Preface

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) summarises the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report) that has been prepared for Tom na Clach Wind Farm Extension application by Infinergy, on behalf of Nan Clach Extension Limited ('the Applicant').

The EIA Report and the supporting documentation are also available online; please visit the dedicated website at www.tomnaclachwindfarm.co.uk under 'Downloads'. All Volumes are available on a CD free of charge. Printed copies of the EIA Report (Volumes 1, 2, 3 & 4) can be purchased from Infinergy for £750 per copy. To obtain a copy, please contact:

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Introduction

This Non-Technical Summary ('NTS') forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIA Report') which accompanies an application by Infinergy on behalf of Nan Clach Extension Limited, the joint venture between Infinergy Limited and Rt. Hon Earl Cawdor ('the Applicant').

The Applicant is proposing a wind energy development, Tom na Clach Wind Farm Extension (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'), 7km north-east of Tomatin and west of B9007 in the Highland region of Scotland.

As the Proposed Development, as an Extension in combination with Tom nan Clach Wind Farm (the 'Operational Scheme'), exceeds 50 MW the Applicant is submitting the application for consent and deemed planning permission to the Scottish Government under the terms of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.

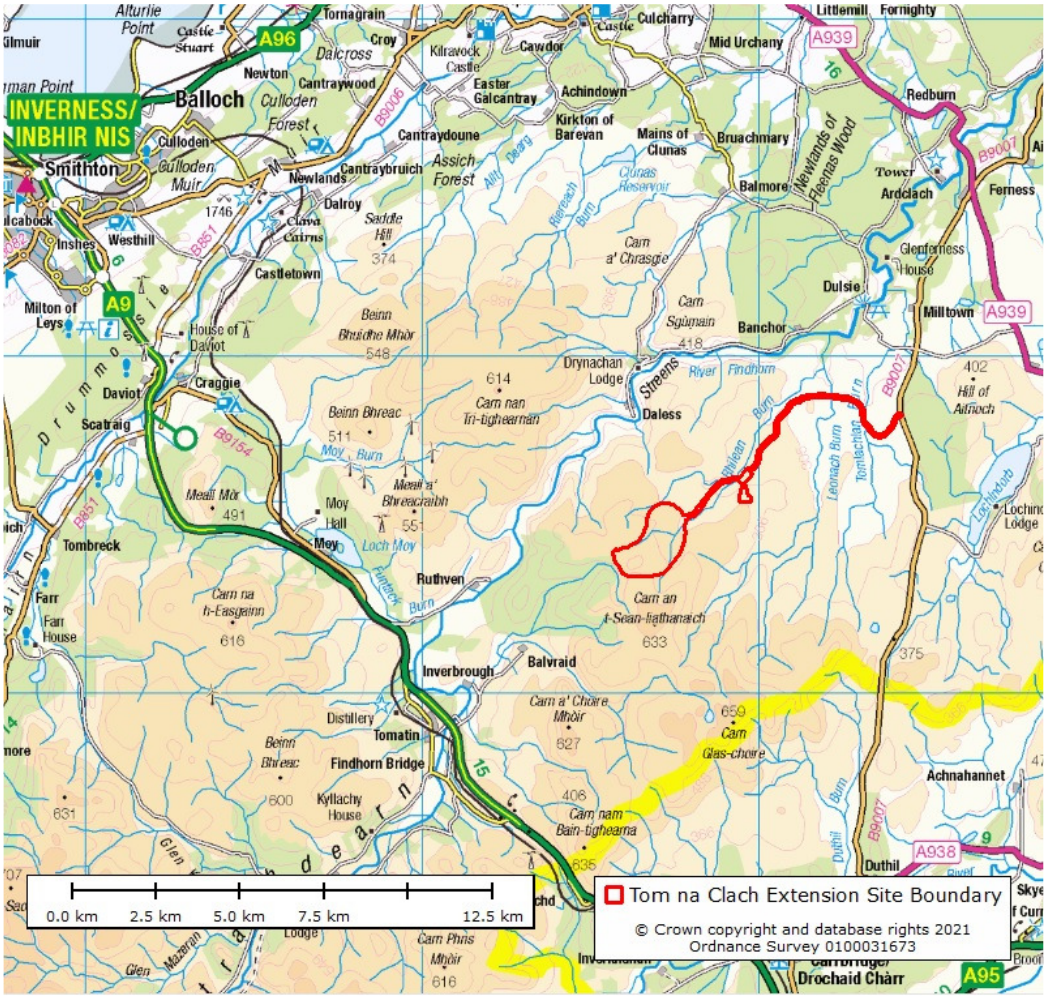

Figure 1: Site Location

Environmental Impact Assessment

The EIA process identifies the methodologies used to assess the environmental impacts predicted to result as a consequence of the construction, operation and decommissioning of a development. Where appropriate, it also identifies mitigation measures designed to prevent, reduce and, if at all possible, offset potential significant adverse environmental effects. An assessment of residual effects, those expected to remain following implementation of mitigation measures, are also considered along with an assessment of the cumulative effects of a development in conjunction with other relevant proposed and existing developments (in this case wind farms). The results of the EIA are then presented in an EIA Report and summarised in plain English in an accompanying NTS (this document).

The EIA process has been instrumental in informing the design of the Proposed Development. The site layout has undergone a number of iterations to ensure it can be accommodated within the environmental and technical constraints identified through the EIA process.

The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is described in detail in the EIA Report. A brief description of the proposal is given as follows:

- The Proposed Development site boundary including internal access tracks occupies a total area of approximately 398 hectares, though the wind farm infrastructure occupies only a small fraction of this. The wind farm is located within an area of mainly upland moor and forestry plantation approximately 7km north-east of Tomatin and west of the B9007;
- Seven turbines, with a maximum tip height of 149.9m, are proposed. Associated ancillary development including new access tracks, a sub-station & battery energy storage system, control building, a temporary construction compound and one borrow pit also form part of the application for the Proposed Development;
- Access to the site will be from an existing road off the B9007, utilising the existing 11.5 km access track built for the Operational Scheme, and new track would be developed where required to transport components and materials to site and service the ongoing needs of the wind farm;
- It is anticipated the wind farm will connect into the national grid at Boat of Garten substation, approximately 31km of underground cable from the onsite substation. The grid connection does not form part of the application for planning permission, and will be subject to a separate application by the Applicant if required;
- The installed capacity of the proposed wind farm is up to 31.5 MW, though capacity and power output may vary depending on the turbine specified and procured for the site through a competitive tendering process, subject to the project receiving consent;
- Based on an installed generation capacity of 31.5 MW (based on the candidate Vestas V136 (4.5MW), the proposed wind farm would have the potential to supply the equivalent of the average annual domestic electricity needs of over 17,429 homes. The proposed wind farm is designed with an operational life of 40 years and permission is sought for this period of operation only;

- Construction, commissioning and site restoration are anticipated to take around 14 months, with potential opportunities for local companies and local workforce to be involved, subject to meeting tender criteria.

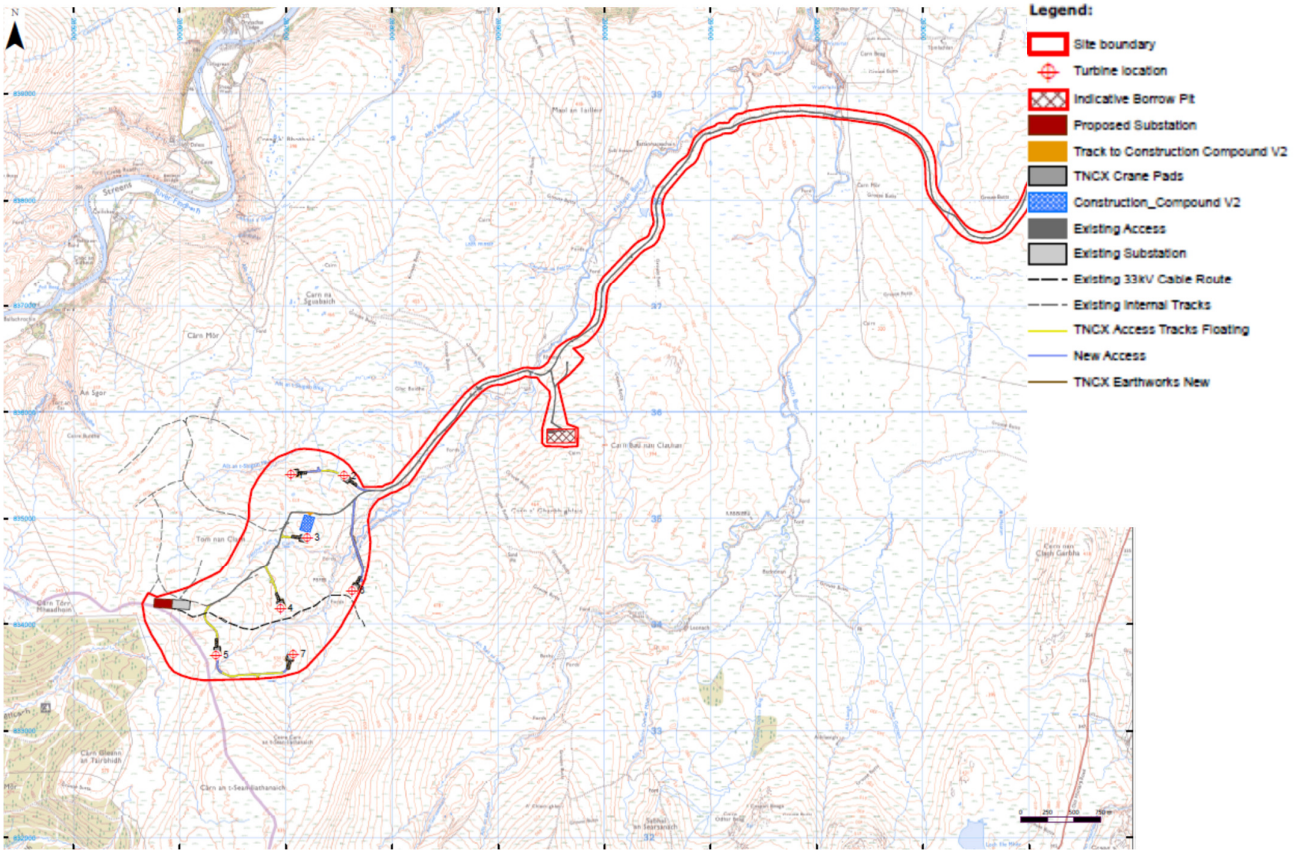

Figure 2: Proposed Wind Farm Layout

Policy & Statutory Framework

It has been demonstrated that the Proposed Development accords with local and national planning policy, and that there is a substantial need for this type of development in order that pressing future targets in relation to the global heating crisis and renewable energy generation and greenhouse gas emission reductions can be met in time.

There is a climate emergency. That is a factor of importance and considerable weight. It does not require a statement to that effect in a planning document to make it so. Planning decisions must be made within and respond to the changing economic and wider policy context within which development comes forward. The planning balance can therefore no longer be approached as it has been in the past.

The firm direction of travel signalled by the NPF4 Position Statement has now continued into the draft NPF4 and the draft OWPS. That point is of itself important since the consistency of approach shown within them adds markedly to the weight to be given in the planning policy drive to attain net zero. Material change is most unlikely. However, the fact of the acceleration of support for up to 12GW of additional onshore wind capacity

clearly evidenced in the two documents in turn means that they cannot be categorised and dismissed as just a continuing of what might be termed a 'business-as-usual' approach.

An additional 12GW of onshore wind capacity would equates to approximately 85 more 100MW scale wind farms having to be consented and become operational across Scotland by 2030.

The NPF4 Position Statement heralded a rebalancing of the planning system, so as to recognise the climate and nature crises. Draft NPF4 delivers this rebalanced approach which means that all decision makers will have to recalibrate their decision-making considerations.

Therefore, the tilt point along the scale of possible decisions represented by the concept of the planning balance has been shifted by law and the clearest direction of policy. This is put into sharp focus by the targets to be met as a matter of law by 2030 and 2045. The 2030 target is a considerable challenge.

It is important to note that the Applicant is not relying on future policy to make its case. The Applicant is quite clear in saying that the Proposed Development should obtain consent as matters stand, irrespective of any additional policy support which will come through NPF4. However, when the further support inevitably does arrive, the planning balance swings yet further in favour of consent being granted.

NPF4 will be vital in supporting delivery of net zero by 2045 with dramatic progress required by 2030 if net zero by 2045 is to stand any chance of being achieved. Onshore wind is the key technology which the Government wishes to see more of, delivered faster and especially by 2030. Taking all matters together, the Applicant submits that the need case is to be accorded very substantial weight in the planning balance.

Indeed, it may fairly be said that consent should only be withheld if the need case is demonstrably and significantly outweighed by local environmental harm which is beyond that which is to be expected for any large wind farm in any location. The policy imperative, being brought up to date by these recent publications must, in the Applicant's view, be acted on.

This does not mean that the decision maker should expect to find an express watering down of environmental protection. Weight is entirely a matter for the decision maker. However, the way that decision makers can recognise the strengthening policy imperative and the increased weight that should be given to the benefits of the Proposed Development is by giving relatively more weight to the seriousness and importance of energy policy related considerations in the planning balance.

The overall conclusion is that when all the relevant considerations have been properly considered, the balance strongly favours the granting of consent. On this basis, it is recommended that Section 36 consent and deemed planning permission should be granted, for the Proposed Development, subject to appropriate conditions.

Regulatory Consultation

Consultation is a critical component of the EIA process. In order to inform the EIA there has been on-going consultation with the Energy and Consents Unit, The Highland Council and statutory consultees, all of which were involved in the development of the original

proposal and have played a key role in the iterative design process for the Proposed Development. The consultees include:

- The Highland Council
- SEPA
- NatureScot
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Marine Scotland
- Transport Scotland
- Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Rivers Trust
- BT
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Defence Infrastructure Organisation (MoD)
- NATS Safeguarding
- RSPB Scotland
- OFCOM
- JRC
- Ericsson
- Vodafone
- Viginmedia02
- Mountaineering Council of Scotland
- Scottish Water
- Highlands and Islands Airport
- Visit Scotland
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Scottish Canoe Association
- Cawdor and West Nairnshire Community Council
- East Nairnshire Community Council
- The Dava Moor
- Strathdearn Community Council
- Carrbridge Community Council
- Dulnain Bridge Community Council
- Forestry Commission
- Joint Radio Company
- The Crown Estate
- John Muir Trust
- Scotways
- British Horse Society

Public consultation

Community Open Days for the Proposed Development were held on 27th October and 28th October 2021, with *Live Chats* on 2nd & 3rd November, at which members of the public were invited to provide their views and comment on the wind farm proposal. In addition, newsletters were sent to the local community requesting feedback and regular updates with the various Community Councils took place.

More information on our public consultation process is provided in the Statement of Community Consultation, submitted along with the planning application and EIA Report.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The EIA process is designed to identify the environmental effects (both adverse and beneficial) of development proposals.

A team of independent experts were employed by the Applicant to undertake the EIA process for the Proposed Development, the main steps in the assessment process have been:

- Baseline surveys (where appropriate and where possible) to provide information on the existing environmental character of the proposed site and the surrounding area;
- Consideration of the possible interactions between the Proposed Development and the existing and predicted future site conditions. These interactions or effects are assessed using criteria based on accepted guidance and best practice;
- Using the outline design parameters for the Proposed Development, prediction of the environmental effects, including direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, beneficial and adverse effects;
- Identification of mitigation measures designed to avoid, reduce or off-set adverse effects and enhance beneficial effects. Re-assessment of alterations to the design and determination of the effectiveness of mitigation proposals;
- Assessment of the significance of any residual effects after mitigation, in relation to the sensitivity of the feature impacted and the magnitude of the effect predicted;
- Identification of any uncertainties inherent in the methods used, the predictions made and the conclusions drawn during the course of the assessment process; and
- Reporting of the results of the EIA in the EIA Report.
- The EIA Process is iterative, with the findings of the EIA fed into the design process over the course of the assessment work.
- The EIA considers the effects of the Proposed Development during the construction, operation and decommissioning with reference to the following:
- Policy & Statutory Framework;
- Carbon Balance (estimate of carbon savings);
- Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation, and Land Use (effects to the local and national economy, local tourism businesses, access paths and the change-in-use of the land of the Proposed Development);
- Traffic & Transport (effects from traffic travelling to and from the Proposed Development);
- Noise (effects to local properties from noise and vibration from the Proposed Development);
- Landscape and Visual (effects to the character of the landscape and views from agreed locations in the surrounding area);
- Cultural Heritage (effects to the integrity and setting of historic sites);

- Ecology (the effects to protected habitats, flora and fauna, excluding birds) and aquatic ecology (fish populations and other aquatic habitats and fauna);
- Ornithology (the effects to birds and protected bird habitats);
- Hydrology, hydrogeology, Geology & Peat (the effects to surface water, ground water, rocks, peat and soils);
- Infrastructure (telecommunications, radar, aviation etc.); and
- Shadow Flicker & Safety.

Environmental Effects

The following sections provide a brief summary of the main findings of the EIA set out in the technical sections within the EIA Report (**Volume 1: Written Statement**). The assessments consider the potential environmental effects during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development.

Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation and Land Use

The assessments presented demonstrate that the Proposed Development would result in a moderate and moderate and potentially significant effect on recreational/tourism users around Lochindorb, but that there would be no other significant adverse effects from the proposals. The Proposed Development would lead to beneficial economic effects, but these are not expected to be significant.

Traffic and Transport

Access to the Proposed Development would then be taken from the existing wind farm access junction on the B9007. Loads would then proceed to the Proposed Development site via new and existing wind farm access tracks.

The closest feasible port to the site that has previously accommodated onshore wind farm developments, such as the Operational Scheme, is Inverness Port. From Inverness, loads would travel to site via A9, A95, A938 and B9007, accessing the site from the south.

The maximum traffic impact associated with construction is predicted to occur in Month 7 of the programme. The greatest impact would occur at the site access where an additional 61 trips are included to the network.

The development traffic at the peak of construction would result in 33 HGV movements per day (17 inbound and 17 outbound) and 27 Car / LGV movements (14 inbound trips and 14 outbound trips).

No significant capacity issues are expected on any of the roads within the study area due to the additional construction traffic movements associated with the Proposed Development as background traffic movements are low, the links are of reasonable standard and appropriate mitigation is proposed.

A review of the road network has been undertaken to assess the feasibility of transporting turbines to the site and the following substantive remedial works are identified as part of the Swept Path Assessment to accommodate the predicted AIL movements at Points of Interest (POI):

- POI 21: A95 / A938 Junction – Due to the length of the proposed loads and the orientation of the road junction it is not possible to utilise the existing junction and the mitigation used by the Operational Scheme that is located in the verge. It is proposed that loads will turn left onto a new track in advance of the junction. Detailed discussions with Transport Scotland and The Highland Council should be held to confirm the proposed mitigation as a new junction will be created on both the A9 and A938.
- POI 60: Proposed Site Access, B9007 –The junction will need to be upgraded to meet manufacturer standards for the larger loads if it is used to access the proposed site.

Traffic levels during the operational phase of Proposed Development would be one or two vehicles per week for maintenance purposes. Traffic levels during the decommissioning of the Proposed Development are expected to be lower than during the construction phase as some elements may be left in situ and others broken up onsite.

An assessment of likely potential effects using IEMA guidelines has been undertaken. This determined that the construction effects are not significant.

There are no residual effects associated with the construction or operational phases of the Proposed Development.

Noise

During construction, noise disturbance may result from the use of plant and machinery to carry out construction activities. Due to the substantial separation distance between the Proposed Development and nearby residential dwellings, no significant effects are anticipated. Notwithstanding this, Best Practice mitigation measures will be adopted to manage noise emissions, including restrictions on working hours during the construction of the Proposed Development.

During operation, wind turbines can generate noise from the machinery housed within the turbine and from the movement of blades through the air. Modern turbines are designed to minimise noise and planning conditions are used to ensure compliance with specified noise limits.

The operational assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of ETSU R-97, the method of assessing wind turbine noise recommended by Government guidance, and following the current best practice methods described in the Good Practice Guide (GPG), as endorsed by the Scottish Government. It has been shown that noise due to the Proposed Development would comply with the requirements of both ETSU R-97 and The Highland Council ('THC') at the closest, and therefore all receptor locations.

A cumulative assessment has also been undertaken in conjunction with the Operational Scheme, the existing Moy Wind Farm, and the proposed Lethen Wind Farm. Worst-case operational noise levels are below the identified noise limits, and the impact of operational noise has therefore been shown to be acceptable.

Noise produced during decommissioning of the Proposed Development is likely to be of a similar nature to that during construction, although the duration of decommissioning will be shorter than that of construction. Any legislation, guidance or best practice relevant at the time of decommissioning would be complied with.

Landscape and Visual

The assessment of landscape and visual effects has been carried out to identify the significant effects that are likely to arise as a result of the Proposed Development. It has considered the effects on landscape and visual receptors, as well as the cumulative effect on these receptors from the Proposed Development in conjunction with other wind farm developments.

The assessment reports significant effects will arise as a result of the Proposed Development in localised and close-range parts of the Open Rolling Upland and Rolling Uplands LCT; the corresponding localised and close-range parts of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA; and from one viewpoint.

The Site mainly lies within the Open Rolling Upland LCT in the Moray and Nairn Council area, with the southern Site boundary extending into the Rolling Uplands LCT in the Inverness District council area. Essentially, these LCTs represent the same landscape which is characterised by open and rounded hills of relatively uniform height, collectively forming smooth ridges and expansive gently undulating plateaux.

The significant effects arise principally as a result of the close proximity of the immediate LCT and adjacent LCT to the large-scale turbines of the Proposed Development whose influence will alter the character of these LCTs despite there already being an influence from the Operational Scheme. These effects on landscape character extend out to a maximum distance of 5 km from the Proposed Development and occur in the corresponding parts of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA which covers the Site and are considered in-conjunction with all relevant operational wind farms.

The Proposed Development and immediate surroundings are not covered by the national landscape designations of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) or the Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area (NSA). These designations do, however, occur in the 40 km radius Study Area and a detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on their SLQs is presented in Appendix 9.B and Appendix 9.C. These detailed assessments found that the Special Landscape Qualities of the CNP and NSA will not be significantly affected by the Proposed Development, owing to a combination of the existing influence from the Operational Scheme in the same location, the relatively small and contained extent of the extension, its separation distance from the CNP and NSA, the limited extents of visibility across these areas and the closer association with the uplands outwith the designated areas. The Proposed Development will not have a significant effect on any of the nationally designated landscapes in the Study Area.

In respect of effects on the Cairngorms Wild Land Area (WLA 15), Appendix 9.D presents a full and detailed assessment. This assessment shows that the Proposed Development will have no significant effects on the wildness qualities of WLA 15, owing to a combination of the existing influence from the Operational Scheme in the same location, the relatively small and contained extent of the extension, the separation distance of over 23 km between the Proposed Development and WLA 15, the limited extents of visibility, and the weak association between the uplands, where the Proposed Development will be located, and the WLA.

Visibility of the Proposed Development is limited across the Study Area owing to the screening effect of the intervening landform. This means that there will be a concentration of visibility within the first 5 to 10 km of the Proposed Development, where there is already

an existing influence from the Operational Scheme, as well as Moy Wind Farm to the north-west and Farr and Glen Kyllachy to the south-west. Beyond 5 to 10 km, theoretical visibility in all directions is shown to be patchy, occurring mostly across open moorlands and upland slopes that face towards the Proposed Development, and with very little actual visibility occurring from the lower-lying straths and glens. This means that it will be the views of walkers on the moorlands and uplands that will be affected more than the views of residents and road-users in the lower lying settlements and on the roads.

One of the 17 viewpoints has been assessed as being significantly affected as a result of the additional effect of the Proposed Development in-conjunction with all other operational wind farms. This assessment relates to the sensitivity of the viewpoint, which represents the northern edge of the CNP, as well as its proximity to the Proposed Development at a minimum of 5.78 km and occurs despite the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme. All other viewpoints and principal visual receptors will not be significantly affected, owing to the combination of the existing influence from the Operational Scheme in the same location, the relatively small and contained extent of the extension, the separation distances between the viewpoints and the proposed turbines, the limited extents of additional visibility and the close association the proposed turbines have with the Operational Scheme turbines.

The cumulative assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Development in conjunction with all relevant operational and consented wind farms in Cumulative Scenario 1, and the effect of the Proposed Development in conjunction with all relevant operational, consented and application stage wind farms in Cumulative Scenario 2. The assessment has found that there will be no significant cumulative effects between the Proposed Development and other under construction, consented or application stage wind farms in the Study Area. This assessment relates principally to the small number of additional turbines, their integration with the Operational Scheme, and the limited occurrence and extent of other consented and application stage wind farms in the Study Area.

The cumulative assessment also considers the effect of the Proposed Development in-combination with all relevant operational and proposed wind farms. This assessment has found that there will be significant cumulative effects on landscape character out to 5 km, including on coinciding parts of the SLA, and on three viewpoints within 8 km of the Proposed Development. No other landscape or visual receptors will be significantly affected, including the CNP, NSA and WLAs. Furthermore, the Proposed Development sits centrally within the broad pattern of wind farm development which follows the north-east to south-west band of upland hills across the Study Area.

In respect of effects on Residential Visual Amenity, there are no properties within a 2 km radius, which is the recommended radius to apply to this type of assessment following Landscape Institute guidance and is also considered an appropriate radius in respect of site work carried out in the area. In considering a 3 km radius, as suggested by consultees, there will still be no significant effects owing to a combination of the very limited number of properties, the very limited level of visibility or no visibility, and the existing influence from the closer range Operational Scheme in the few instances where visibility may arise.

While significant effects are reported to arise within the first 5 km radius to the east and south-east and 2 km to the west of the Proposed Development, the remaining receptors will undergo no significant effects or no effects. Not all receptors within a 5 km radius of the Proposed Development will be significantly

Cultural Heritage

Methodology

This Chapter assesses potential effects upon the Historic Environment (Archaeology and Cultural Heritage) as a result of the Proposed Development. Assessment of potential direct (physical) effects and effects upon cultural significance through development within the setting of heritage assets is presented separately for the construction, operation and decommissioning stages of the Proposed Development, and potential cumulative effects are presented separately also.

The assessment has been compiled with reference to all relevant planning policy and guidance documents of Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). Through Scoping, Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd, part of the RSK Group, consulted with statutory consultees to agree the methodology employed by the assessment and for them to identify specific assets of particular concern. The methodology and Study Areas employed by the assessment have been formulated as a result of this consultation.

Within the Inner Study Area (used throughout this assessment to refer to the site boundary), all heritage assets are assessed for potential construction and operational effects. The Outer Study Area (OSA) is defined by the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) to identify any heritage assets that may be affected by the operation of the Proposed Development, i.e. through effects on their settings and the contribution made to their cultural significance. The baseline for the assessment has been informed by a comprehensive desk-based study (Volume 4, Appendix 10.A), based on all readily available documentary sources. The desk-based study also includes a Glossary of Terms used in this Chapter.

Baseline conditions

There are no designated assets within the ISA. There are a total of eight non-designated heritage assets within the ISA. Of these, one is recorded on THC HER: farmstead MHG26505, which was fully excavated and recorded within the current ISA during construction of the access track for the Operational Scheme. The remaining non-designated heritage assets were identified during previous walkover surveys within the current ISA.

The majority of the heritage assets within the ISA comprise post-medieval and later historic period features representing upland farming. They include a farmstead (site of) and associated enclosure and the remains of five shieling huts. These heritage assets are all non-designated and represent locally common features relating to upland farming. They are of low (local) importance.

Within 2km from proposed turbines there are five non-designated heritage assets comprising a township, a shieling, two farmsteads and an air crash site. Within 2-5 km from the proposed turbines there are three scheduled monuments. Within 5-10 km from the proposed turbines there are 11 scheduled monuments, three Category A Listed Buildings, and 17 Category B Listed Buildings. Within 10–20 km from the proposed turbines there are seven Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes, and 38 Category A Listed Buildings (15 of which are located within an IGDL boundary).

Stage 1 Setting Assessment considers each heritage asset in the OSA in turn to identify those assets in the ZTV which have a wider landscape setting that contributes to their cultural significance and whether it is likely that cultural significance could be harmed by

the Proposed Development. In accordance with the HES Scoping Opinion, The Stage 1 Setting Assessment also concluded that the Proposed Development has the potential to cause effects on the cultural significance of one Scheduled Monument through change to its setting:

- SM1231 Lochindorb Castle. Located 9.8km east of the ISA, the castle comprises the substantial remains of a 13th century island castle. As a Scheduled Monument, the castle is of High importance.

Potential impacts

No direct effects upon any known archaeological remains have been identified. It is recommended that certain heritage assets are fenced off with a suitable buffer throughout construction to prevent accidental damage.

Any effect resulting from an impact upon archaeological remains discovered during the construction phase is unlikely to be of greater than Minor significance. Following implementation of a programme of mitigation agreed with the Highland Council ('THC') in advance of the works, if required, no residual effects are anticipated upon any currently unknown potential heritage assets that may be preserved within the site.

Construction phase setting effects would be temporary and are not considered to be significant in EIA due to their very short duration.

A residual effect of Minor significance, which is not significant in EIA terms, is predicted on Lochindorb Castle SM1231 throughout the operation of the Proposed Development.

Cumulative impact assessment, considering all other operational, consented and submitted applications for wind farms in the vicinity has identified no significant effects in EIA terms as a result of the Proposed Development.

No direct residual decommissioning effects have been identified. Although impacts have been assessed as if the development was permanent (SPP paragraph 170), on decommissioning the operational effects on Lochindorb Castle SM1231 would be reversed.

Ecology

The scope of the ecological assessment was determined through a combination of desk study to identify existing biological data relating to the Proposed Development and the surrounding area, site survey and consultation with relevant stakeholders.

A Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken across the site and detailed National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys were completed. Surveys and habitat assessments for otter *Lutra lutra*, water vole *Arvicola amphibius*, pine marten *Martes martes*, bats and fish were also undertaken. The assessment has also considered effects on badger *Meles meles*, red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, Scottish wildcat *Felis sylvestris* and reptiles. The results of previous survey work completed in support of the Operational Scheme have been used to inform the ecological baseline.

The site is dominated by degraded blanket bog that is evaluated as being of County level importance. Other habitats that are present include wet heath, acid flush, acid grassland and running water.

The results of surveys indicate that the Proposed Development site may occasionally be used by otter but there is no resident population of this species. Low levels of bat activity

were recorded, with common pipistrelle being the most frequently encountered species. Fish surveys found that watercourses within the site support a resident brown trout population with no other species present. No evidence was found to indicate that badger, water vole, pine marten and wildcat are present.

No effects are likely on any designated features of statutory nature conservation sites.

The design of the proposed scheme has sought to avoid the most valuable areas of habitat. The proposed mitigation is primarily in the form of minimising the risks of potential disruption to sensitive habitats, including wetlands and watercourses, and minimising potential disturbance of protected species. Measures include the completion of pre-construction surveys for otter, the use of appropriately designed lighting schemes (if required), and the adoption of best practice measures to minimise pollution of watercourses.

It is predicted that the Proposed Development would not have residual effects on important ecological features that are significant in relation to local or national planning policy or legislative requirements.

No significant effects on important ecological features are likely when the Proposed Development is considered in combination with other plans and projects.

Ornithology

This Chapter considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on ornithology. It details the methods used to establish the bird species and populations present, together with the process used to determine their Nature Conservation Importance. The ways in which birds might be affected (directly or indirectly) by the construction and operation of the Proposed Development are explained and an assessment is made with regards the significance of these effects.

The assessment is structured around the consideration of potential effects, including cumulative effects, of construction and operation of the Proposed Development upon those ornithological receptors identified during survey work.

Desk-based studies and field surveys were carried out in and around the Proposed Development over respective 'study areas' to establish baseline conditions and the species and populations present.

It was possible to 'scope out' the effects on a number of species of high Nature Conservation Importance by virtue of their ecology, absence, distance from the Proposed Development, small numbers, low levels of activity and the nature and location of this activity.

Three bird species were included in the assessment, golden eagle, red kite and hen harrier. These species were considered to be of high Nature Conservation Importance due to their listing as Annex I (Birds Directive) and Schedule 1 (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004).

Habitat loss arising from the construction of tracks, borrow pits and turbine bases is unlikely to result in adverse impacts upon any bird species. Any impacts are likely to be negligible and not significant. Population reductions due to habitat loss, displacement and/or collision mortality are also likely to be minimal. Any impacts are likely to be negligible and not significant for all bird species.

The contribution of adverse effects accrued by the Proposed Development to regional populations would be undetectable and so cumulative effects of the Proposed Development with existing and planned windfarm developments in the region are judged as being unlikely to have a significant effect on existing bird populations. Overall, it is concluded that construction and operation of the Proposed Development would not have a significant effect on birds under the terms of the EIA Regulations.

Information is presented to allow the competent planning authority to consider the requirement for an assessment of potential effects of the Proposed Development on the integrity of a number of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified for capercaillie. This information demonstrates that the Proposed Development would not have a likely significant effect on any SPA, therefore further consideration under the Habitats Regulations is not required.

Hydrology & Hydrogeology

A desktop assessment and series of site investigations have been undertaken to identify and characterise the hydrological, geological and hydrogeological environment within the vicinity of the Proposed Development taking into account scoping responses.

The majority of the proposed development falls within the Rhilean Burn Catchment with the substation area being within the upper reaches of the Allt a' Mhulinn catchment. Both are tributaries of the River Findhorn. The surface water quality is generally good with some brown trout habitat in the lower reaches of the watercourses and evidence of otter foraging on site. Four new watercourse crossings will be required for the development, three minor crossings and one main crossing of the Allt Carn an t-Sean-liathanaich.

The geological regime of the development area comprises of relatively impermeable psammite bedrock, overlain by relatively impermeable glacial till and peat deposits across much of the site. There are some areas of more permeable glaciofluvial and alluvial deposits associated with the watercourses. Deep peat and areas of SNH Class 1 and Class 2 peat are present within the site boundary and were identified as a key sensitivity. An extensive peat depth and condition survey campaign was undertaken to reduce impacts on peat as far as possible through site design and avoidance. The peat slide risk assessment demonstrates that there is low risk, with the Proposed Development having been characterised in the lowest peat slide risk categories. The peat management plan demonstrates that there are opportunities to reuse all excavated peat as part of the site reinstatement and habitat restoration of the degraded peat and erosional gullies on site.

The sensitivity of receptors has been assigned through the completion of the baseline assessment. The significance of residual effect has been determined taking into account embedded mitigation, standard good practice and any additional mitigation.

The mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset adverse impacts on the identified receptors, include the implementation specific mitigation relating to peat management, habitat restoration and maintaining water flow to groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE). Drainage management provisions and a watercourse crossing assessment have been presented to demonstrate appropriate control and treatment of run-off and to maintain flows within the watercourses. Detailed design of the drainage will be agreed with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and THC prior to the commencement of construction.

It has been concluded that with best practice techniques and additional habitat restoration the residual effects are considered to be not significant in terms of the EIA Regulations

Other Study Areas

No significant effects in terms of infrastructure, telecommunications, television, air quality, and ground conditions have been identified through the EIA for the Proposed Development.

Shadow Flicker & Safety

There are no residential properties within a 2km of any turbine forming part of the Proposed Development. As such, the Shadow Flicker effects from the operation of the Proposed Development would not be significant.

The Applicant has requested a 40-year operational lifetime for this application, Applications for extensions to operational lifetime are increasingly common from wind farm developers and asset owners. An operational wind farm would be subject to planning conditions ensuring that noise emissions are not breached and the asset continues to perform. Studies which have been completed show that subject to the ongoing operation and maintenance of a wind farm and additional investment in key components, significant health & safety impacts are not predicted to arise.

Conclusion

Nan Clach Extension Limited is seeking planning consent to construct and operate a wind farm north-east of Tomatin, in the Highland region of Scotland. The Proposed Development will consist of 7 turbines with a maximum tip height of 149.9m, giving a total installed capacity at the site of 31.5 MW. The operational life of the development will be 40 years.

The EIA carried out to support the Proposed Development involved detailed surveys, studies and assessments to determine any potential 'effects' to the natural, physical and manmade environment that would result as a consequence of the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development. Through careful design, in response to the findings of the EIA as well as the Applicant's commitment to mitigation measures, the results of the EIA the Proposed Development would not have any long-term unacceptable impacts on the surrounding environment.

The Applicant has engaged with the local community throughout the EIA process in order to inform the community about the proposed development, to explain its components and potential effects, and to obtain feedback and an understanding of any key concerns or issues. A full account of the consultation undertaken is provided in the Pre-Application Consultation Report that accompanies the EIA Report.

There is an urgent need to change existing energy infrastructure if the established renewable energy targets set by successive EU, UK and Scottish Governments are to be met, in order to help address climate change, energy security and energy poverty. The Proposed Development is a positive response to the ambitious targets set for renewable electricity generation. At a size of 31.5 MW the estimated generation of the Proposed Development would power the equivalent of 17,429 average UK homes with Renewable energy while providing a meaningful contribution to the Scottish and UK Governments' renewable electricity targets, reducing CO^2 emissions, and ensuring further diversification of the UK energy mix.