Technical Appendix 7.1: Assessment Methodology

Technical Appendix 7.1: Assessment Methodology

7.1.1 Introduction

7.1.1.1 This appendix presents full details of the methodology and results for the field surveys undertaken for the Proposed Development, including references to best practice. It also includes the methodology for the assessment of significance of effects of the Proposed Development upon ecological features.

7.1.2 Methods of Baseline Data Collection

Study Areas

7.1.2.1 The Ecology Desk Study Area is defined as the area within the Proposed Development and a 5 km buffer around the boundary of the existing Turbine Array, and a 2 km buffer beyond the Access Route. This area is considered to represent the Zone of Influence (ZOI)[1] in which impacts on ecological features could occur, shown on **Figure 7.1: Designated Sites and Ancient Woodland (EIAR Volume 3a).**

7.1.2.2 The Ecology Field Survey Area is defined as the area within the Site and a 250 m buffer around the existing Turbine Array, and a 20 m buffer around the existing Access Route, this was considered to represent the area within which potential impacts on ecology would be concentrated. **Figure 7.2 – 7.6 (EIAR Volume 3a)** show the results of that field survey work.

Desk Study

7.1.2.3 A desk study was undertaken to collect existing baseline data about the Site and surrounding area, such as the location of designated nature conservation sites or other natural features of potential ecological importance. The desk study considered the following data sources:

- NS Sitelink[2];
- Scotland's Environment Carbon and Peatland map[3];
- NBN Atlas[4]; and
- Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)[5].

7.1.2.4 Data sources were searched for protected or notable species records. Examples of notable species include, but are not limited to, national or local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, restricted range species, species or species groups listed for local designated sites in the area (Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest) or key species groups such as invertebrates or non-vascular plants. These species are not considered to have the same importance as those protected by legislation; however, their inclusion allows a more holistic approach and therefore a more robust assessment in line with the applicant's responsibilities under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989[6]. This information was used to understand what the key species for the Site might be prior to field surveys. Supplementary information on the Site and its surroundings was obtained from aerial images available from Google™ Earth Pro.

Limitations and Assumptions

7.1.2.5 It should be noted that the availability and quality of the data obtained during desk studies is reliant on third party responses and recorders. This varies from region to region and for different species groups. Furthermore, the comprehensiveness of data often depends on the level of coverage, the expertise and experience of the recorder and the submission of records to the local recorder. However, this is not considered to be a limitation on the desk study data assessed as this was updated and verified with field surveys.

7.1.2.6 The habitat and faunal surveys provide a snapshot of ecological conditions and do not record plants or animals that may be present in the field survey area at different times of the year. The absence of a particular species cannot be confirmed by a lack of field signs and only concludes that an indication of its presence was not located during the survey effort. However, most surveys were undertaken between May and September, which is within the optimal season of April to October for surveying most habitats and species, therefore, the data collected is considered to be an accurate representation of the habitats and species that are present in the field survey area.

Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance

7.1.2.7 The assessment has been informed by the following legislation/guidelines/policy:

LEGISLATION

- EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna, 92/43/EEC 1992[7];
- Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulation 2019[8];
- Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc.) Regulations 1994[9];
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 1971[10];
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[11];
- Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004[12];

[1] CIEEM, (2024), Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland – Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. URL: https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/EcIA-Guidelines-v1.3-Sept-2024.pdf [Assessed: 22/012026]

[2] NatureScot, (2026), SiteLink. URL: https://sitelink.nature.scot/home [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[3] Scotland's Environment, (n.d.), Scotland's Environment Carbon and Peatland Map. URL: https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[4] NBN Atlas Partnership, (2025), NBN Atlas Scotland. URL: https://scotland.nbnatlas.org/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[5] Natural England, (2024), MAGIC Map. URL: http://magic.defra.gov.uk/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[6] UK Government, (1989), Electricity Act 1989, c. 29 Schedule 9. URL: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/schedule/9. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[7] EEC, (1992), The Habitats Directive - Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. URL: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive_en. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[8] UK Government, (2019), The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019). URL: The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[9] UK Government, (1994), The Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc.) Regulations (as amended) (1994). URL: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1994/2716/contents. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[10] Ramsar Convention, (1971), Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (as amended). https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/current_convention_text_e.pdf [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[11] UK Government, (1981), The Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended). URL: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[12] Scottish Parliament, (2004), Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (as amended). URL: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/6/contents. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

- UK Biodiversity Framework 2024[13];
- Electricity Act 1989[6];
- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992[14]; and
- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) ('the 1997 Act')[15.]

POLICY

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) 2023[16];
- Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) 2020[17];
- 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity[18];
- Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (Forestry Commission, 2009)[19];
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045[20];
- Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024 to 2030[21];
- The Highland Council Ecology Strategy and Action Plan[22]; and
- The Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026[23].

Field Surveys

7.1.2.8 Extended UK Habitat Classification surveys (UKHab) and Habitat Condition Assessments (HCA) were undertaken between June-November 2024, with an additional survey undertaken in May 2025 to record habitat and habitat condition data in order to inform assessment in the future.

Extended UKHab Survey

7.1.2.9 This survey involved a walkover with an assessment of key habitats, habitat condition, land use and ecological features focusing on areas of natural interest that could be affected by the Proposed Development. The surveys were undertaken between June-November 2024 and in May 2025. Habitats of potential sensitivity were recorded, such as wetlands, peatlands and other features of potential ecological value in their own right or as potential high-quality habitat for protected species. These habitats were mapped using UKHab survey methodology[24].

7.1.2.10 The abundance of each species was estimated for each habitat using standard 'DAFOR' codes:

- Dominant (50-100%);
- Abundant (30-50%);
- Frequent (15-30%);
- Occasional (5-15%); or
- Rare (<5%).

7.1.2.11 The field survey area was also inspected for signs of any invasive plant species subject to legal controls, such as giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* and Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*. In addition, any notable species encountered during the course of the surveys were recorded, as defined in paragraph 1.2.13.

National Vegetation Classification Survey

7.1.2.12 National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Surveys[25] of the field survey area were completed alongside UKHab surveys to identify potential Ground Water Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs)[26] and to add additional detail beyond the UKHab survey for sensitive habitats, such as peatland. The NVC surveys followed the methodology described in best practice guidance[27], with five 2 m² quadrats surveyed within each habitat, and the species composition analysed[28].

Protected Species Surveys

7.1.2.13 Protected species surveys were conducted concurrently with UKHab habitat surveys, within the Ecology Field Survey Area. The field survey area was surveyed for its potential to support species protected by international and national legislation, such as badger *Meles meles*, otter *Lutra lutra*, water vole *Arviola amphibius*, red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, pine marten *Martes martes,* mountain hare *Lepus timidus*, along with any signs of reptiles or amphibians. The survey aimed to identify features that could support those species, including field signs of each species. Table 7.1.1 identifies the field signs of the terrestrial mammal species and references the relevant survey guidance that was implemented.

[13] JNCC on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group (4CBG), (2024), UK Biodiversity Framework. URL: https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/19a729f6-440e-4ac6-8894-cc72e84cc3bb/uk-biodiversity-framework.pdf [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[14] UK Government, (1992), Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. URL: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1992/223/contents [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[15] UK Government, (1997), Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. URL: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/section/46 [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[16] Scottish Government, (2023), National Planning Framework 4. URL: https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[17] Scottish Government, (2020), The Scottish Biodiversity List. URL: https://www.nature.scot/doc/scottish-biodiversity-list. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[18] Scottish Government, (2013), The 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity. URL: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/5538. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[19] Forestry Commission Scotland, (2009) ,The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal. URL: https://www.forestry.gov.scot/sites/default/files/pub-documents/PDF_Policy_Felling_Trees_SG_Policy_on_Control_of_Woodland_Removal_022009.pdf [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[20] Scottish Government, (2024), Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045. URL: Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 - gov.scot. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[21] Scottish Government, (2024), Biodiversity: Delivery Plan 2024 to 2030. URL: Biodiversity: delivery plan 2024 to 2030 - gov.scot. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[22] Highland Council, (2024), Ecology Strategy and Action Plan. URL: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1210/environment/68/biodiversity [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[23] Highland Council, (2021), Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026. URL: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1210/environment/68/biodiversity [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[24] UKHab Ltd, (2023), UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0. URL: https://ukhab.org/.[Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[25] Rodwell, J.S., (2006), National Vegetation Classification: User's Handbook. URL: NVC Users' Handbook | JNCC Resource Hub [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[26] SEPA, (2014), Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Wind farm Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems. Land Use Planning System SEPA Guidance Note 31. URL: https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/143868/lupsgu31_planning_guidance_on_groundwater_abstractions.pdf. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[27] J. Hall, K. Kirby, and A. Whitbread, (2004), National Vegetation Classification Field Guide to Woodland. JNCC. URL: https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/673dc337-e58f-4f6b-ac7b-717001983c2e. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[28] J. Rodwell et al., (1991), British Plant Communities Volume 1: Woodlands and Scrub. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. URL: https://doi.org/10.1017/9780521235587. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

Table 7.1.1: Protected Species Surveys – Terrestrial Mammals	
Protected Species	**Field Signs Sought**
Badger[29]	Setts (classified as either main subsidiary or outlier and their level of usage indicated), dung pits and latrines, footprints and paths, and foraging signs.
Water vole[30,31]	Burrows, droppings or latrines, feeding stations, footprints, runs, or sightings.
Otter[32]	Holts, couches, spraints, feeding remains, footprints, slides, or sightings.
Pine marten[33]	Scats, footprints, sightings, scratch markings or dens.
Red squirrel[34]	Dreys, feeding signs, and sightings.
Mountain hare[35]	Droppings, footprints, scratch markings, or dens.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

7.1.2.14 Reptiles and amphibians were recorded incidentally through high-level visual searches undertaken during UKHab and Protected Species Surveys. Any signs (i.e. reptile shedding), observations or suitable habitats were recorded.

BAT SPECIES

7.1.2.15 Suitable trees were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats and categorised dependent on the presence of features suitable to support bat roosts. The categories assigned were: None, Further Assessment Required (FAR), and Potential Roost Feature (PRF). Table 7.1.2 provides criteria for each of these categories[36]. The identified trees with PRF were inspected from the ground using binoculars.

Table 7.1.2 Bat Roost Potential Categories	
Suitability	**Description**
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present.

7.1.3 Impact Assessment Methodology

Criteria for Evaluating the Importance of Ecological Features

7.1.3.1 Habitats and species (i.e. ecological features) identified within both Ecology Study Areas have been assigned ecological values using the standard Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) scale that classifies ecological features within a defined geographic context[1]. The classification uses recognised and published criteria[37,7], where the ecological features are assessed in relation to their size, diversity, naturalness, rarity, fragility, typicalness, connectivity with surroundings, intrinsic value, recorded history and potential value. Table 7.1.3 describes the geographic frame of reference that has been used.

Table 7.1.3 Geographic Conservation Importance	
Importance	**Example**
International	Internationally designated sites including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar sites, Biogenetic Reserves, World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves, candidate SACs and potential Ramsar sites; discrete areas which meet the published selection criteria for international designation but which are not themselves designated as such; or a viable area of a habitat type listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive[7], or smaller areas which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an international level, such as European Protected Species (EPS), the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species at an international level; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
National	Nationally designated sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Marine Nature Reserves; discrete areas which meet the published selection criteria for national designation, but which are not designated as such; or areas of a habitat type identified in the UK Biodiversity Framework[13]. Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at the national level, such as species listed in Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act[11], the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across Britain or Scotland; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
Regional	Areas of a habitat type identified in the Regional BAP; viable areas of habitat identified as being of Regional value in the appropriate Natural Heritage Zone(s)[38] (or equivalent); or smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole.

[29] Scottish Badgers, (n.d.), Badger Surveying. URL: https://www.scottishbadgers.org.uk/information-hub/badger-surveying/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[30] Capreolus Wildlife Consultancy, (2005), The Ecology and Conservation of Water Voles in Upland Habitats. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 099 (ROAME No. F99AC320). URL: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-07/Publication%202005%20-%20SNH%20Commissioned%20Report%2099%20-%20The%20ecology%20and%20conservation%20of%20water%20voles%20in%20upland%20habitats.pdf [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[31] Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R., (2016), The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook. The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series. URL: https://gat04-live-1517c8a4486c41609369c68f30c8-aa81074.divio-media.org/filer_public/1e/30/1e3072bf-0ffe-4df2-8ee2-e1af6f66755e/d93_-_water_vole_mitigation_handbook81824175_1.pdf [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[32] Chanin, P., (2003), Monitoring the Otter *Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 10, Peterborough: English Nature. URL: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/78009 [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[33] NatureScot, (2024), Standing Advice for Planning Consultations, Protected Species: Pine Marten. URL: https://www.nature.scot/doc/standing-advice-planning-consultations-pine-martens [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[34] Gurnell, J., Lurz, P., McDonald, R. and Pepper, H., (2001), Practical Techniques for Surveying and Monitoring Squirrels. Edinburgh: Forestry Commission. URL: https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/publications/practical-techniques-for-surveying-and-monitoring-squirrels/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[35] NatureScot, (2024), Standing Advice for Planning Consultations, Protected Species: Mountain Hare. URL: https://www.nature.scot/doc/standing-advice-planning-consultations-mountain-hare [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[36] Collins J. (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, 4th Edition. The Bat Conservation Trust, London. URL: https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Resources/For-professionals/Bat-Survey-Guidelines-4th-edition-AMENDED-27.03.24.pdf?v=1711530492 [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[37] Wray, S., Wells, D., Long, E. and Mitchell-Jones, T., (2010), Valuing Bats in Ecological Impact Assessment. In Practice. December 2010 pp23-25. Winchester: CIEEM. URL: https://cieem.net/resource/in-practice-issue-70-2010-target-dec-2010/ [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[38] Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, (n.d.), Natural Heritage Zones. URL: https://raptormonitoring.org/natural-heritage-zones. [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

Table 7.1.3 Geographic Conservation Importance	
Importance	**Example**
	Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an international level, or at the national level, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across the region; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
County	Designated nature conservation sites at the local authority level in Scotland including statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and non-statutory Local Nature Conservation Sites; or discrete areas which meet the published selection criteria for designation, but which are not designated as such. Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at the local authority level, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across the local authority area.
Local	Features of local value include areas of habitat or populations/communities of species considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the immediate surrounding area, for example, species-rich hedgerows. Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an international level, or at the national level, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across the immediate surrounding area; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
Site	The receptor does not meet the threshold of importance of the other categories above.

7.1.3.2 A wide range of sources can be used to assign importance to ecological features, including legislation and policy. In the case of designated nature conservation sites, their importance reflects the geographic context of the designation. For example, sites designated as SACs are recognised as being of importance at an international level. Ecological features not included in legislation and policy may also be assigned importance due to, for example, local rarity or decline, or provision of a functional role for other ecological features. Professional judgement is used to assign such importance.

Characterising Impacts

7.1.3.3 The potential impacts upon ecological features have been considered in relation to the Proposed Development. The impacts have been assessed without consideration of any specific mitigation measures that would be employed. The assessment of potential ecological impacts has been made in relation to the baseline conditions of the Ecology Study Areas. The potential impacts of activities arising from the Proposed Development upon ecological features have been characterised according to several variables detailed in Table 7.1.4.

Table 7.1.4 Impact Characterisation	
Parameter	**Description**
Direction	Impacts are either adverse (negative) or beneficial (positive).
Magnitude	This is defined as high, medium, low or negligible, with these being classified using the following criteria: **High**: Total/near total loss of a population due to mortality or displacement or major reduction in the status or productivity[39] of a population due to mortality or displacement or disturbance. Total/near total loss of a habitat.

[39] Status is defined as the conservation status of the species and indicates whether the species is likely to become extinct in the near future. Productivity is defined as the rate of population growth.

Table 7.1.4 Impact Characterisation	
Parameter	**Description**
	Moderate: Partial reduction in the status or productivity of a population due to mortality or displacement or disturbance. Partial loss of a habitat. **Low**: Small but discernible reduction in the status or productivity of a population due to mortality or displacement or disturbance. Small proportion of habitat lost. **Negligible**: Very slight reduction in the status or productivity of a population due to mortality or displacement or disturbance. Reduction barely discernible, approximating to the 'no change' situation. Slight loss of habitat that is barely discernible from the habitat resource as a whole.
Extent	The geographical area over which an impact occurs.
Duration	The time for which the impact is expected to last prior to recovery of the feature or replacement of the feature by similar resource (in terms of quality and / or quantity). This is expressed as a short-term, medium-term, or long-term effect relative to the ecological feature that is impacted.
Frequency	The number of times an activity occurs will influence the resulting effect (if appropriate, described as low to high and quantified, where possible).
Timing	The timing of an activity or change may result in an impact if it coincides with critical life-stages or seasons e.g. the breeding season.
Reversibility	Irreversible impacts: permanent changes from which recovery is not possible within a reasonable time scale or for which there is no reasonable chance of action being taken to reverse it. Reversible impact: temporary changes in which spontaneous recovery is possible or for which effective mitigation (avoidance/cancellation/reduction of effect) or compensation (offset/recompense/offer benefit) is possible.

Magnitude of Impact

7.1.3.4 Detailed consideration of impact magnitude is a standard component of ecological impact assessment. It is incorporated to succinctly describe the scale of individual impacts. The magnitude of effects is predicted quantitatively where possible, taking into account the duration and reversibility of effects, and is considered spatially and temporally as described within Table 7.1.5. Effects can be adverse, neutral or beneficial.

Table 7.1.5 Description of spatial impact magnitudes	
Spatial impact magnitude	**Description**
High	Major effect on the nature conservation status of the Site, habitats or species, likely to threaten the long-term integrity of the system.
Medium	Moderate effect on the nature conservation status of the Site, habitats or species, but would not threaten the long-term integrity of the system.
Low	Noticeable effects, but either of sufficiently small scale or short duration to cause no harm to the conservation status of the Site, habitats or species.
Negligible	Not expected to affect the conservation status of the Site, habitats or species under consideration in any way, therefore no noticeable effects on the ecological resource.
High	Major effect on the nature conservation status of the Site, habitats or species, likely to threaten the long-term integrity of the system.

Significance Criteria

7.1.3.5 Significant effects are assessed with reference to the geographic importance of the ecological feature. However, the scale of significance of an effect may not be the same as the geographic context in which the feature is not considered important. For example, a significant effect on a species protected by national legislation does not necessarily equate to a significant effect on its national population.

7.1.3.6 For the purposes of this ecological impact assessment, apart from in exceptional circumstances, a significant effect, as defined by the Electricity Works (Environment Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017[40] is only considered to be possible where the feature in question is considered to be of regional, national or international importance. That is not to say that impacts from the Proposed Development could not result in significant effects on features of county or local importance, simply that those effects are not likely to be significant under EIA Regulations, unless the effect is likely to undermine biodiversity conservation objectives (such as local polices for no net loss) or biodiversity in general. Whether an effect at local or county importance is considered to be significant or not significant under the EIA Regulations is made clear in the impact assessment of each ecological feature.

7.1.3.7 Table 7.1.6 illustrates how residual effects are determined by comparison of the sensitivity of receptors with the magnitude of predicted change. For the purposes of this assessment significant effects are major or major/moderate.

Table 7.1.6 Significance Criteria

Spatial impact magnitude	Description
Major	This is a significant effect (either beneficial or adverse), as the effect is likely to result in a long-term significant effect on the integrity of the receptor at a particular geographical scale.
Moderate	This is a potentially significant effect (either beneficial or adverse), as the effect is likely to result in a medium term or partially significant effect on the integrity of the receptor at a particular geographical scale.
Minor	The effect is likely to affect the receptor at an insignificant level by virtue of its limited duration and/or extent, but there will probably be no effect on its integrity. This is not a significant effect.
Negligible	No discernible effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development.

7.1.3.8 The assessment only describes characteristics relevant to understanding the ecological impact and determining the significance of the effect.

Requirements for Mitigation

7.1.3.9 Mitigation and/or compensation is proposed for all effects considered significant under the EIA Regulations or where required in relation to protected species where legislation may require actions to protect populations or individuals. Where there are no significant effects on features, and where no mitigation and/or compensation is required under the EIA Regulations, further measures may still be proposed as part of additional good practice for the purpose of enhancing the biodiversity in the Ecology Study Area.

Assessment of Cumulative Effect Significance

7.1.3.10 Significant cumulative effects can result from effects that are individually not significant but collectively significant taking place over a period of time or concentrated in a location[41,42]. Cumulative effects are important in Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIAs) as many ecological features are already exposed to background levels of threat or pressure and may be close to critical thresholds, where further impacts could cause irreversible decline. Cumulative effects can also make habitats and species more vulnerable or sensitive to change.

7.1.3.11 Developments included in the cumulative effects assessment are the following types of future development within the same ZOI:

- Development for which consent has been applied;
- Developments that have been granted consent but have not yet been started or have been started but are not yet completed (i.e. under construction); and
- Developments that have been refused permission but are subject to appeal.

7.1.3.12 It may also be necessary to consider developments that are operational, but whose full environmental effects are not yet known and cannot be accounted for in the baseline, such as developments that have only recently been constructed and become operational.

7.1.3.13 The ZOI for cumulative effects is 10 km for ecological features, primarily bat species, due to the distance they are able to travel. The following cumulative developments are considered in the cumulative assessment and are shown on **Figure 2.2 (EIAR Volume 3a)**:

- Abhainn Dubh (9 turbines), in planning, onshore 0-5km away;
- Beinn nan Oighrean (2 turbines), operational, 10-15km;
- Beinn Tharsuinn (17 turbines), operational, 10-15km;
- Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm Repowered and Extended (31 turbines), screening/ scoping, 5-10km away;
- Carn Fearna (9 turbines), in planning, onshore 10-15km away;
- Ceislein (11 turbines), in planning, 0-5km away;
- Coire na Cloiche (13 turbines), operational, onshore 5-10km away;
- Creachan (13 turbines), in planning, onshore 5-10km away;
- Glasa Wind Farm (27 turbines), scoping/screening, onshore 5-10km away;
- Novar 2 (17 turbines), operational, 0-5km away;
- Spittal-Loch Buidhe-Beauly 400kV Overhead Transmission Line Connection in planning, crossing Access Route and Secondary Vehicular Access Route;
- Strathrory (7 turbines), approved, onshore 5-10 km away; and
- Yellow Wells (1 turbine) operational, onshore 5-10 km away.

7.1.3.14 The environmental statements or other relevant environmental reports, such as the Scoping Report, for the cumulative developments have been consulted, where possible.

[40] The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Act (2017), URL: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/contents/made. [Accessed 22/01/2026].

[41] European Commission, (2019), Managing Natura 2000 sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC. URL: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/02245 [Accessed: 22/01/2026]

[42] NatureScot, (2021), Guidance – Assessing the Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments. URL: https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-assessing-cumulative-landscape-and-visual-impact-onshore-wind-energy-developments [Accessed: 22/01/2026]