volume 2)** and Section 5.6 above.

Decommissioning of Repowered Wind Farm

5.7.14 Decommissioning of the Proposed Development would last approximately 9-10 months. The methods that would be utilised during decommissioning are detailed in **Chapter 3: Site Description and Proposed Development (EIAR Volume 2)**. The decommissioning elements with the potential to affect the landscape and visual amenity of the Study Area are:

- Temporary introduction of cranes and dismantling equipment;
- Temporary disturbance to landform and vegetation around turbine bases and internal access tracks;
- Potential soil compaction or scarring from heavy machinery;
- Temporary storage of turbine components creating localised clutter;
- HGV movements to and from Site and movement of vehicles on-Site; and
- Reinstatement work, including removal of temporary compounds and laydown areas and peatland restoration works.

5.7.15 The effects on landscape and visual resources of decommissioning the repowered wind farm would be similar to those of decommissioning the Novar 1 Wind Farm. During decommissioning, measures would be taken to minimise effects on landscape fabric through the implementation of a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP). Due to the small area affected and temporary nature of effects, the overall effects on landscape fabric would be **not significant**.

5.7.16 Effects on landscape character, landscape designations and wild land areas would relate to visibility of decommissioning activities and the influence that such activities would have on the perceived key characteristics, special qualities and key attributes of these areas. Due to the small area affected and temporary nature of effects the overall effects on landscape character, landscape designations and wild land areas would be **not significant**.

5.7.17 Decommissioning effects would be short-term adverse effects during dismantling due to the presence of cranes, heavy machinery and temporary disturbance, which would occur across a small area and be temporary and reversible. The effects would be **not significant**.

Potential Cumulative Effects

Potential Cumulative Construction Effects

5.7.18 Whilst there is potential for cumulative effects associated with the construction of the Proposed Development and a number of other wind energy developments in the Study Area, there is no certainty as to the nature of construction operations or timescales for the cumulative developments identified in Table 5.2.

Potential Cumulative Operational Effects

5.7.19 Potential cumulative operational effects could arise as a result of the Proposed Development in conjunction with existing, consented, in-planning and in-scoping wind developments within the Study Area. Two types of effects have been considered in the assessment of cumulative effects: in-addition effects and in-combination effects. The focus is on in-addition effects i.e., effects arising from the Proposed Development in addition to cumulative developments in each cumulative scenario assessed. In combination effects are those arising from the total amount of wind farm development in any given scenario assessed.

5.7.20 Of relevance to cumulative effects is the extent to which the Proposed Development would be consistent with the emergent pattern of development and the avoidance of geographical distribution of development with consequent spreading of cumulative effects, especially in respect of sensitive landscape and visual receptors.

5.8 Additional Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Mitigation During Construction

5.8.1 The following precautionary mitigation measures would be adopted during construction:

- All working areas would be restricted as far as practicable to specified areas to prevent incursion of Site plant into non-construction areas;
- Material storage and temporary stockpiles would be retained for the shortest possible duration and would be sited in accordance with the latest best practice guidance and to avoid visual intrusion to neighbouring visual receptors in accordance with the Outline DCEMP in **Technical Appendix 3.1 (EIA Report Volume 4)**; and
- The Turbine Array and Internal Tracks have been designed to limit effects on deep peat. Where peatland materials do need to be excavated or moved, they would be placed wherever practicable to avoid double handling, reduce the number of vehicle movements and to reduce the potential drying out and oxidisation of the material. See the **Outline Peat Management Plan (OPMP) Technical Appendix 9.6 (EIA Report Volume 4)**.

5.8.2 The location of the three temporary construction compounds and laydown areas are shown on **Figure 1.3 (EIA Report Volume 3a)**. These have been located to avoid environmental impacts such as the disturbance of deep peat or existing vegetation to be retained. These

elements of the construction phase would be required for a short duration and their locations reinstated to a condition consistent with adjoining areas that are undisturbed by the Proposed Development.

Mitigation During Operation

5.8.3 The primary means of mitigating impacts on landscape and visual amenity is through the design of the Proposed Development and involves design modifications and inputs to the design process to minimise effects. Design is informed by consultee responses and Site-specific constraints and opportunities. No additional mitigation is proposed during the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development.

5.9 Assessment of Residual Effects

5.9.1 The assessment of residual effects identifies and describes the changes to the landscape and visual baseline, which includes operational wind farms, after embedded and additional mitigation.

Decommissioning of Novar 1 Wind Farm

Short-Term Effects During Decommissioning

- Temporary introduction of cranes and dismantling equipment;
- Temporary disturbance to landform and vegetation around turbine bases and access tracks;
- Potential soil compaction or scarring from heavy machinery;
- Temporary storage of turbine components creating localised clutter;
- Residual effects that remain may be the access tracks, crane pads/hardstanding if these are not removed.

5.9.2 Decommissioning effects on landscape fabric would be managed through a DCEMP and the approach to restoration of the turbine foundations and any unused sections of track would be agreed with consultees and included in a DCEMP and/or a Land Management Plan (LMP). This is considered embedded mitigation. The magnitude of change on landscape fabric would be Slight. Residual effects on landscape fabric at the Site which is of Medium/Low sensitivity would be minor and **not significant**.

5.9.3 Effects on landscape character, landscape designations and wild land areas would relate to visibility of decommissioning activities including the plant and machinery used during the works. Visibility of decommissioning works would influence the perceived landscape character of the host LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif and the adjacent LCT330 Rounded Hills and moorland and LCT341 Forest Edge Farming. Visibility of the decommissioning works would also influence views from Ben Wyvis SLA and qualities of wildness as experienced from WLA 29 Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis which overlaps with Ben Wyvis SLA. However, the effects of decommissioning on landscape character and the special qualities of Ben Wyvis SLA and key attributes of WLA 29 would be temporary and of short duration. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible at most on receptors of up to High/Medium sensitivity. Residual effects would therefore be minor and **not significant**.

5.9.4 Effects on views and visual amenity would be temporary and of short duration. Decommissioning activities would be visible mainly from more elevated locations such as Ben Wyvis and would be discernible from nearby locations such as the community of Boath to the northeast of the Proposed Development and the sparsely settled Strath Rusdale. For receptors of up to high sensitivity the magnitude of change would be Slight at most.

However, these activities would be temporary and of short duration and reversible. Effects would therefore be Moderate and **not significant**.

Construction of Repowered Wind Farm

Effects on Landscape Fabric

5.9.5 The key changes to the fabric of the landscape within the Site due to the construction of the Proposed Development would relate to minor and limited changes to landform, and landcover through the construction of internal roads, turbine foundations, installation of underground cabling and creation of construction compounds and the substation compound. Effects arising from these activities would be small and largely reversible upon decommissioning. Construction would result in a Slight magnitude of impact on landscape fabric within the Site which has Medium sensitivity. This would result in a direct, temporary and short-term Moderate/Minor and **not significant** residual effect.

Effects on Landscape Character

5.9.6 The construction phase would affect mainly LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif in which the turbine array would be located and in which area most of the construction activities would take place. The character of this part of LCT329 has already been altered by wind farm development and construction activity would be perceived in that context. Effects would be restricted to construction locations and would be temporary and of short duration. The magnitude of change on the key characteristics of LCT329 would be Slight at the Site reducing to Negligible. The sensitivity of LCT329 varies from Low at the Site to High/Medium in parts of the LCT coinciding with wild land areas. Effects would be temporary and of short duration. The residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant** reducing to Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.7 LCT330 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes would be affected by construction of the access road to the substation, construction of the substation and upgrades to a short section of existing track that crosses part of LCT330 to the south of the Site. The effects on landscape character would be very limited due to the presence of existing tracks in the LCT where the track upgrades and new sections of tracks are proposed. Construction of the proposed substation would involve demolition of the existing substation building and extension of the existing compound. The magnitude of change on the key characteristics of LCT330 would be Slight at the Site reducing to Negligible. The sensitivity of LCT330 varies from Medium to High/Medium in parts of the LCT coinciding with wild land areas. Effects would be temporary and of short duration. The residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant** reducing to Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.8 LCT341 Forest Edge Farming would be affected by upgrades to existing tracks leading to the Turbine Array along the main access route from the south. The upgrades would be to existing tracks, and no new tracks would be constructed in this LCT. The magnitude of change on the key characteristics of LCT330 would be Slight at the Site reducing to Negligible. The sensitivity of LCT341 is Medium. Construction effects would be temporary and of short duration. The residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.9 LCT345 Farmed and Forested Slopes would be affected by construction of upgrades to existing tracks, widening of the existing bell mouth at the B817 and by a temporary construction compound which would be situated at an existing gravel pit in an area of forestry. The effects of construction on key characteristics of LCT345 would be very restricted and of short duration. The magnitude of change would be Slight at the Site

reducing to Negligible. The sensitivity of LCT345 is Medium. The residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.10 The effect of construction on the landscape character of adjacent LCTs would be restricted to indirect effects on perceived landscape character. Construction activities would be visible mainly from nearby location or from elevated areas in adjacent LCT. The magnitude of change on adjacent LCT would be Negligible at most. The effects would be of short duration and reversible and the residual effects would at most be Minor and **not significant**.

Effects on Landscape Designations and Classifications

5.9.11 No construction activities would take place in any designated landscapes or wild land areas. Construction activities would be visible from Ben Wyvis SLA and from WLA29. Construction activities would be noticeable from elevated parts of the SLA and WLA and would be seen in the context of the operational Novar 2 Wind Farm. Ben Wyvis SLA is of High/Medium sensitivity. The effects of construction on the special qualities of Ben Wyvis SLA would be very limited and of short duration. The magnitude of change would be Negligible. The residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.12 The effects on WLA29 are discussed below in relation to viewpoints within the WLA.

Effects on Visual Amenity

5.9.13 Most construction activities associated with the Proposed Development would be of a low height and visually constrained by landform although such activities would be visible from more elevated areas such as Ben Wyvis (Viewpoint 16). The taller vertical elements such as the wind turbines, and cranes would have the potential to be viewed by visual receptors within the wider landscape. The receptors affected would vary with the area under construction, but construction works would have the most potential to exert an influence on views from Ben Wyvis where receptors would be looking down onto the Site. Construction activities would be a noticeable change to views bringing vehicles and construction plant into part of the view where currently the main influence is the wind turbines of the Novar 1 Wind Farm and the Novar 2 Wind Farm. Receptors at Ben Wyvis are of High sensitivity. The magnitude of change would be Slight. The residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant**. Effects would be of short duration and reversible.

5.9.14 Construction activities would also be visible from the community at Boath (Viewpoint 6) and from the eastern part of Strath Rusdale at Inchlumpie (Viewpoint 7) and from the minor road at Ardross Distillery (Viewpoint 8). Construction activities would be perceived intermittently and would be seen for a short duration. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible. The residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant** for the community of Boath and residents in Strath Rusdale. Effects would be of short duration and reversible.

5.9.15 In views from the wider area, effects would be limited to the final stages of the construction phase during the erection of wind turbines using cranes and would extend over a short period of time. This would affect mainly views from elevated locations to the northeast through northwest to west represented by Viewpoints 1 (Beinn Dearg), 2 (Carn Salachaidh), 10 Beinn Tharsuinn, 22 (Tom Ban Mor) and 23 (Diebidale Ridge). This would result overall in a Negligible magnitude of change, reducing to None, due to intervening distance. For those receptors of High sensitivity, the residual effect would be temporary, short-term, Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

Operation of Repowered Wind Farm

5.9.16 Residual operational effects have been considered in two scenarios:

- **Scenario 1 (comparative scenario)**: in which the effects of the Proposed Development have been assessed against the current baseline i.e., with Novar 1 turbines present; and
- **Scenario 2 (restored scenario)**: in which the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against a baseline in which Novar 1 turbines are not present.

Landscape Effects: Landscape Fabric

5.9.17 No additional adverse effects are anticipated on landscape fabric following completion of the construction phase. Replacement and compensatory planting, and habitat creation and peatland restoration/enhancement would gradually mature, with some benefits on landscape condition and biodiversity potential.

Landscape Effects: Landscape Character Types

5.9.18 There are 37 landscape character types (LCTs) within the Study Area. There would be theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from 24 of these. Those LCTs that are distant from the Site and/or with very limited potential visibility of the Proposed Development were scoped out of further assessment and justification for this is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)**. The remaining LCTs have been assessed in detail in both the comparative scenario and the restored scenario, and the detailed assessment is described in Table 5.2.3 of **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)**. The LCTs assessed in detail are:

- LCT135 Rounded Hills - Caithness & Sutherland;
- LCT139 Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness & Sutherland;
- LCT140 Sandy Beaches and Dunes;
- LCT145 Farmed and Forested Slopes with Crofting;
- LCT146 Coastal Farmland & Woodlands;
- LCT220 Rugged Massif – Inverness;
- LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif (host LCT);
- LCT330 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross and Cromarty;
- LCT331 Rounded Rocky Hills – Ross & Cromarty;
- LCT339 Inland Strath;
- LCT341 Forest Edge Farming;
- LCT342 Farmed River Plains;
- LCT344 Lowland Farmed Plain – Ross & Cromarty;
- LCT345 Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty; and
- LCT346 Open Farmed Slopes.

5.9.19 The detailed assessment of effects on LCTs described in **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** found that significant effects would be likely on those listed below.

- LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif (the main host LCT);
- LCT330 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross and Cromarty;
- LCT339 Inland Strath; and
- LCT341 Forest Edge Farming.

LCT329 ROUNDED MOUNTAIN MASSIF

5.9.20 Most of the Proposed Development including the turbine array would be located in the eastern part the LCT unit that lies to the west of Alness and coincides with Ben Wyvis and Glen Glass. Novar 1 Wind Farm and Novar 2 Wind Farm are situated in this LCT at and adjacent to the Site. Viewpoints 3: Loch Glass, 16: Ben Wyvis and 20: Glen Glass are located in the host LCT unit. **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** notes that the Proposed Development has potential to affect mainly the following key characteristics:

- "High, broad-based, smooth sided, lobed mountains found in discrete groups set within, and sweeping down to smooth, lower hills and high-level straths and u-shaped valleys, giving a sense of grandeur.
- Well-defined summits with either a rounded or angular profile. Often both occur on the same summit where rounded tops have been sculpted by glacial activity into corries and cliff faces.
- Limited settlement, few footpaths or other structures, and little evidence of historic or current land use.
- Far reaching views from upper reaches to the mountains, plains and firths in adjacent areas.
- Vastness of the landscape due to simple lines of mountain profile, sweeping horizons, undifferentiated ground cover, and few man-made structures to indicate scale.
- Wild character over much of the area."

5.9.21 Sensitivity is evaluated as Low at the Site and to the east of Loch Glass and southeast of Meall Beag, Medium/Low immediately west of Loch Glass and Medium/High in parts of the LCT coinciding with WLA29 Rhiddoroch-Beinn Dearg-Ben Wyvis and Ben Wyvis SLA.

5.9.22 In the **comparative scenario,** the Proposed Development would noticeably increase the influence of wind farm development at the Site and within a distance of approximately 4 km. The magnitude of change would be Moderate and the residual effect would be Minor and **not significant** at most within 4 km. Beyond 4 km the characterising influence of the proposed turbines would lessen and the proposed turbines would present a simpler, more balanced design that responds to underlying landform and reduces the spread of turbines across the landscape. Beyond 4 km the magnitude of change would reduce to Moderate/ Slight. The residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.23 In the **restored scenario** where Novar 1 turbines would not be present, but Novar 2 wind turbines would be, the Proposed Development would increase the contrast with the baseline and there would be a noticeable difference in the size of the turbines compared to those of Novar 2. The proposed turbines would be a noticeable addition but would be spaced widely apart and correspond well to the shape and height of the underlying ridge landform. The magnitude of change within 4 km would be Substantial/Moderate and residual effect would be Major/Moderate **and Significant** within 4 km. Beyond 4 km the magnitude of change would reduce to Moderate up to about 8 km and the residual effects would be Major/ Moderate and **Significant**. The magnitude of change would reduce to Moderate/Slight within approximately 10 km and beyond reducing to Low at most. Beyond 8 km the residual effects would be Moderate and **not significant**.

LCT330 ROUNDED HILLS AND MOORLAND SLOPES – ROSS AND CROMARTY

5.9.24 The proposed substation and upgrades to existing access tracks would be situated in LCT330. The effects on landscape character arising from these components would be very limited in extent in the context of the LCT as a whole. The proposed turbines would be visible

from the LCT as shown on Viewpoints 9: Loch Morie **(Figure 5.34a-g),** 10: Beinn Tharsuinn **(Figure 5.35a-g)** and 11: Cnoc Fyrish **(Figure 5.36a-f)**. The proposed turbines would also be seen in views from adjacent LCT looking across LCT330 including Viewpoints 2: Carn Salachaidh **(Figure 5.27a-g)**, 22: Tom Ban Mor **(Figure 5.47a-g)** and 23: Diebidale Ridge **(Figure 5.48a-g)**. The main operational wind farms located in or influencing LCT330 and relevant the baseline scenarios assessed are Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oghrean, Lochluichart and Corriemoillie. **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** notes that the Proposed Development has potential to affect mainly the following key characteristics:

- "Broad, rounded hills and upland moorlands with smooth, gentle slopes down to broad straths, creating an undulating skyline.
- Man-made structures of pylons, wind farms and reservoirs occur as occasional features within a large-scale landscape.
- Large, remote interior areas of vast scale with wildness characteristics."

5.9.25 Sensitivity is Medium generally, and Medium/High in areas categorised as Wild Land.

5.9.26 In the **comparative scenario**, the proposed turbines would slightly intensify the influence of wind turbines in the LCT extending the influence of wind turbines associated with the Novar 2 Wind Farm. The Proposed Development would have a greater influence on eastern parts of the LCT unit where the magnitude of change would be Moderate within approximately 3.5 to 4 km of the Site. This would reduce to Moderate/Slight in areas to the north and northeast which are influenced by operational Beinn Tharsuinn and Coire na Cloiche wind farms. Magnitude would reduce to Slight in the west where visibility coincides mainly with isolated summits and where the proposed turbines would be seen as a minor addition in wider views. The residual effects would be Moderate and **not significant** at most.

5.9.27 In the **restored scenario**, the large size of the proposed turbines would contrast with those of the Novar 2 Wind Farm intensifying the presence of wind turbines in the eastern part of this LCT within approximately 4 km. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/ Moderate. The perception of the contrast in size would reduce with distance and the proposed turbines would be more noticeable than those of the Novar 2 Wind Farm within approximately 4-8 km. The magnitude of change would reduce to Moderate within 4-8 km and Slight beyond 8 km. The residual effects would be Major/Moderate and **significant** within 4 km and Moderate and **not significant** at most beyond 4-8 km.

LCT339 INLAND STRATH

5.9.28 No part of the Proposed Development would be located in LCT339 the closest unit of which is 3.5 km to the northeast of the nearest proposed turbine. The proposed turbines would be visible from the LCT as shown on Viewpoint 4: Strath Rusdale and Viewpoint 7: Minor road at Inchlumpie **(EIAR Volumes 3b and 3c)**. **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** notes that the Proposed Development has potential to affect mainly the following key characteristics:

- "Strath floors rise up to a strath head and peter out into upland moorlands.
- Contrast with surrounding exposed, uninhabited, upland moorland and hills, and the more intensely farmed or settled areas beyond the lower end of the strath.
- Confined views which direct attention towards the foreground details on the surrounding slopes and enclosing skyline.

- Landlocked, enclosed upland setting, and low use, cul-de-sac minor roads and tracks, which give a sense of isolation."

5.9.29 The sensitivity of LC341 is Medium/High due to the smaller scale of the strath landscapes.

5.9.30 In the **comparative scenario** the proposed turbines would be more noticeable in the southern part of the strath and appear larger on the enclosing skyline. The reduction in the number of turbines from 34 to nine would present a much simpler image that corresponds well to the skyline and would not be uncharacteristic of views to the enclosing skyline in the south of the strath. In the north of the strath the proposed turbines would be a new feature and a comparison with Novar 1 would not be made. However, throughout the strath although the proposed turbines would be present on the skyline they would not affect the scale or wider character of the Strath Rusdale LCT unit. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

5.9.31 In the **restored scenario** effects in the south of the strath would differ in that the proposed turbines would introduce large new features into the enclosing skyline. The proposed turbines would be seen with the turbines of Novar 2. Scale comparisons would be made between the two developments, but the proposed turbines would not impinge upon the overall scale of the strath or other key characteristics that define it. The Proposed Development would be a notable change to the scale of development and influence on the enclosing skyline. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant** in the northern part of the LCT within 6 km of the Proposed Development.

LCT341 FOREST EDGE FARMING

5.9.32 The Proposed Development would result in very limited direct effects on LCT341 arising from the upgrade of existing tracks along the main access route to the Turbine Array. The main effects on LCT341 would result from the introduction of the proposed turbines into the adjacent LCT329 and visibility of them as shown on Viewpoints 6: Boath, 8: Minor road by Ardross Distillery and 30: Ardross Community Hall. The Proposed Development would affect the following key characteristics:

- "Tree cover creates enclosed or intermittent distant views and helps to screen structures such as pylons and masts,
- Far reaching views to the south and east from high ground or open areas, often framed and enhanced by foreground trees."

5.9.33 The sensitivity of LC341 is Medium. It is a landscape strongly influenced by human activity. There are no landscape designations and qualities of remoteness and wildness are not strongly evident.

5.9.34 In the **comparative scenario** the Proposed Development would be perceived as fewer, larger turbines associated with the moorland landscapes beyond the LCT. The random, overlapping array of Novar 1 turbines would be replaced with a simpler image of turbines arranged to correspond to the topography of the Site. While the design of the Proposed Development is an improvement, the scale of the proposed turbines would be larger relative to the small-scale features of LCT341, and they would be more noticeable in views. The magnitude of change would be Moderate in the western part of the LCT and Moderate/Slight in the east. The residual effects would be Moderate and Not Significant in the west of the LCT and Moderate/Minor and **not significant** in the east of the LCT.

5.9.35 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be seen as large new features adding to the smaller Novar 2 turbines. In the west of the LCT the change would be very

noticeable and the contrast with the baseline would be notable. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate in the western part of the LCT, and the residual effects would be Major/Moderate and **significant**.

LCT345 FARMED AND FORESTED SLOPES – ROSS & CROMARTY

5.9.36 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium sensitivity. **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** identified two key characteristics with the potential to be affected:

- "Occasional large settlements in a predominantly rural landscape.
- Views from more open, terraced areas across lowlands or firth to hills or out to sea."

5.9.37 However, due to intervening distance and limited visibility of the Proposed Development as indicated on Viewpoints 21: A817 Invergordon and 28: A9 East of Alness and the ZTV shown on **Figure 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)**, these key characteristics would not be significantly affected. The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario** since visibility of the proposed turbines would be restricted and heavily filtered in general. The residual effects would be Minor and **not significant**.

LCT135 ROUNDED HILLS - CAITHNESS & SUTHERLAND

5.9.38 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium sensitivity in eastern parts of the LCT where human activity has a greater influence. Sensitivity is Medium/High where wildness characteristics are more strongly evident. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified the potential for primarily four key characteristics to potentially be affected:

- "Scarcely settled with a largely uninhabited interior and widely scattered crofts and farms on lower slopes adjoining straths and farmed landscapes.
- Wind farms located in more accessible and generally lower rolling hills, either close to extensive forestry or the high voltage transmission line aligned broadly parallel to the southeast Sutherland coast.
- Views into the interior of the hills very restricted.
- Strong sense of wild character can be experienced within the more remote and little modified parts of this landscape."

5.9.39 The ZTV shown on **Figure 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates that potential visibility of the proposed turbines would be largely limited to the south-facing slopes on the east side of Achany Glen. Visibility from other parts of the LCT would be limited to upper slopes and higher peaks. The key characteristics of this LCT would not be significantly affected. The magnitude of change would be Slight in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Minor and **not significant**.

LCT346 OPEN FARMED SLOPES

5.9.40 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium sensitivity. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified one key characteristic with the potential be affected:

- "Ever present views which are open, expansive and outward looking."

5.9.41 Viewpoints 5: A9 Duncanston, 13: Easter Brae, Black Isle, 17: A835 Leanaig Junction, 19: Culbokie and 24: Knockfarrel are located in LCT346 and show typical views from northwest facing slopes and from the locally distinctive hill of Knockfarrel. The viewpoints show that the proposed turbines would slightly intensify the influence of wind turbines on outward facing views from this LCT in the **comparative scenario**. The magnitude of change would be Slight and the effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.42 The change would be more apparent in the **restored scenario** where the proposed turbines would appear as a minor focal point on the horizon from the closer parts of the LCT within wider views. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight and the residual effects would be Moderate and **not significant**.

LCT139 RUGGED MOUNTAIN MASSIF – CAITHNESS & SUTHERLAND

5.9.43 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium/High sensitivity. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified five key characteristics with the potential be affected:

- "Mountain peaks form landmarks, rising above the interlocking mass of lower slopes and distinguished by their height, distinctive and recognisable profile.
- Largely uninhabited and difficult to access. The small number of settlements and roads which do exist tend to be located at the edges of this character type and at the intersection of a strath or loch.
- Interior of this landscape is mainly visited by hill walkers and deer stalkers.
- Extensive views of the surrounding landscape and an exhilarating experience of openness and exposure from mountain ridges and summits.
- Natural unmodified character of the high mountains, with their remoteness, ruggedness, and difficulty of access, creating a strong wild character."

5.9.44 The ZTV shown on **Figure 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates that theoretical visibility is restricted to the highest peaks and some upper slopes. Such visibility is constrained in the larger of the two units of this LCT in the Study Area, and the greatest visibility is from the southern slopes of Carn Salachaidh (see Viewpoint 2) with Viewpoints 23: Diebidale Ridge showing a more distant view. Whilst the proposed turbines would be slightly more noticeable in views from this LCT, the overall effect is limited. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

LCT342 FARMED RIVER PLAINS

5.9.45 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium sensitivity. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified one key characteristic with the potential be affected:

- "Contrast of the flat, open plain and the adjacent surrounding concave slopes rising to steep hill and mountain edges to the north, west and south."

5.9.46 Views of the Proposed Development would be wholly or partly screened by layers of intervening vegetation from this LCT characterised by low lying topography of settled and farmed landscapes. The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Minor and **not significant**.

LCT145 FARMED AND FORESTED SLOPES WITH CROFTING

5.9.47 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium/High sensitivity. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified two key characteristics with the potential be affected:

- "Semi-enclosed character of this well-wooded landscape with occasional views.
- Attractive views from small roads high up the slopes, giving views to the Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland and glimpses of the Dornoch Firth."

5.9.48 Given the intervening distance and limited areas of visibility as shown on the ZTV **(Figure 5.4 in EIAR Volume 3a)**, the magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Minor and **not significant**.

LCT331 ROUNDED ROCKY HILLS – ROSS & CROMARTY

5.9.49 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is generally of Medium sensitivity due to the large scale of the landscape and the extensive areas of conifer plantation. Sensitivity is Medium/High where qualities of wildness are more evident. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified three key characteristics with the potential be affected:

- "Extensive views of adjoining plains, firths and mountains from higher levels.
- Occasional masts and pylons tend to be visually absorbed by rocky landforms and vegetation.
- Wild character in the south-west area, which is more remote and has few built structures."

5.9.50 In the LCT unit to the southwest, visibility of the proposed turbines would be at relatively long distances and seen in the context of existing operational wind energy development at Fairburn. The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Minor and **not significant**.

LCT344 LOWLAND FARMED PLAIN – ROSS & CROMARTY

5.9.51 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium sensitivity. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified one key characteristic with the potential be affected:

- "Wide views from elevated areas towards the Cromarty Firth, Morrich More, and mountains to the west."

5.9.52 The ZTV shown on **Figure 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)** shows extensive areas of visibility from this LCT. However, there are wide views all around from this LCT and the Proposed Development would be perceived as minor element in available views and have a very limited influence on key characteristics. The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

LCT140 SANDY BEACHES AND DUNES

5.9.53 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium/High sensitivity. **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** identified three key characteristics with the potential be affected:

- "Focus for recreation with camp sites, caravan parks and car parks located close to more accessible areas of coast with golf courses present where links and machair areas are more extensive.
- Strong sense of space, light and exposure, and extensive visibility on the larger and more open stretches of sandy beach.
- Wildness character to of all these seascapes, more intensely experienced on the more remote beaches along the north and west coasts of Sutherland."

5.9.54 Dornoch Firth NSA coincides with LCT140 thereby giving this coastal area a Medium/High sensitivity. However, the wide-open views all around, the coastal focus of the LCT and the long intervening distance to the Proposed Development mean it would be perceived as a minor feature in views with a very limited influence on key characteristics (see Viewpoints 14: Dornoch Point and 15: Dornoch Firth Bridge). The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

LCT146 COASTAL FARMLAND & WOODLANDS

5.9.55 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium/High sensitivity. Technical Appendix 5.2 identified one key characteristic with the potential be affected:

- "High visibility from the east coast railway and coastal trunk roads, as well as the network of other roads which cross this area."

5.9.56 Visibility from the LCT would be restricted by woodland and visibility would be mainly of blade tips at long distances. The influence on this LCT would be very limited and the key characteristics would be unaffected. The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Minor and **not significant**.

LCT220 RUGGED MASSIF – INVERNESS

5.9.57 No significant effects have been identified for this LCT which is of Medium/High sensitivity. **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)** identified three key characteristics with the potential be affected:

- "Largely uninhabited, few signs of human activity or human artefacts in the interior, and sparse archaeological evidence.
- Views from the hill tops at the edges of the massif offer expansive views of the adjacent straths and surrounding landscape character types.
- A sense of remoteness and wildness which is particularly strong within the interior."

5.9.58 The LCT is a large area of upland to the west of Inverness that partly coincides with Glen Strathfarrar NSA, WLA 24 Central Highlands and Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA in the west. The Proposed Development would be noticeable appearing in the same view as Ben Wyvis and seen in the context of operational Fairburn wind farm. Given the long intervening distance to the Proposed Development the influence on this LCT would be very limited. The magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

Landscape Effects: Landscape Designations and Wild Land Areas

5.9.59 An assessment has been made of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on one National Scenic Area (NSA) and three local designations (SLAs) and is described in detail **Technical Appendix 5.4 (EIAR Volume 4)**. The findings of the assessment of effects on each designated area are summarised below.

DORNOCH FIRTH NSA

5.9.60 The Dornoch Firth NSA is of High sensitivity. An initial assessment of effects on Dornoch Firth NSA was undertaken using the ZTV shown on **Figure 5.9 (EIAR Volume 3a)**, visualisations from Viewpoint 14 (Dornoch Point) and Viewpoint 15 (Dornoch Bridge) **(EIAR Volumes 3b and 3c)** and was informed by the assessment of effects on landscape character. Analysis of that material and a review of the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ) of the NSA indicated limited potential for significant effects due primarily to:

- The small proportion of the NSA from which theoretical visibility is shown;
- Intervening distance between areas of theoretical visibility in the NSA and the Proposed Development;
- Limited visibility of the Proposed Development which would be seen as a very minor feature on the distant horizon as indicated on Viewpoints 14 and 15; and

- The mainly coastal focus of the SLQ and limited potential for the Proposed Development to influence those and the SLQ "*wilder backdrop of hills and moors*".

5.9.61 The assessment in **Technical Appendix 5.4: Landscape Designations** Assessment **(EIAR Volume 4)** concludes that the magnitude of change on SLQ of Dornoch Firth NSA would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effects on SLQ of the NSA would be Moderate/Minor and therefore the effects on the qualities for which the NSA is designated would be **not significant**. Consequently, the overall integrity of the NSA would not be adversely affected and the Dornoch Firth NSA would not be compromised by the Proposed Development.

BEN WYVIS SLA

5.9.62 Ben Wyvis SLA is of Medium/High sensitivity. The Site is situated 3 km to the east of Ben Wyvis SLA which is already influenced by the Novar 1 and Novar 2 Wind Farms. The special qualities of Ben Wyvis SLA likely to be affected are the panoramic views from the summit and secondly views towards the distinctive landmark feature of Ben Wyvis from the surrounding area. The assessment of effects described in **Technical Appendix 5.4 (EIAR Volume 4)** indicates that the magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight in the **comparative scenario** and effects would be **not significant**.

5.9.63 In the **restored scenario**, the Proposed Development would be seen in views towards Ben Wyvis but would not interrupt views of the landmark mountain or be seen in front of it. This special quality would not be significantly affected. The Proposed Development would mainly affect views east from Ben Wyvis but not views in other directions. The special quality of "extensive panoramas" would be significantly affected, and the assessment identified a Moderate magnitude of change and a Major/Moderate and **significant** effect relating to the special quality of views from Ben Wyvis in a small area.

5.9.64 The effects on the special quality of views from Ben Wyvis would occur in the direction of the Proposed Development. Wider views available from Ben Wyvis would be unaffected. Views north and west to vast areas of mountains and uplands would be unaffected and views southeast and south to the settled and farmed lowlands and firths would be unaffected. The influence of the Proposed Development and overall effects would affect a small area with significant effects on one special quality of the SLA. The other three special qualities would not be significantly affected as explained in **Technical Appendix 5.4 (EIAR Volume 4)**. Due to the limited extent of effects on one special quality of Ben Wyvis SLA the overall integrity of the SLA would not be compromised by the Proposed Development.

FANNICHS, BEINN DEARG AND GLENCALVIE SLA

5.9.65 Fannichs, Beinn Derag and Glencalvie SLA is of Medium/High sensitivity. The Site is situated 11.5 km southeast of the SLA which encompasses a vast tract of high mountains between Starthcarron and Loch Broom and between Loch Broom and Strath Bran in the southwest. The southwestern part of the SLA is influenced by a group of operational wind farms comprising of the Lochluichart, extension and Corriemoillie. The central and eastern parts of the SLA are more remote and isolated with high summits and deep straths.

5.9.66 The assessment described in **Technical Appendix 5.4 (EIAR Volume 4)** indicates there would be patchy and limited visibility of the Proposed Development mainly from summit areas of mountains in the SLA. The Proposed Development would be a minor feature in views with limited influence on special qualities. The assessment identified a Slight/ Negligible magnitude of change on special qualities of the SLA in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario** with a Minor and **not significant** effect.

5.9.67 Due to intervening distance and limited visibility from the SLA overall integrity of the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie SLA would not be compromised by the Proposed Development.

SUTORS OF CROMARTY, ROSEMARKIE AND FORT GEORGE SLA

5.9.68 The Site is situated 21.5 km northwest of the SLA which is of Medium/High sensitivity.

5.9.69 The assessment described in **Technical Appendix 5.4 (EIAR Volume 4)** indicates there would be a Negligible magnitude of change on special qualities of the SLA in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario** with a Moderate/Minor and **not significant** effect.

5.9.70 Due to intervening distance and limited visibility from the SLA, the overall integrity of the Sutors of Cromarty, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA would not be compromised by the Proposed Development.

WLA 29 RHIDDOROCH – BEINN DEARG – BEN WYVIS

5.9.71 WLA 29 is of high sensitivity overall with wild land qualities (WLQ) varying in sensitivity in relation to the Proposed Development. The assessment described in **Technical Appendix 5.6 (EIAR Volume 4)** indicates that the Proposed Development would have a greater influence on two WLQ within 8 km of the nearest proposed turbine. The panoramic views intrinsic to the experience of WLQ1 would be affected. Effects would be mitigated to a degree at the eastern edge of the WLA and at Ben Wyvis by the presence of operational wind farm development at Novar 2 and views of Strathrory wind farm and the settled and farmed lowlands of the Moray Firth area and the Black Isle. However, the Proposed Development would be a notable change to the baseline due primarily to the large size of the proposed turbines.

5.9.72 The main area of WLA affected by the Proposed Development would be the eastern fringes and southeastern 'lobes' that coincide with Ben Wyvis, Meall Beag between Glen Glass and Loch Morie and Carn Salachaidh. Wildness is less evident in these areas although it increases with increasing distance from the eastern fringes and 'lobes' in the larger interior areas. There is reasonable separation by landform from WLA 29, and the Proposed Development would be present in an area where wind farm development was established prior to the boundary of WLA being published.

5.9.73 While there would be significant effects on WLQ1 within 8-12 km of the Proposed Development, effects on WLQ2, 3 and 4 would be Not Significant. All four of the WLQ may be experienced to differing degrees in WLA 29. The analysis of sensitivity in Table 5.6.1 in Technical Appendix 5.6 and the assessment of effects described in Table 5.6.2 of Technical Appendix 5.6 indicates that the interaction of the Proposed Development with the four WLQ would also differ and the degree of change would be influenced to a degree by the presence of activity in the WLA or development in land adjacent to it.

5.9.74 Taking account of the analysis described in Technical Appendix 5.6 the overall effects on WLA 29 would be **not significant** due to the limited extent of significant effects on one of the four WLQ.

Visual Effects: Settlements

5.9.75 Settlements are evaluated as being of High sensitivity.

BOATH

5.9.76 Boath is a small community that lies approximately 2.6 km northeast of the Proposed Development.

5.9.77 Viewpoint 6: Boath indicates a view from the minor road at the head of the glen where there are some residential properties. The viewpoint indicates that the Proposed Development would introduce fewer but larger turbines, which would result in a simpler visual composition. The proposed turbines would appear large in scale compared to features visible in the view but would not be an uncharacteristic feature of views. In the **comparative scenario**, the magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effects would be Major/Moderate and **significant**. In the **restored scenario**, the Proposed Development would introduce new features into the view that would become very noticeable focal points resulting in change across a medium extent of the receptor. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the residual effects would be Major and **significant**.

ALNESS

5.9.78 Alness is situated on the north side of the Cromarty Firth approximately 9 km east of the Proposed Development. A comparison of the hub height ZTV shown on **Figure 5.7 (EIAR Volume 3a)** and the tip height ZTV shown on **Figure 5.6 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates theoretical visibility mainly of blade tips of up to six of the proposed turbines from eastern parts of the settlement. It is likely that intervening buildings and vegetation in the settlement would screen views of the proposed turbines from the majority of the settlement. Where uninterrupted views would be obtained, the proposed turbines would not be readily discernible due to intervening forestry. In both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario,** the magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

CULBOKIE

5.9.79 Culbokie is a village situated on the north side of the Black Isle at an elevated position with outlooks in the direction of the Proposed Development. Viewpoint 19: Culbokie is representative of uninterrupted views from Culbokie and indicates that the Proposed Development would be noticeable on the horizon in views across the Cromarty Firth. These views would be typical for receptors with uninterrupted views on the west side of the village.

5.9.80 In the **comparative scenario**, the Proposed Development would reduce the number of turbines visible. Novar 1 Wind Farm would be replaced by nine larger turbines arranged in a regular linear array on the horizon. This would result in a simplified image reducing the number of turbines visible on the horizon albeit with larger and more noticeable turbines. The magnitude of change would be Slight, and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

5.9.81 In the **restored scenario,** the Proposed Development would be noticeable on the horizon in views across the Cromarty Firth. It would occupy a small proportion of the available views from the western side of Culbokie. The proposed turbines would be separated from Ben Wyvis by terrain and would not interrupt views towards the mountain or result in adverse scale comparisons with this distinctive landmark feature. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

5.9.82 Views of the Proposed Development from the eastern side of the village and from the northern part of the settlement would be interrupted by buildings and vegetation. Effects would be less across most of the eastern part of the settlement and would be no greater at most than the effects described above for the western part of the settlement.

INVERGORDON

5.9.83 Invergordon lies approximately 14.8 km east of the Site. Views of the Proposed Development from the settlement would be restricted by the large amounts of tree planting

within gardens, the golf course and cemetery on the west side of the town. Clearest views towards the Proposed Development would be from the coast road.

5.9.84 Where visible, the proposed turbines would be seen close to the horizon forming a small element within the view. The magnitude of change would be Slight where uninterrupted views occur and Slight/Negligible at most for most of the settlement in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant** where uninterrupted views occur and Moderate/Minor and **not significant** for most of the settlement.

Visual Effects: Recreational Routes

5.9.85 Receptors using recreational routes are generally of High sensitivity as views would form a key part of the experience of using the route. However, sensitivity may vary along a route and magnitude of change may also vary. The assessment provides a balanced overview of potential effects noting potential worst-case in addition to the overall nature of visibility from each route assessed.

NCN1

5.9.86 This cycle route enters the Study Area from the south, by Inverness, and loops around the Cromarty Firth. The sensitivity of receptors using the route may vary but in general is evaluated as being of High sensitivity. The route follows the A832 along the southern side of the Black Isle using the ferry crossing to Nigg. It continues on minor roads north eastwards towards Balintore where the route continues along minor roads circling around to Tain where it follows a route south westwards through the Morangie Forest. Most of the route between Tain and Alness is through forestry. From Alness to Dingwall it follows the coast, and continues around the Beauly Firth to Conon Bridge, on minor roads where possible to join the A832 near Leanaig. From here it travels to Tore and then back towards Inverness, always on minor roads which run parallel to the A9.

5.9.87 Views of the Proposed Development from the NCN1 route would be possible from around Cromarty and the crossing to Nigg, and around the south side of the Cromarty Firth near Leanaig.

5.9.88 Whilst the 180 m tip height ZTV shown on **Figure 5.6 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates theoretical views from Nigg eastwards to Balintore, it is likely that such views would be largely filtered by intervening field boundary planting. From Balintore to Tain the views would continue to be filtered, but here the Proposed Development would be largely perpendicular to the direction of travel. North of Loch Eye, the views become more constrained and limited and eventually there are no potential views. Very few views of the Proposed Development are likely on the Tain to Alness and on to Dingwall leg of the route due to the forestry and then the lack of theoretical visibility.

5.9.89 As the potential for direct views towards the Proposed Development are restricted from much of route of the NCN1 through the Study Area, the magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effect on the amenity of the NCN1 route would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

CORE PATH RC05.02: TOLLIE TO LEALTY

5.9.90 The route passes alongside forestry plantation descending towards the River Averon. It passes through deciduous woodland on the south facing valley side before crossing the river Averon and ascending the north facing valley side through a clearing then into sparse deciduous woodland. Once out of the valley, views are open along two short sections of

0.45 km and 0.15 km with views screened by deciduous woodland from remaining sections of the route.

5.9.91 From the two open sections of the route there would be views of the Proposed Development which would be seen above the valley on the skyline. Viewpoint 8: Minor Road by Ardross Distillery gives an indication of views from an elevated location in the vicinity of the northern part of the route which runs along the edge of the forestry in the foreground.

5.9.92 In the **comparative scenario** from open parts of the route, the Proposed Development would introduce nine larger turbines in a simple, linear array. These would replace the 34 smaller turbines of the Novar 1 Wind Farm that are arranged in an irregular array. The proposed turbines would not be uncharacteristic of views from this location, and the view would be available only along short sections of the route where it crosses open ground on the south side of the strath. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant** along a short section of the route.

5.9.93 In the restored **scenario**, the proposed turbines would be very noticeable features on the skyline extending across the small hills on which they are positioned. The proposed turbines would have a greater influence than those of Novar 2. The degree of change would be notable occurring in a small area. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the residual effect would be Major and **significant** along a short section of the route.

CORE PATH RC16.01: SWORDALE HILL

5.9.94 The route circumnavigates Swordale Hill which is mostly covered in forest plantation. The 180 m tip height ZTV shown on **Figure 5.8a-b (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates theoretical visibility from the route where it passes around the north side of Swordale Hill. The Proposed Development would be visible from a 0.4 km section of the route where it passes through an area of felled forestry that has opened up views to the north in the direction of the Site. Approximately 14 Novar 1 turbines are visible from this part of the route

5.9.95 In the **comparative scenario** T7, T8 and T9 would be visible and more noticeable than the remaining six turbines of which blades only would be seen. The removal of Novar 1 turbines from the view and replacement with larger turbines would reduce the complexity of the image. While the proposed turbines would be more noticeable than those of Novar 1 they would present a balanced composition, and their larger size would not result in adverse scale comparisons with landform. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant** along a short section of the route.

5.9.96 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be a notable new addition to views. It would occupy a relatively small part of views from the route and would be seen obliquely to the direction of travel. The proposed turbines although large would not dominate views and would affect only part of the available views that may be obtained from the route. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant** along a short section of the route.

CORE PATH RC05.03: DAM WOOD

5.9.97 This route heads north from the minor road near Ardross Distillery passing to the east of the distillery along gradual south facing slopes with views to the south partly interrupted by buildings. After 0.28 km, the route descends to Loch Dubh passing to the east of the loch before heading southwest through forestry plantation.

5.9.98 There would be views of the Proposed Development from the short section to the east of Ardross Distillery and no views at Loch Dubh or in the forestry. Views from the southern part of this section would be partly interrupted by distillery buildings. Further from the

buildings, views would be uninterrupted and the proposed turbines would be seen on the skyline. Viewpoint 8: Minor Road by Ardross Distillery gives an indication of views at a slightly lower elevation 0.12 km to the west of the southern part of the core path.

5.9.99 In the **comparative scenario** from the southern part of the route the Proposed Development would introduce nine larger turbines in a simple, linear array. These would replace the 34 smaller turbines of Novar 1 that are scattered across the same part of the skyline. The proposed turbines would not be uncharacteristic of views from this location, and the view would be available only along a short section of the route where it crosses open ground to the east and northeast of Ardross Distillery. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant** along a short section of the route.

5.9.100 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be very noticeable features on the skyline extending across the small hills on which they are positioned. The proposed turbines would have a greater influence than those of Novar 2. The degree of change would be notable occurring in a small area. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major and **significant** along a short section of the route.

CORE PATH RC05.01: FYRISH PATH

5.9.101 The route heads southwest from a car park in forestry along the minor road to the community of Boath. The route passes through forest plantation which gradually thins out with increasing altitude until the route passes across open moorland hill slopes.

5.9.102 The ZTVs shown on **Figures 5.8a-b (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicate theoretical visibility from short sections of the route near the summit of Fyrish and on the lower slopes to the northeast. Viewpoint 11: Summit of Cnoc Fyrish is representative of views that may be experienced from short sections of core path RC05.01.

5.9.103 No turbines of Novar 1 Wind farm or Novar 2 Wind farm are visible from the core path. The effects of the Proposed Development in the **comparative** and **restored scenarios** would therefore be the same. There are views all around from the open parts of the core path and the Proposed Development would be seen in a small part of these views. The hubs of three proposed turbines and blades only of five would be visible in views to the northwest. Given the wider views available from this location the Proposed Development would occupy a small part of the available views. It would alter the experience of the landscape and views from the viewpoint to a small degree. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant** along short sections of the route.

CORE PATH RC05.04: DUBLIN TO ARDROSS MAINS

5.9.104 The route follows a short section of track that runs between the northern part of Ardross connecting with core path RC05.03 to the north of Ardross Distillery. The outlook from the path is open along its entire 0.63 km length.

5.9.105 There would be open views of the Proposed Development from the short section to the east of Ardross Distillery and no views at Loch Dubh or in the forestry. Viewpoint 8: Minor Road by Ardross Distillery gives an indication of views at a slightly lower elevation 0.32 km to the southwest of the eastern part of the core path.

5.9.106 Worst case views would be similar to those experienced along the southern part of core path RC05.03. Consequently, in the **comparative scenario** the magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant**. In the **restored scenario**, the magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major and **significant**.

Visual Effects: Transport Routes

A9 TRUNK ROAD

5.9.107 The A9 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. There are three stretches of the A9 from which sustained views are theoretically possible: from Daviot to Inverness travelling northbound; across the Black Isle from Tore through forestry over the higher land on the Black Isle; and east of Alness to just past Pitmaduthy when views become glimpsed and it goes out of visibility at Calrossie Woods.

5.9.108 Views from the Daviot to Inverness section would be distant and panoramic. The Proposed Development would appear to be a small element within the hills to the east of Ben Wyvis, on the horizon. Views across the Black Isle would be largely filtered by forestry across the spine of the peninsula, and in views between Pitmaduthy and Alness, views would be interrupted by field boundary tree planting and the occasional stone wall (see Viewpoint 28: A9 East of Alness **Figure 5.53a-g**).

5.9.109 There are glimpsed views possible from two stretches of the A9: from Ardulie Lodge to Foulis Point on the north side of the Cromarty Firth, and from the north of Dornoch to Dornoch Firth Bridge (north side).

5.9.110 Between Ardulie Lodge and Foulis Point, the views of the Proposed Development would be perpendicular to the direction of travel and interrupted by the rising topography. The section of the A9 between north of Dornoch and Dornoch Firth Bridge passes through a heavily wooded area which would restrict the distant views.

5.9.111 Given the type of visibility possible from the A9, as described above, there would be limited change to views. Whilst the Proposed Development may be discernible in places, such views would occur along short stretches of the route with intermittent screening by landform and vegetation. The underlying character of the views would be broadly consistent with the baseline.

5.9.112 Consequently, the magnitude of change would be Slight at most in the **comparative scenario** and the residual effect on the amenity of the A9 would be Moderate/Minor and not significant.

5.9.113 In the **restored scenario**, the magnitude of change would be Moderate at most in the Duncanston area. The residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant** along this stretch of the route. For most of the A9 in the Study Area the magnitude of change would be Slight or less and the residual effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant** in the restored scenario.

A835 TRUNK ROAD

5.9.114 The A835 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. Views of the Proposed Development from the A835 would be limited to a short stretch of approximately 5 km, from near Kilcoy Brae at Mullans Wood (approximately 2.5 km west of Tore) to Conon Bridge. Viewpoint 17: A835 at Leanaig Junction illustrates the views from this section of road.

5.9.115 Views from only a short stretch of the road would be potentially altered by the Proposed Development. The underlying character of the views from the majority of this trunk road through the Study Area, would be largely unchanged.

5.9.116 Consequently, the magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario** and the residual effect on the amenity of the A835 would be Minor and **not significant**.

A832 CROMARTY TO MOY BRIDGE

5.9.117 The A832 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. There are theoretical views of the Proposed Development from the A832 along two sections of the road:

- From Cromarty travelling westwards for approximately 5.5 km, whilst the road remains on the north side of the ridge that forms the spine of the peninsula. There is the potential for views from a short stretch of the route at Callachy Hill. However, this area is covered in forestry which would likely screen such views; and
- From east of Muir of Ord, through the settlement to Clash Wood to the west (approximately 3 km).

5.9.118 Views westbound from Cromarty, would be oblique and panoramic, over Cromarty Firth to the hills where the Proposed Development would be located. Along the second section of road through Muir of Ord, views would be glimpsed when not obscured by the built form of the settlement.

5.9.119 Views from very short sections of the road would be potentially changed by the Proposed Development. The underlying character of the views from most of this road would remain unchanged.

5.9.120 Consequently, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the residual effect on the amenity of the A832 would be Minor and **not significant** in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**.

A836 TRALOGIE (NEAR TAIN) TO LAIRG

5.9.121 The A836 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. Theoretical views from the A836 are limited to three areas:

- There is potential for limited and constrained views for about 1.5 km along the northern bank of Kyle of Sutherland north of Bonar Bridge. Such views would be glimpsed and interrupted by mature woodland on the slopes across the water;
- Fragmented visibility is shown around Lairg. At distances of around 28 km to 35 km, views from such areas would likely be obscured by the large amount of woodland in the area and built form of settlement; and
- Southbound travellers on this road would potentially experience filtered and very distant views of the Proposed Development approximately 5 km on the approach to Invershin from Lairg.

5.9.122 Views from very short sections of the road would be potentially changed by the Proposed Development. Such changes would be distant and imperceptible. The underlying character of the views, for the vast majority of this road would remain unchanged.

5.9.123 Consequently, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the residual effect on the amenity of the A832 would be Minor and **not significant** in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**.

A862 MUIR OF ORD TO DINGWALL

5.9.124 The A662 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. Theoretical views are restricted to one section of this road, and may be experienced northbound from Muir of Ord to Conon Bridge, for a distance of approximately 4 km. However, such views are likely to be screened with occasional glimpses of the wider area for much of this length. Close to the settlements, the associated built form would limit views. Along the open road between Muir of Ord and Conon Bridge, the mature tree planting associated with Balvaird and Conon Wood would screen views.

5.9.125 Therefore, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the residual effect on the amenity of the A832 would be Minor and **not significant**.

B9165 FROM A9 AT LOANDHU TO PORTMAHOMACK

5.9.126 The B9165 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. The ZTV shown on **Figure 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates theoretical views from the entire length of this route, though views are shown to be limited around Loandhu. Between the A9 and Loandhu the road is routed through mature woodland which would restrict views. Between Loandhu and Hill of Fearn, visibility is restricted by mature tall hedges alongside much of the road, and the bands and lines of trees within the farmland. There would be views from short sections of the route towards the Proposed Development at Hill of Fearn. At a distance of 27 km or more, any such views would be distant, and the Proposed Development would be seen as a minor feature in the distance.

5.9.127 Travelling eastwards from Portmahomack, it is unlikely that the Proposed Development would be noticeable in views around 35 km away. Scattered groups of mature trees and mature hedges on field boundaries would interrupt views and the change would be imperceptible.

5.9.128 Given the distance and the intermittent nature of potential views the magnitude of change would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effect on the amenity of the B9165 would be Minor and **not significant**.

B9169 FROM MUIR OF ORD TO SHORETON ON THE BLACK ISLE

5.9.129 The B9169 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity. This road traverses the northern slopes of the Black Isle from Muir of Ord to the junction with the B9163, several kilometres north-east of Culbokie. There would be sustained theoretical views for much of this road from Drynie Park to its junction with the B9163, after visibility becomes more constrained.

5.9.130 Viewpoints 17: A835 at Leanaig Junction and 19: Culbokie are indicative of the large-scale nature of the views. Views of the Proposed Development would be oblique when travelling east.

5.9.131 The magnitude of change to the views from this road would be Slight in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**, as the overall composition of the views would remain largely consistent with the baseline view. The residual effect on the amenity of the B9169 would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

B9176 NEAR ALNESS TO EASTER FEARN

5.9.132 The B9176 is evaluated as being of Medium Sensitivity and is the high road through the hills which bypasses Tain on the way to Lairg. The ZTV shown on **Figure 5.4 (EIAR Volume 3a)** indicates patchy areas of theoretical visibility from the west facing slopes of Cnon Navie, by Achandunie, to Dalnavie, and another area of potential views from the north side of Stittenham Wood to Strath Rory. The areas from which theoretical views are possible are within and around established woods. Views of the Proposed Development would be severely restricted, and at the most, there would be glimpsed views from this undulating and winding stretch of road.

5.9.133 The magnitude of change to the views from this road would be Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**, as the overall composition of the views would remain consistent with the baseline view, and unchanged for much of the road. The residual effect on the amenity of the B9176 would be Minor and **not significant**.

INVERNESS - WICK RAILWAY LINE

5.9.134 The Inverness-Wick railway line is evaluated as being of Medium sensitivity. It affords views over parts of the Beauly Firth, Dornoch Firth and the Kyle of Sutherland. Open views towards the Proposed Development would be limited occurring mainly between Inverness and Lentran Point, looking out over Beauly Firth, at distance of 26 km or more. There would potentially be oblique views for several kilometres west of Fearn Station when the direction of travel is towards the Proposed Development.

5.9.135 Given the very small degree to which views would be possible when travelling on this railway line, the magnitude of change is Negligible in both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario**. The residual effect on the amenity of the Inverness - Wick line would be Minor and **not significant**.

Viewpoint Assessment

5.9.136 A selection of 30 representative viewpoints within the Study Area have been assessed. The detailed viewpoint assessment is included in **Technical Appendix 5.4 (EIAR Volume 4)**.

5.9.137 The viewpoints were selected following consultation with THC and NS. They are intended to cover the various receptor types across the Study Area and from different directions and distances. It is not practical or feasible to provide a viewpoint for each individual visual receptor that may be affected by the Proposed Development. The viewpoints therefore provide a representative set of viewpoints and are used in addition to field survey work to assess the degree of visual change resulting from the Proposed development. Visual receptors have been identified and assessed for each viewpoint, and cumulative effects have also been assessed.

5.9.138 Out of the 30 viewpoints assessed, significant effects have been identified at those listed below.

VIEWPOINT 2: CARN SALACHAIDH.

5.9.139 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by hill walkers who are of High sensitivity. The viewpoint shows that Novar 1 turbines are discernible in the existing view appearing small and scattered across the distant ridgeline. All nine of the proposed turbines would be visible. In the **comparative scenario**, the proposed turbines although larger and more noticeable would be seen as a simple linear array that corresponds well to the underlying ridge landform. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would Major/Moderate and **significant**.

5.9.140 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be a noticeable new feature. Novar 2 turbines would be largely screened by intervening landform and barely discernible. There would be no notable adverse scale comparisons between the proposed turbines and those of Novar 2. The proposed turbines would occupy a small part of wide available views, situated on lower ground and not interrupting views of Ben Wyvis. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would Major/Moderate and **significant.**

VIEWPOINT 3 LOCH GLASS AT BEN WYVIS LODGE

5.9.141 The viewpoint is representative of walkers who may be visiting the lodge or trekking close to Loch Glass. The sensitivity of receptors at this location is High. Views are relatively enclosed by the strath side focussing on Loch Glass and the enclosing skyline. Nacelles of five proposed turbines and blade tips of two turbines would be visible. The larger size of the proposed turbines would increase the influence of wind farm development in views. The proposed turbines would not introduce features that are uncharacteristic of baseline views

from this location. In the **comparative scenario** the proposed turbines would reduce the number of turbines visible on the ridge but would be noticeably larger and have a greater influence in a small areas. In the **restored scenario**, the larger turbines would be noticeable although not uncharacteristic of views. They would be seen in combination with Novar 2 turbines and increase the visible extent of development.

5.9.142 In both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario,** the magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight and the residual effect would be Moderate and **significant**.

VIEWPOINT 4: STRATH RUSDALE

5.9.143 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by users of the minor road who are of Medium sensitivity and residents who are of High sensitivity. Views from this location are focussed along the strath and up the side of the strath to the enclosing skyline. There would be theoretical visibility of seven hubs and two blade tips from this location. However, forestry would limit visibility to the hubs of three turbines and the blades only of four turbines. In both the **comparative scenario** and the **restored scenario,** the proposed turbines would be separated from the strath by an intervening ridge and would not appear on the strath sides. The proposed turbines would introduce new features but the degree of change to the composition of views would be limited due to partial screening by forestry. Due to the small number of turbines visible, the influence of forestry and the small part of available views affected, the magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would Moderate/Minor and **not significant** for road users and Moderate and **not significant** for residents of this part of the strath.

5.9.144 With intervening forestry felled, the proposed turbines would have a greater influence extending across the skyline introducing a greater scale of change in a small area. The magnitude of change would be Moderate without forestry screening in both the **comparative scenario** and **restored scenario**. The residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant** for road users and Major/Moderate and **significant** for residents of this part of the strath. Significant effects would be small in extent occurring in only this part of the strath.

VIEWPOINT 6: BOATH

5.9.145 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by the community of Boath who are of High sensitivity. The assessment of effects at Viewpoint 6 has been described with reference to the community of Boath in paragraphs 5.9.75 to 5.9.76 above. These findings and those described in Table 5.3.1 in **Technical Appendix 5.3 (EIAR Volume 4)** indicate that the magnitude of change in the **comparative scenario** would be Moderate and residual effects would be Major/Moderate and **significant**. In the **restored scenario**, the magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, and the residual effects would be Major and **significant**.

VIEWPOINT 7: MINOR ROAD AT INCHLUMPIE

5.9.146 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by users of the minor road who are of Medium sensitivity and residents who are of High sensitivity. The viewpoint shows that all nine of the proposed turbines would be visible. In the **comparative scenario**, the proposed turbines would present a simpler image than the existing Novar 1 turbines and would be seen in the same areas as the existing turbines. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significan**t for residents and Moderate and **not significant** for road users.

5.9.147 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be a very noticeable addition to the skyline and would increase the influence of wind farm development already experienced with Novar 2. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the residual effect would be Major and **significant** for residents and Major/Moderate and **significant** for road users.

VIEWPOINT 8: MINOR ROAD BY ARDROSS DISTILLERY

5.9.148 The viewpoint is representative of road users who are of medium sensitivity. Views in the direction of the Site from the minor road are generally interrupted by roadside vegetation and woodland. There are small gaps at field gates and where vegetation is low growing or absent. Open views towards the Site are therefore intermittent. The visualisations shown on **Figures 5.33a-g** show that hubs of eight proposed turbines and a blade only of one proposed turbine would be visible.

5.9.149 In the **comparative scenario** the Proposed Development would introduce nine larger turbines in a simple, linear array. These would replace the 34 smaller turbines of Novar 1 that are arranged in an irregular array. The proposed turbines would not be uncharacteristic of views from this location, and the view would be available only along a short section of the road due to screening by forestry and woodland. However, the scale of change would be notable. The magnitude of change would be Moderate in the **comparative scenario,** and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

5.9.150 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be very noticeable features on the skyline extending across the small hills on which they are positioned. The proposed turbines would have a greater influence than those of Novar 2 and the difference in size would be notable. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant** in the **restored scenario**.

VIEWPOINT 10: BEINN THARSUINN

5.9.151 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by hill walkers who are of High sensitivity. The viewpoint shows that all nine of the proposed turbines would be visible. In the **comparative scenario**, the proposed turbines would present a simpler image than the existing Novar 1 Turbine Array and would be seen in the same areas as the existing turbines. The proposed turbines would relate to the large-scale upland landscape in which they would be located, and the number of wind turbines visible would reduce. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight, and the residual effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

5.9.152 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be a notable addition to views. Views from this location are influenced to a degree by operational wind farms of Coire na Cloiche and Bein Tharsuinn and the proposed turbines would not be uncharacteristic as they would also be seen in the context of Novar 2. The proposed turbines would be larger than those of Novar 2 and a noticeable addition albeit in a simple linear array, the design of which responds well to underlying terrain and the overall scale of the landscape. Views are available all around from this location and in other directions, the influence of the Proposed Development would be very limited. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant**.

VIEWPOINT 16: BEN WYVIS

5.9.153 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by hill walkers who are of High sensitivity. The addition of the proposed turbines would result in a simpler composition that relates better to the landform of the Site. The size of the nine proposed turbines is larger, but this is in keeping with the large-scale of the landscape visible at this viewpoint. The

Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change albeit in an area in which wind farm development is an established part of the baseline. The magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight in the **comparative scenario**, and the residual effects would be Moderate and **not significant**.

5.9.154 In the **restored scenario**, the size difference between the proposed turbines and Novar 2 turbines would be notable. The effects of this difference would be lessened by Novar 2 turbines being lower in the landscape and set against a backdrop of local landform while the proposed turbines would be seen on a well-defined ridge above Novar 2 turbines in a linear array. The linear design and association with underlying topography and the backdrop of landform, means that the proposed turbines create a simple image in views that would not create a discordant feature. The magnitude of change would be Moderate in the restored scenario, and the residual effects would be Major/Moderate and **significant**.

VIEWPOINT 20: GLEN GLASS

5.9.155 The viewpoint is representative of views experienced by hill walkers who are of High sensitivity. Novar 1 turbines create a dense irregular array that extends across the skyline. The Proposed Development would not be uncharacteristic of existing views and would result in a small increase in the influence of wind farm development. The magnitude of change would be Moderate in the **comparative scenario,** and the residual effect would be Major/ Moderate and **significant**.

5.9.156 In the **restored scenario**, the proposed turbines would be perceived as a similar height to the existing Novar 2 turbines although the rotor size would be larger. The proposed turbines would extend across the skyline in a part of the glen where views are influenced by forestry and Novar 2 wind turbines. While the proposed turbines would not be uncharacteristic of existing views, they would be a notable change in the small area represented by Viewpoint 20. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, and the residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant**.

Aviation Lighting

5.9.157 The effects of the proposed aviation lighting are described in detail in **Technical Appendix 5.5 (EIAR Volume 4)**. The assessment is supported by night-time visualisations for Viewpoints 3: Loch Glass Wyvis Lodge (**Figure 5.28h-i**), 4: Strath Rusdale (**Figure 5.29h-i**) and 7: Minor Road Inchlumpie (**Figure 5.32h-i**) and 16: Ben Wyvis (**Figure 5.41h-i**) shown in **Volume 3b**. The key points of note and findings of that assessment are noted here.

5.9.158 The methodology differs since the night-time assessment addresses the changes made to the night-time environment by the introduction of stationary points of light as opposed to large-scale structures with blades that move. **Appendix 5.5 (EIAR Volume 4)** sets out the factors that must be considered and these include:

- Only visual effects have been considered since landscape features are not fully visible during hours of darkness;
- The sensitivity value of receptors varies from the LVIA taking account of how the landscape is used during the night, and recognises the time requirements for eye-adaptation;
- The magnitude of change also differs from the LVIA accommodating the levels of change as perceived during hours of darkness since the change is measured against the baseline light at the receptor; and

- The significance of night-time effects is grounded in the alteration to the appreciation of the night sky from receptors.

5.9.159 The mitigation measures that would be applied to the aviation lighting are also a key consideration, including:

- Automatic dimming - in conditions where horizontal meteorological visibility exceeds a 5 km radius from the position of the light, significant reductions in light intensity would be experienced, as lighting intensity would be reduced to 10% of the maximum intensity; and
- Directional intensity reduction – lights are designed to be more visible at angles of 0 to +3 degrees from horizontal at the height of the lights above ground level i.e., hub height or 99 m for the Proposed Development. At angles below the horizontal the intensity of the lights reduces considerably.

5.9.160 A third mitigation measure is the design of a reduced lighting scheme. A reduced lighting scheme for turbines 1, 5, 7 and 9 to be lit with nacelle lights only and no mid-tower lights has been agreed with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The assessment in **Appendix 5.5 (EIAR Volume 4)** is therefore based on the agreed reduced scheme.

5.9.161 NatureScot guidance[7] advises that the observed brightness of lights seen at night is "*…influenced by a range of factors and therefore observations are rarely experienced consistently*." These factors may include:

- "The number and perceived intensity of visible aviation lights;
- The distance and angle of view to the lights;
- The prevailing atmospheric conditions [including the presence of intervening material such as water droplets, dust and pollen that can attenuate light];
- The changing illumination that results from different phases of the moon;
- The saturation of darkness and seasonality changes; and
- The appearance of other baseline lighting in the landscape."

5.9.162 A further consideration is the time it takes an individual's eyesight to adjust to darkness. This process called 'dark adaptation' is influenced by the amount and intensity of artificial light at the receptor location.

5.9.163 The assessment of the effects of turbine lighting on the Proposed Development found that visibility of the lights at the Proposed Development would primarily affect elevated upland landscapes which are substantially unpopulated after dark. Views of the lights from lower lying landscapes, settlements and roads would be substantially restricted by intervening topography and vegetation. A combination of directional intensity reduction and automatic dimming would reduce the perceived intensity of lights and contrast with baseline.

5.9.164 The assessment identified geographically restricted Not Significant night-time effects on the SLQ of "extensive panoramas" in Ben Wyvis SLA. The overall effect on Ben Wyvis SLA **would not be significant,** and the integrity of the designation would not be undermined.

5.9.165 The assessment identified geographically restricted significant effects on WLA29 Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis. Significant effects would be restricted to a small number of summits within 10 km of the proposed turbines and the overall effect on relative wildness of WLA29 **would not be significant** and the integrity of the WLA would not be undermined.

[7] NatureScot (November 2024). Guidance on Aviation Lighting Impact Assessment.

5.9.166 No significant night-time effects are identified on Dornoch Firth NSA and the integrity of the designation would not be undermined.

5.9.167 No significant night-time effects are identified on Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie SLA and the integrity of the designation would not be undermined.

5.9.168 No significant effects are identified on visual receptors in the Study Area.

Decommissioning of Repowered Wind Farm

5.9.169 The decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development would be of a shorter duration relative to that of the construction phase, with the removal of all above ground structures and reinstatement of disturbed ground. It is anticipated that the turbine foundations would be removed to a depth of 1 m and all other below ground structures would be left in place to avoid further disturbance. There would be a temporary impact from the activities on Site to remove structures, but this would be of relatively short duration. Accordingly, the decommissioning phase is likely to have a minimal effect on the landscape and visual amenity of the locality. Mitigation measures associated with decommissioning would be agreed during the preparation of the final Decommissioning Plan, that would require approval of statutory consultees.

Cumulative Effects

Emergent Pattern of Wind Farm Development

5.9.170 The Proposed Development is situated at an area where wind farm development is an established feature of the baseline. As noted in the assessment of effects in the comparative scenario described above, the removal of the existing 34 operational Novar 1 turbines and the addition of the nine larger proposed turbines, while more visible, would create a simpler image in conjunction with operational Novar 2 turbines. The assessment of effects in the restored scenario also considers the simple array of the proposed turbines and their fit with underlying topography and scale of the landscape when perceived in conjunction with Novar 2. While significant effects are identified mainly in the restored scenario, these effects are limited in extent having been mitigated through iterative design modifications as described in Section 5.6. The footprint of the proposed turbines would not extend beyond that of Novar 1 and the association with operational Novar 2 would be apparent. The emerging pattern of development is one where most of the consented developments are associated with existing groups of operational wind farms such as Lochluichart with all consented development at distances of 17.8 km or more from the Site.

5.9.171 Cumulative wind farms in planning are mainly situated 14.9 km or more from the Site with the exception of Ceislein which is 1.3 km to the east and Abhainn Dubh which is 4.8 km away to the south. Beinn Tharsuinn Repowering is the only scoping stage proposal within 10 km of the Site with two turbines of Glasa within 10 km and most of that development beyond 10 km. There is greater uncertainty regarding sites in planning and even greater uncertainty about sites at scoping stage. These sites might not be consented; some may never progress through planning. The design of sites in planning could change and the likelihood of the design of a scoping site changing is greater.

5.9.172 Given the uncertainty around the emerging pattern of development, the focus of the cumulative assessment is on the in-addition effects arising from the Proposed Development with consented wind farms (Scenario 2). Sites in-planning (Scenario 3) are also a key consideration as these sites could potentially be consented before the Proposed Development. A high-level assessment has been provided of the in-addition effects arising from the Proposed Development with sites at scoping (Scenario 4).

5.9.173 ZTV pairings have been provided for operational, consented, proposed (in-planning) and scoping wind farms within the 45 km Study Area in **Figures 5.14-5.25 (EIAR Volume-3a)**. These pairings illustrate the theoretical visibility of the combined wind farms.

5.9.174 As mentioned above and in **Technical Appendix 5.1: Methodology (EIAR Volume 4)**, the focus of the cumulative assessment is on the additional effects of the Proposed Development when considered in the context of the different cumulative scenarios assessed. The in-addition assessment does not assess the combined effects of all the wind farms in each cumulative scenario on landscape and visual receptors in the Study Area. Regarding combined effects, it is the authors' professional opinion that, in broad terms the Proposed Development would not alter the current perception of a 'landscape with wind farms' characteristic currently experienced in this part of the east Highlands between the Black Isle and Bonar Bridge and Loch Glascarnoch in the west. The Proposed Development would be situated at a Site where operational wind farms are a characteristic feature that redefines a small area of upland landscape (focussed at and around the Site) as a wind farm landscape character type and influences WLA29 and Ben Wyvis SLA. The addition of the Proposed Development would not increase the physical extent of the landscape occupied by wind farm development but would slightly increase its influence due to the larger size of the nine proposed turbines compared to the 34 smaller turbines they would replace. However, the increase in influence would not result in a in a change in perception to a wind farm landscape in the wider area.

Potential Cumulative Construction Effects

5.9.175 There is very limited potential for cumulative construction effects in the Study Area due to the limited geographical extent of effects of construction of the Proposed Development and the nearest consented wind farms being situated at distances of greater than 17.8 km. There is the potential for significant effects with Abhainn Dubh (in planning) 4.8 km to the south, Ceislein (in planning) 1.3 km to the east and with Creachan (in planning) 8 km to the north. Significant cumulative construction effects may also arise with Beinn Tharsuinn repowering (scoping) 7 km north northeast and Glasa (scoping) 9 km to the northwest. However, as stated previously there is a high degree of uncertainty around the programme of consent and construction of these projects.

5.9.176 These changes would mainly affect visual receptors, and the magnitude of change would be up to Moderate, which as residents and tourists have High sensitivity, would result in up to a Major/Moderate and **significant** residual effect. These residual effects would be temporary and reversible.

Potential Cumulative Operational Effects

5.9.177 Potential cumulative effects would arise in relation to the operation of the Proposed Development with other existing, consented, in-planning, and in-scoping (should they progress into operational assets) wind farm developments in the Study Area. Three scenarios have been assessed in addition to the Site 'En Solo' in its baseline context (that includes existing, operational wind farms) as described in paragraph 5.4.37. The operational baseline and the potential future baseline including consented, in-planning and in-scoping wind farm developments are listed in Table 5.5.

5.9.178 The following assessment describes the In-Addition residual cumulative effects on LCTs, landscape designations and classifications, and visual amenity. The cumulative (En Solo in baseline (Scenario 1), and Scenarios 2 to 4) residual effects on landscape character and visual amenity at the 30 viewpoint locations are reported within **Technical Appendix 5.3**

(EIAR Volume 4). The focus of the assessment is on in-addition cumulative effects and notes any significant in-combination cumulative effects.

5.9.179 Where the magnitude of change assessed for the Proposed Development in cumulative Scenario 1 i.e. the Proposed Development in addition to operational wind farms, is Negligible or Slight/Negligible, the in addition cumulative effects have not been assessed as any potentially significant cumulative effects would result from the influence of cumulative development and not the addition of the Proposed Development. In-combination effects have been assessed for these receptors.

CUMULATIVE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES

5.9.180 This section describes a summary of residual effects identified as significant. A detailed assessment is provided in **Technical Appendix 5.2 (EIAR Volume 4)**.

5.9.181 There would be limited in-addition significant cumulative effects from summits and in proximity. Significant effects are restricted to specific locations within the LCTs and relate to views where the Proposed Development has relative prominence in the view. There would be the potential for in-combination cumulative effects to influence key characteristics in relation to perceptual qualities i.e., wildness or remote and undeveloped character in Scenarios 3 and 4.

LCT329: ROUNDED MOUNTAIN MASSIF.

5.9.182 The Proposed Development would introduce wind farm development into part of the LCT unit in which wind farm development is an established characteristic and would continue to be so with the presence of the Novar 2 Wind Farm. There are no other cumulative wind farms in the host LCT unit. Sensitivity of this LCT varies from Low at the Site and environs to High/Medium sensitivity.

5.9.183 The cumulative magnitude of change would vary between None and Slight. The resulting residual cumulative effect would be up to Minor for Scenario 2 (consented) and up to Moderate/Minor and **not significant** for Scenarios 3 (in planning) and 4 (scoping).

LCT330: ROUNDED HILLS AND MOORLAND SLOPES – ROSS AND CROMARTY

5.9.184 LCT330 is a large unit that surrounds the host LCT in all directions except to the southwest. Eight to 10 km to the northeast of the Site LCT330 is influenced by operational Beinn Tharsuinn and operational Coire na Cloiche. Eighteen kilometres to the west southwest the LCT unit is influenced by operational Lochluichart and Extension and Corriemoillie. This LCT is assessed as High/Medium sensitivity.

5.9.185 The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight at most in Scenarios 3 (in planning) and 4 (scoping) mainly within 4 km of the Site. The resulting residual cumulative effect overall would be up to Moderate/Minor and **not significant** within 4 km of the Site for Scenarios 3 and 4.

LCT341: FOREST EDGE FARMING

5.9.186 There are no operational wind farms situated in this LCT and there are no consented, in planning or scoping sites in this LCT. Cumulative effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development would be limited to instances of combined visibility in views from the LCT to the Proposed Development. The addition of the Proposed Development would lead to no noticeable cumulative interactions with wind farm sites in Scenarios 2 (consented) and 4 (scoping). As such the main cumulative interaction would be with Ceislein (in planning). This LCT is assessed as Medium sensitivity.

5.9.187 The cumulative magnitude of change would be Moderate. The resulting residual in-addition and in-combination cumulative effect would be up to Moderate and **not significant** for Scenario 3 with no significant cumulative effects during Scenarios 2 and 4.

LCT339: INLAND STRATH

5.9.188 There are no operational wind farms situated in this LCT and there are no consented, in planning or scoping sites in this LCT. Cumulative effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development would be limited to instances of combined visibility in views from the LCT to the Proposed Development. The addition of the Proposed Development would not lead to an increase in the magnitude of change assessed for the Proposed Development with the operational baseline in Scenarios 2 (consented) and 4 (scoping). As such the main cumulative interaction would be with Ceislein (in planning). This LCT is assessed as High/Medium sensitivity.

5.9.189 The cumulative magnitude of change would be Moderate. The resulting residual cumulative in-addition effect would be up to Major/Moderate and **significant** for Scenario 3 with no significant cumulative effects during Scenarios 2 and 4.

LCT135: ROUNDED HILLS – CAITHNESS AND SUTHERLAND

5.9.190 Operational Rosehall, Achany, Lairg and Kilbraur Extension wind farms are situated in this LCT at distances of more than 30 km from the Site. There is very limited interaction between the Proposed Development and these sites due to intervening distance. This LCT is assessed as High/Medium sensitivity.

5.9.191 The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight. The resulting residual in-addition cumulative effect would be up to Minor and **not significant** for Scenarios 2, 3 and 4.

LCT346: OPEN FARMLAND SLOPES

5.9.192 There are no operational wind farms and no consented, in planning or scoping sites in this LCT. Cumulative effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development would be limited to instances of combined visibility in views from the LCT to the Proposed Development. As such, the main cumulative interactions would be with Abhainn Dubh (in planning) and Ceislein (in planning). This LCT is assessed as Medium sensitivity.

5.9.193 The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight in Scenario 3 (in planning). There would be no noticeable cumulative change to landscape character in Scenarios 2 (consented) and 4 (scoping). The resulting residual in-addition cumulative effect would be up to Moderate/Minor and **not significant** for Scenario 3.

CUMULATIVE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS – LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

5.9.194 The following is a summary of the in-addition and in-combination cumulative residual landscape and visual effects.

DORNOCH FIRTH NSA

5.9.195 The magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development in Scenario 1 (i.e., the addition of the Proposed Development to the baseline of operational wind farms), is assessed as Negligible due to intervening distance and the coastal focus of the NSA. The residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and there would be very little or imperceptible change to the SLQ of Dornoch Firth NSA. Consequently, in Scenario 1 the integrity of the NSA would not be compromised by the introduction of the Proposed Development.

5.9.196 The addition of the Proposed Development would not lead to an increase in the magnitude of change assessed for the Proposed Development in comparison with the operational baseline. The in-addition cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in Scenarios 2, 3

and 4 would therefore be no greater than those effects of the Proposed Development in any given scenario.

5.9.197 **Figure 5.13 (EIAR Volume 3a)** shows that the pattern of cumulative wind farm development would potentially introduce the Scoping sites of Beinn Tharsuinn repowering and Glasa and the in planning site of Creachan to the southwest of the NSA. These sites lie between the Site and Dornoch Firth NSA and would have more of an influence on the NSA than the Proposed Development.

5.9.198 **Figure 5.13 (EIAR Volume 3a)** also shows an emerging pattern of wind farm development to the west and northwest of Dornoch Firth NSA with Braelangwell (Scoping) having a minor influence (see Viewpoint 14: Dornoch Point).

5.9.199 Given the distance to the Proposed Development from the NSA and its limited influence on SLQ, the potential for in-combination cumulative effects is very limited. The cumulative magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development would therefore be Negligible and the residual in-addition and in-combination effects would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

BEN WYVIS SLA

5.9.200 **Figure 5.13 (EIAR Volume 3a)** shows that the nearest operational development to Ben Wyvis SLA is Novar 2 wind farm. Operational Coire na Cloiche and Beinn Tharsuinn are approximately 10 km to the northeast of the SLA beyond operational Novar 1 and Novar 2. Operational Corriemoillie is 7 km to the west and operational Fairburn is 9 km to the south. The intervening distance to existing and consented schemes provides separation from the SLA and avoids wind farm development interrupting key views of Ben Wyvis from the south and southeast.

5.9.201 In Scenario 2 the Proposed Development would result in a very limited degree of cumulative change due to the long distance between the Proposed Development and consented wind farms. The cumulative magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development would therefore be Negligible. The resulting residual in-addition cumulative effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

5.9.202 In Scenario 3 the main in-addition cumulative interaction would be with Ceislein which would be the more noticeable development in views from Ben Wyvis (**see Viewpoint 16 Figure 5.41a-i in EIAR Volume 3b**) and to a lesser degree Abhainn Dubh. The Proposed Development would add to the amount of wind turbines visible, but Abhainn Dubh would have the main influence on the special quality of Ben Wyvis as a landmark feature due to its position in front of Ben Wyvis in views from the southeast. The Proposed Development would add turbines of a similar size to those of Ceislein but on a broad ridge where wind farm development is an established feature. The addition of the Proposed Development would be a notable increase in wind farm development but would not lead to an increase in the magnitude of change assessed for Novar Repowering within the operational baseline. The cumulative magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development would be Negligible and the resulting residual in-addition cumulative effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant**.

CUMULATIVE VISUAL EFFECTS - SETTLEMENTS

5.9.203 Residential receptors are of High sensitivity.

BOATH

5.9.204 Novar 2 is the only operational wind farm visible. Consented developments and developments in planning would not be visible from this location. The main cumulative

interaction would be with in planning stage Ceislein (Scenario 3) which would be visible to the south from the community.

5.9.205 The Proposed Development would be seen in succession and would be the main influence on views. The community would not be encircled by wind farm development due to the partial screening of Ceislein by forestry and landform and the limited number of turbines of the Proposed Development that would be visible. The addition of the Proposed Development would not lead to an increase in the magnitude of change assessed for the Proposed Development with the operational baseline.

5.9.206 The cumulative magnitude of impact would be Moderate in Scenario 3 (In Planning) and the resulting cumulative residual effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant**. There would be no cumulative effects in Scenario 2 (consented) and Scenario 4 (scoping).

ALNESS

5.9.207 Given the Negligible magnitude of change and Moderate/Minor **(not significant)** residual effects assessed for the Proposed Development in the operational baseline, there would be **no significant** cumulative effects in Scenarios 2, 3 or 4.

CULBOKIE

5.9.208 Novar 2 is the only operational wind farm visible. Consented developments would not be visible from this location. The main cumulative interaction would be with Abhainn Dubh (in planning) and in planning stage Ceislein (Scenario 3).

5.9.209 In Scenario 3. the Proposed Development would be visible in combination with Ceislein which would extend across a larger part of the view. The proposed turbines would appear as being of similar size as those of Ceislein and would be perceived as part of the same wind farm. There would also be combined visibility with Abhainn Dubh. Abhainn Dubh would be seen in front of Ben Wyvis while the Proposed Development would be perceived in a part of the view where wind farm development is not uncharacteristic. Abhainn Dubh would influence views towards Ben Wyvis which is a landmark feature in views from Culbokie. The Proposed Development would not interrupt views of Ben Wyvis but would slightly increase the influence of wind farm development in views when considered in addition to Abhainn Dubh and Ceislein. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight, and the residual in-addition cumulative effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

INVERGORDON

5.9.210 Viewpoint 21: Invergordon shows that no consented sites would be visible and this would be the case for the settlement as a whole due to the consented cumulative wind farm development being situated to the north, northwest or west of the settlement and screened by landform. The main cumulative interactions would therefore be with Abhainn Dubh (in planning) and Ceislein (in planning).

5.9.211 In Scenario 3. the Proposed Development would be visible with Ceislein slightly increasing the number of wind turbines visible but with limited extension of development across the view. Abhainn Dubh would also be visible and the Proposed Development would slightly increase the amount of wind farm development visible. However, the Proposed Development is separated from Abhainn Dubh by terrain and intervening distance and seen in a different context. The addition of the Proposed Development would not lead to an increase in the influence of wind farm development on views and visual amenity from the settlement. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight, and the residual in-addition cumulative effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

CUMULATIVE VISUAL EFFECTS – RECREATIONAL ROUTES

NCN 1

5.9.212 The assessment of the Proposed Development in the operational baseline (Scenario 1) described in Section 5.9 indicates that the magnitude of change would be Negligible and residual effects would be Moderate/Minor and not Significant. This is due primarily to a combination of the following factors:

- The long distance to the Proposed Development from some sections of the route from which there would be visibility;
- Short sections of visibility with most of the route screened wholly or partially by intervening layers of vegetation; and
- The oblique nature of views.

5.9.213 Viewpoints 12: Cromarty, 17: A835 at Leanaig Junction and 27: Sutors of Cromarty provide an indication of typical views from parts of NCN 1. There are sections east of Alness and north of Invergordon which are closer and from which **Figure 5.8a-b (EIAR Volume 3a)** shows theoretical visibility. However, intervening vegetation and woodland would restrict views from these locations which has been a consideration in the overall assessment of effects in Scenario 1.

5.9.214 Consented sites in Scenario 2 would not be an influencing factor and there would be no in addition cumulative effects.

5.9.215 The main cumulative interaction in Scenario 3 would be with Ceislein which would be seen in front of the Proposed Development. There would be combined visibility in which Ceislein would appear to extend wind farm development across the skyline with the proposed turbines appearing set back slightly and associated with Novar 2. Abhainn Dubh would be visible from the parts of the route and mainly in elevated, long-distance views from the southeast. There would be combined visibility of the Proposed Development with Abhainn Dubh. However, the context to Abhainn Dubh is different as it is set low in the landscape and in front of Ben Wyvis in views from the south and southeast. The Proposed Development would be seen in a different part of the view associated with undulating, rounded hills and ridges behind an intermediate ridge.

5.9.216 The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight at most, and the residual in-addition cumulative effect would be Moderate and **not significant** in Scenario 3.

CORE PATH RC05.02: TOLLIE TO LEALTY, CORE PATH RC05.03: DAM WOOD AND CORE PATH RC05.04: DUBLIN TO ARDOSS MAINS

5.9.217 These three routes are considered as a group as they are all in the same area and where views from these routes are available. the aspect is similar and the magnitude of change and residual effect assessed are the same for each route.

5.9.218 There are no Consented or In Planning cumulative wind farm sites visible from these routes and there would be no in-addition cumulative effects arising from the Proposed Development in Scenarios 2 and 3. The main cumulative interaction would be in Scenario 3 (in planning) where Ceislein would be a very noticeable feature. The addition of the Proposed Development to Ceislein would increase the extent of wind farm development across the horizon and increase its influence on views. Wind farm development would not be uncharacteristic of views as Novar 2 would be present. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the residual in-addition cumulative effect would be Major/Moderate and **significant** in Scenario 3.

CORE PATH RC16.01: SWORDALE HILL

5.9.219 Where visible, consented sites would be seen as distant features and there would be no in-addition effects arising from the Proposed Development at this location. The main cumulative interactions would be with Abhainn Dubh (in planning) and Ceislein (in planning).

5.9.220 Abhainn Dubh would be a very noticeable feature in views to the west from the core path. The nearest proposed Abhainn Dubh turbines would be approximately 2 km from the route and would be the main influencing feature in views. The Proposed Development would be a noticeable new feature with three turbines clearly visible while blades only of six would be seen. Ceislein would be situated 2.5 km to the north of the route and would lie between the core path and the Proposed Development and would be the main influencing feature in views. The presence of Ceislein would lessen the effects of the Proposed Development as it would be a minor addition in views already strongly influenced by Ceislein. Assuming the prior presence of both Ceislein and Abhainn Dubh, the in-addition cumulative magnitude of change would be Moderate/Slight and the residual cumulative effect would be Moderate and **not significant**.

CORE PATH RC05.01: FYRISH PATH

5.9.221 There are no consented sites visible and there would be no in-addition effects arising from the Proposed Development at this location in Scenario 2. The main potential cumulative interactions would be with Abhainn Dubh (in planning) and Ceislein (in planning).

5.9.222 Ceislein would be very noticeable and closer than the Proposed Development extending across a large proportion of the view. The Proposed Development would slightly increase the amount of wind energy development visible. Abhainn Dubh would be seen on lower ground and there would be limited interaction with the Proposed Development. The in-addition cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible and the residual cumulative effect would be Moderate/Minor and **not significant** in Scenario 3.

CUMULATIVE VISUAL EFFECTS – TRANSPORT ROUTES

5.9.223 The following routes have been scoped out of in-addition cumulative assessment due to a Negligible or Slight/Negligible magnitude of change and Minor and **not significant** effects:

- A835;
- A832 Cromarty to Moy Bridge;
- A836 Tralogie (near Tain) to Lairg;
- A862 Muir of Ord to Dingwall;
- B9165 From A9 at Loandhu to Portmahomack;
- B9176 near Alness to Easter Fearn; and
- Inverness to Wick Railway Line (not considered further due to limited visibility of the Proposed Development).

5.9.224 All assessed transport routes are of Medium sensitivity unless stated otherwise.

A9 TRUNK ROAD

5.9.225 The cumulative magnitude of change would range from none to up to Moderate/Slight for in-addition effects and up to Moderate for in-combination effects. The resulting cumulative residual effect would be up to Moderate and **not significant** in Scenario 4.

A835

5.9.226 The cumulative magnitude of change would be up to Moderate/Slight and the resulting in-addition cumulative residual effect would be up to Moderate/Minor and **not significant** in Scenarios 3 and 4.

Summary of Significant Residual Effects

5.9.227 Table 5.7 summarises the significant residual effects that are predicted to remain following the implementation of embedded mitigation measures.

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects									
Receptor/ Affected Group	**Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor**	**Activity or Impact**	**Embedded Design Mitigation**	**Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence**	**Significance of effect**	**Additional Mitigation**	**Residual Magnitude of Impact**	**Significance of Residual effect**	**Monitoring**
Decommissioning of Novar 1 Wind Farm									
No significant residual effects anticipated.									
Construction of Repowered Wind Farm									
No significant residual effects anticipated.									
Operation of Repowered Wind Farm									
LCT329 Rounded Mountain Massif (the main host LCT	Low to High/Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Substantial/Moderate within 4 km (restored scenario only) Moderate within 4-8 km (restored scenario only) Limited Long term/Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate within 8 km (restored scenario only)	None	Substantial/ Moderate within 4 km (restored scenario only) Moderate within 4-8 km (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate within 8 km (restored scenario only)	None
LCT330 Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes – Ross and Cromarty	Medium to High/ Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Substantial/Moderate within 4 km (restored scenario only) Limited Long term/Permanent Likely	Substantial/ Moderate within 4 km (restored scenario only)	None	Substantial/ Moderate within 4 km (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate within 4 km (restored scenario only)	None
LCT339 Inland Strath	High /Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (restored scenario only) Limited Long term Likely	Major/Moderate	None	Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects									
Receptor/ Affected Group	**Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor**	**Activity or Impact**	**Embedded Design Mitigation**	**Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence**	**Significance of effect**	**Additional Mitigation**	**Residual Magnitude of Impact**	**Significance of Residual effect**	**Monitoring**
LCT341 Forest Edge Farming	Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario only) Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None	Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None
Boath (settlement)	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None
Core path RC05.02: Tollie to Lealty	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None
Core path RC16.01: Swordale Hill	High	Operation of the proposed		Moderate (restored scenario only) Limited	Major/Moderate	None	Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate	None

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects									
Receptor/ Affected Group	**Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor**	**Activity or Impact**	**Embedded Design Mitigation**	**Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence**	**Significance of effect**	**Additional Mitigation**	**Residual Magnitude of Impact**	**Significance of Residual effect**	**Monitoring**
		wind turbines		Long term/ Permanent Likely					
Core path RC05.03: Dam Wood	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None
Core path RC05.04: Dublin to Ardross Mains	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Medium Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None
Viewpoint 2: Carn Salachaidh	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate/Slight (comparative and restored scenario) Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Moderate (comparative and restored scenario)	None	Moderate/Slight (comparative and restored scenario)	Moderate (comparative and restored scenario)	None

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects									
Receptor/ Affected Group	**Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor**	**Activity or Impact**	**Embedded Design Mitigation**	**Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence**	**Significance of effect**	**Additional Mitigation**	**Residual Magnitude of Impact**	**Significance of Residual effect**	**Monitoring**
Viewpoint 3: Loch Glass at Wyvis Lodge	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate/Slight (comparative and restored scenario) Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Moderate (comparative and restored scenario)	None	Moderate/Slight (comparative and restored scenario)	Moderate (comparative and restored scenario)	None
Viewpoint 4: Strath Rusdale	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate/Slight with forestry (comparative and restored scenario) Moderate with forestry felled (comparative and restored scenario) Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate with forestry felled only (comparative and restored scenario)	None	Moderate/Slight with forestry (comparative and restored scenario) Moderate with forestry felled (comparative and restored scenario)	Major/Moderate with forestry felled only (comparative and restored scenario)	None
Viewpoint 5: A9 between Duncansby and Causeway	High/Medium (Tourists) Medium (Motorists)	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate/Slight (comparative and restored scenario) Medium Long Term/ Permanent Likely	Moderate (comparative and restored scenario) for Tourists only.	None	Moderate/Slight (comparative and restored scenario)	Moderate (comparative and restored scenario) for Tourists only.	None
Viewpoint 6: Boath	High	Operation of the proposed		Moderate (comparative scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario)	None

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects

Receptor/ Affected Group	Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor	Activity or Impact	Embedded Design Mitigation	Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence	Significance of effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Residual effect	Monitoring
		wind turbines		Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Medium Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major (restored scenario)		Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major (restored scenario)	
Viewpoint 7: Minor Road at Inchlumpie	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative scenario) Major (restored scenario)	None
Viewpoint 8: Minor Road by Ardross Distillery	Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario only) Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None	Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None
Viewpoint 10: Beinn Tharsuinn	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (restored scenario only) Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None	Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects

Receptor/ Affected Group	Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor	Activity or Impact	Embedded Design Mitigation	Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence	Significance of effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Residual effect	Monitoring
Viewpoint 16: Ben Wyvis	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (restored scenario only) Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None	Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only)	None
Viewpoint 20: Glen Glass	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/Moderate (restored scenario) Medium Long term/Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate (comparative and restored scenario)	None	Moderate (comparative scenario) Substantial/ Moderate (restored scenario)	Major/Moderate (comparative and restored scenario)	None
Ben Wyvis SLA	High/Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate (restored scenario only) Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely Limited Long term Likely	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only) On one SLQ only. Overall integrity not compromised.	None	Moderate (restored scenario only)	Major/Moderate (restored scenario only) On one SLQ only. Overall integrity not compromised.	None
Decommissioning of Repowered Wind Farm									
No significant residual effects anticipated.									

Table 5.7: Summary of significant residual effects									
Receptor/ Affected Group	**Value or Sensitivity (significance) of Receptor**	**Activity or Impact**	**Embedded Design Mitigation**	**Magnitude/Spatial Extent/Duration/ Likelihood of Occurrence**	**Significance of effect**	**Additional Mitigation**	**Residual Magnitude of Impact**	**Significance of Residual effect**	**Monitoring**
Cumulative Effects									
LCT339 Inland Strath	High/Medium	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate	None	Moderate	Major/Moderate	None
Boath (settlement)	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Moderate Small Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate	None	Moderate	Major/Moderate	None
Core path RC05.02	High	Operation of the proposed wind turbines		Substantial/Moderate Limited Long term/ Permanent Likely	Major/Moderate	None	Substantial/ Moderate	Major/Moderate	None