9. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

9.1 Non-technical Summary

9.1.1 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.

9.1.2 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.

9.1.3 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.

9.1.4 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.

9.1.5 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.

9.1.6 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.

9.1.7 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.

9.1.8 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.

9.1.9 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.

9.1.10 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.

9.1.11 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.

9.1.12 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 affected.

9.2.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIA Report') evaluates the potential landscape and visual effects of the Tom na Clach Wind Farm Extension (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'). It has been prepared by chartered Landscape Architects at Optimised Environments Limited (OPEN) on behalf of the Applicant. The LVIA has been undertaken during 2021. The LVIA considers the effects of the Proposed Development on the fabric of the Site, on landscape character and visual amenity, and on the cumulative effects arising from the Proposed Development in-conjunction and in-combination with other wind farms.

9.2.2 This LVIA contains the following sections:

- Introduction;
- Consultation;
- Methodology and Approach;
- Baseline Conditions;
- Potential Effects;
- Mitigation;
- Assessment of Landscape Effects;
- Assessment of Visual Effects;
- Assessment of Cumulative Effects; and
- Summary of Assessment of Effects.

9.2.3 There following five technical appendices to this LVIA, are included in Volume 3 of the EIA Report, and these should be read in conjunction with the LVIA.

- **Appendix 9.A**: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology; a detailed description of the methodology used in the landscape and visual assessment (a summary is provided in Section 9.4 of this chapter).

- **Appendix 9.B**: Assessment of Effects on Cairngorms National Park (CNP); a detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the special landscape qualities of the CNP.
- **Appendix 9.C:** Assessment of Effects on Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area (NSA); a detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the special landscape qualities of the NSA.
- **Appendix 9.D:** Assessment of Effects on Cairngorms Wild Land Area (WLA); a detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the wildness qualities of the WLA.
- **Appendix 9.E:** Assessment of Effects on Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) Criteria; a detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on ten key criteria as set out by THC in their Supplementary Guidance.

Project description

9.2.4 Chapter 3 Project Description of the Proposed Development provides descriptions of the Site, the main components of the Proposed Development, the associated infrastructure and the phases of construction, operation and decommissioning.

9.2.5 The Proposed Development comprises seven wind turbines, which will have a maximum blade tip height of 149.9 m, and a rotor diameter of up to 133 m, which is the largest applicable rotor diameter and, is in this instance, considered to represent the worst case scenario in respect of landscape and visual effects. Access into the Site will be taken from the existing site entrance on the B9007 and will use existing tracks with new and upgraded tracks added to access the Operational Scheme turbines. Other permanent infrastructure will include an onsite substation, control building and maintenance building, and temporary infrastructure will include a construction compound, with the intention being that the borrow pit used for the operational site will be reopened for the construction of the Proposed Development. The Site Layout is shown in **Figure 3.1**.

Project terminology

9.2.6 The terminology used in the LVIA is consistent with that set out in Chapter 1: Introduction of this EIA Report. It refers to the 'Proposed Development' for the Tom na Clach Wind Farm Extension and the 'Operational Scheme' for the existing Tom nan Clach Wind Farm. At points in the LVIA, it is necessary to refer to individual turbines or groups of turbines, in which case terminology refers to the 'Proposed Turbines' for the Proposed Development turbines. The assessment uses the term 'turbines' when referring generally to wind turbines.

9.2.7 Where distances between receptors and the Proposed Development are used in this assessment, they refer to the distance from the closest edge of the receptor to the closest Proposed Turbine, unless otherwise stated.

Project interactions

9.2.8 This LVIA has been carried out in conjunction with the design iteration of the Proposed Development as documented in Chapter 2: EIA Process and has

closely informed the final layout and design. of the Proposed Development. This process is summarised in Section 9.6 below.

Study Area

9.2.9 The LVIA covers a Study Area of 40 km radius, which follows guidance given in Scottish Natural Heritage's 'Visual Representation of Windfarms Version 2.2'[1]. The 40 km Study Area is measured beyond an 'enclosing circle' around the proposed turbines, as shown in **Figure 9.1**. Graphic information, including Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) diagrams, have been produced to cover the 40 km Study Area, as shown in **Figures 9.5a** and **9.6a**. The Study Area is not intended to provide a boundary beyond which the Proposed Development will not be seen, but rather to define the area within which the Proposed Development may have a significant landscape or visual effect. It is considered very unlikely for a significant effect to occur towards the edges of the Study Area, and this is confirmed by the assessment undertaken.

9.2.10 Cumulative effects are assessed with other existing and proposed wind farms within a Study Area of a 40 km radius, in accordance with relevant cumulative assessment guidance. Cumulative Wind Farms are shown in **Figure 9.12**.

9.3.1 The Highland Council (THC) and NatureScot have been consulted during the pre-application stage. The detail of these consultations is presented in these documents. Consultation has led to agreement on the content of the viewpoint list, content of the cumulative wind farm list and requirements for the graphic production, which is to follow THC's 'Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments' (July 2016)[2] and SNH's 'Visual Representation of Wind Farms Version 2.2' (February 2017)[3].

9.3.2 A summary of the consultation responses relevant to this LVIA is presented in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 – Consultation Response

Consultation Response	Applicant Action
Scoping Opinion – The Highland Council – 14th May 2021	
Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance. These should be provided in hard copy. It would be beneficial for THC's volume to be provided in a A3 ring bound folder for ease of use.	Visualisations to both NatureScot and THC Visualisation Standards are provided in hard copy in ring binders.
This assessment should include the expected impact of on-site borrow pits and access roads, despite the fact that the principal structures will be a primary concern.	In Sections 9.8, 9.9, 9.10, 9.11 and 9.12, the assessment considers the effects of on-site borrow pits and access tracks where relevant to the assessment.
We agree that the Study Area for solus	The assessment of landscape and visual

[1] Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Visual Representation of Windfarms Version 2.2
[2] The Highland Council (2017). Visual Representation of Windfarms Version 2.2.
[3] Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.

Consultation Response	Applicant Action
effects should be 40km from the outer most turbines and consider that the assessment of landscape and visual impact should be completed in full across the entire Study Area. THC do not consider it to be acceptable to screen out viewpoints for a full assessment based upon distance. The cumulative Study Area should extend beyond this to 60km.	impact is assessed in those parts of the 40 km Study Area where there is potential for a significant effect to arise. All viewpoints have been assessed in detail regardless of their distance from the Proposed Development. While a cumulative search out to a 60 km radius has been included at the request of the consultees, the potential for significant cumulative effects to occur will be limited.
There are a number of similar applications in this area which are yet to be determined / concluded in the vicinity of this application, the status of these may require to be updated beyond figure 7.2 dependent on progress with other schemes in the area, further if the Study Areas is extended as per our recommendation above a number of schemes around Loch Ness will require to be considered.	All relevant cumulative wind farms have been considered in the cumulative assessment presented in Section 9.12.
As far as possible, the viewpoints should correspond with the viewpoints used for existing wind energy schemes within the area, including the original scheme.	The viewpoints correspond with the viewpoints used in the assessment of the Operational Scheme and with continuity with the viewpoints used for other nearby wind farms.
It would be useful to include a comparative ZTV between the consented scheme and the proposed scheme.	A comparative ZTV between the Operational Scheme and the Proposed Development is shown in **Figure 9.13**.
Community Councils may request additional viewpoints and it would be recommended that any pre-application discussions with the local community, and associated reporting on consultation undertaken, take this into account.	No additional viewpoints have been requested by the Community Councils.
The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints shall be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information. For example, it should be clear that the VP has been chosen for landscape assessment, or visual impact assessment, or cumulative assessment, or sequential assessment, or to show a representative view or for assessment of impact on designated sites, communities or individual properties.	The purpose of the viewpoints is presented in Table 9.3 and described in the individual viewpoint assessments in Section 9.10.
When assessing the impact on recreational routes please ensure that all core paths, the national cycle network, long distance trails are assessed.	All recreational routes are assessed where there is potential for a significant effect to arise. The assessments of these recreational routes are presented in Section 9.11.
We expect an assessment of the proposal against the criterion set out in	An assessment against the criterion set out in THC's OWESG is presented in **Appendix**

Consultation Response	Applicant Action
the Council's OWESG to be included within the LVIA chapter of the EIAR.	**9.E**.
Further, in relation to impacts on areas of Wild Land (as identified by NatureScot in 2014), an assessment on the impacts of the qualities of Wild Land requires to be undertaken. The methodology and scope for this assessment should be agreed with THC and NatureScot. Further an assessment of the proposals impact on the special qualities of the Special Landscape Areas in vicinity of the site must be undertaken. Given the scale of the proposals there may now be visibility of the scheme within National Scenic Areas and the Cairngorms National Park. Assessments of the proposal against impacts on these designations must be undertaken.	A detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the Cairngorms National Park, Cairngorms National Scenic Area and Cairngorms WLA is presented in Appendices **9.B**, **9.C** and **9.D** respectively. A detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Special Landscape Area is presented in Section 9.9. These assessments follow the relevant guidance and make reference to the relevant citations produced by NatureScot.
It is considered that Residential Visual Amenity should be scoped in to the EIAR.	In respect of defining the extent of the Study Area, TGN 02/19 gives the following advice (Paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7): *"Over the last few years a large number of RVAAs have been prepared, especially relating to wind energy proposals. Local Planning Authorities (LPA) have frequently requested 'Study Areas' of up to 3 or even 5 km. The logic for these (exceptionally) large Study Areas was based on certain findings of LVIAs which identified significant visual effects from 'settlements' or from clusters of residential properties within this range. This fails to recognise that RVAA is a stage beyond LVIA. Consequently, many RVAAs, including those of windfarms with large turbines (150m and taller), have included disproportionately extensive Study Areas incorporating too many properties. This appears to largely be based on the misconception that if a significant effect has been identified in the LVIA adjacent to a property at 2.5 km it will also potentially lead to reaching the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold.* *When assessing relatively conspicuous structures such as wind turbines, and depending on local landscape characteristics, a preliminary Study Area of approximately 1.5 to 2 km radius may initially be appropriate in order to begin identifying properties to include in a RVAA."* There are no properties within a 2 km radius of the Proposed Development. While there are two properties within a 3 km radius, neither of these will be affected by visibility of the Proposed Development. In

Consultation Response	Applicant Action
	line with this best practice guidance, an RVAA has not been produced for this project.
Scoping Opinion – NatureScot 14th May 2021	
Whilst the scoping report identifies six key constraints, our own advice on this proposal will be focused on issues we consider may be of national interest, in this case being the effects on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the Cairngorms National Park.	A full assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park is presented in **Appendix 9.B**.
The comparative ZTV in Figure 7.7 shows the extent of visibility of the proposed development in comparison with that of the operational wind farm. This indicates that whilst there is a very similar visibility pattern, there would be some additional visibility of the proposed turbines (shown in yellow) on the north and east facing slopes within the Park at distances varying from around 15 and 30km. For most of these areas between 1 – 4 turbines would tend to be seen (Figure 7.3) therefore it would be useful to see wireframes from some of these locations, to help better understand if re-siting these turbines could reduce this additional visibility and if a viewpoint would be helpful.	Wirelines from three representative viewpoint locations have been provided to NatureScot, THC and JMT. These all show very limited visibility of the Proposed Development and, as such, no additional viewpoints have been included in the assessment. The wirelines are presented in **Figures 9.58** to **9.60**.
We are pleased to note that the effect of the proposed development on the Cairngorms National Park will be fully assessed in the LVIA, making reference to the SLQs and following the draft 'Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities' (2018). A copy of this guidance is attached for information. We advise that the assessor shares with us a draft list of the SLQs to be included for assessment, so as to refine and agree the scope ahead of submission.	Draft list of SLQs to be included in the assessment have been shared with NatureScot.
Where there are significant adverse effects on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park this may result in us objecting to a proposal.	Noted.
In order for us to provide accurate and helpful advice we request that a basemap is provided, ideally with a 1:50k OS backdrop, at a resolution where we can identify key features and locations as well as the National Park	Study Area plan including ZTV, landscape designations, WLA and viewpoints has been provided to NatureScot, THC and JMT on a 1:50K OS base map.

Consultation Response	Applicant Action
boundary.	
Viewpoints 3, 4 and 9 within the Park are all elevated locations where it appears that the existing wind farm will be visible. We advise that further consideration is given to additional viewpoints within the Park where the proposal is seen and the existing wind farm is not, so that the additional effects on the SLQs of the Park can be better understood.	Consideration has been given to additional viewpoints where the Proposed Development is visible, but the Operational Scheme is not. Wirelines in these areas have shown very limited visibility and, as such, do not warrant inclusion as viewpoints. Wirelines have been included in **Figures 9.58** to **9.60** to demonstrate the limited visibility.
It is clear from the cumulative basemap (Figure 7.2) that there is a high degree of interest in wind energy development in this general area. Our current guidance on assessing cumulative effects should be followed.	NatureScot's current guidance is presented in Scottish Natural Heritage's 2012 publication *'Assessing the cumulative impact of onshore wind energy developments'* which is applied and referenced in the cumulative assessment in Section 9.12.
It is our understanding that there will not be a requirement for visible aviation lighting on the turbines. Should this change and lighting become a requirement, we would expect to be consulted on this aspect of the proposal as there may be significant landscape and visual effects arising.	No aviation lighting is required other than the MOD standard aviation safety lighting which is only visible to people wearing night vision goggles. There is no need, therefore, to assess night lighting in the LVIA.
Scoping Opinion - John Muir Trust 28th April 2021	
On reading the report we were surprised to note that an assessment of impacts on the two Wild Land Areas (WLAs) within the Study Area was being scoped out. As both WLAs are within the 40km Study Area and subject to ZTV, we would have expected potential impacts to be assessed so that the combined effect of the operational Tom nan Clach wind farm plus the proposed extension could be taken into account.	The Cairngorms WLA has been assessed in detail despite the limited potential for significant effects on its wildness qualities to arise. The very limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible across the Monadhliath WLA, combined with the greater influence from the series of intervening operational wind farms makes the likelihood of significant effects to arise, even more limited. The wireline from Carn Dub hic an Deior illustrates this position. On this basis a detailed assessment of the Monadhliath WLA has been scoped out of the assessment.
E-mail Correspondence - John Muir Trust 28th April 2021	
"Thank you very much for this follow-up and for considering our comments. I've read the summary table and understand the reasoning for the approach that's being taken. We're grateful that you're now going to be assessing impacts on the Cairngorms WLA and appreciate the explanation for not including an impact assessment for the Monadhliath WLA in	Noted and advice followed in the assessment.

Consultation Response	Applicant Action
the LVIA."	
E-mail Correspondence - NatureScot 22nd August 2021	
"We can confirm that we are content that visuals are not required from these additional viewpoints within the CNP and we would be content with you providing wirelines only for these additional locations. *Our colleagues at the National Park said it would be really helpful if the following might be possible to include in the LVIA:* *For the site location, layout and ZTV figures to have the National Park boundary clearly marked on them.* *A cumulative ZTV showing where there is visibility of all other existing and consented wind farms and where there is visibility of the proposed extension (for example, three colours on one ZTV showing existing/consented, existing consented and extension, extension only) on the same figure."*	The additional viewpoints are presented as wirelines in **Figures 9.58** to **9.60**. All plans have the CNP boundary marked on. An additional cumulative CTV has been included in **Figure 9.14** which illustrates the Proposed Development in conjunction with all operational and consented cumulative wind farms.

9.4.1 This section provides a summary of the methodology used to carry out the LVIA, with the full methodology described in **Appendix 9.A**. This methodology has been specifically devised by OPEN for the assessment of wind farms and complies with "Guidelines for the Assessment of Landscape and Visual Impacts: Third Edition" (GLVIA3)[4]. In addition to GLVIA3, the following sources have been used in the formulation of the assessment methodology and the presentation of graphics:

- The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.
- The Highland Council (2016). Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Visual Representation of Wind Farms Guidance – Version 2.2.
- Landscape Institute (2019). Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals;
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2012). Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments.

[4] The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition. Routeledge

- Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). 'The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas: Commissioned Report No. 374'
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). 'The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park: Commissioned Report N0.375'
- Cairngorms National Park (2017). 'Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022'
- The Highland Council (2011). 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas'.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2012). 'Assessing the cumulative impact of onshore wind energy developments'.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2018). 'Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities' Working Draft and Annexes.
- Land Use Consultants on behalf of SNH and the Countryside Agency (2002). Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Siting and Designing of Windfarms in the Landscape: Version 3a.
- NatureScot (2020). Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas – technical guidance.'

Effects to be assessed

9.4.2 The LVIA identifies the effects that the Proposed Development will have on landscape character and visual amenity. For the purpose of the assessment, the potential effects on landscape and visual receptors are grouped into the following five categories.

Effects on physical elements

9.4.3 Physical effects are restricted to the area within the Proposed Development site boundary and are the direct effects on the existing fabric of the Site, such as the removal of forestry and alteration to ground cover. This category of effects is made up of landscape elements, which are the components of the landscape, such as heather moorland, which may be directly and physically affected by the Proposed Development.

Effects on landscape character

9.4.4 Landscape character is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and the way that this pattern is perceived. Effects on landscape character arise either through the introduction of new elements that physically alter this pattern of elements, or through visibility of the Proposed Development, which may alter the way in which the pattern of elements is perceived. This category of effects is made up of landscape character receptors, which fall into two groups; landscape character areas and planning related landscape designations.

Effects on wild land

9.4.5 The assessment of effects on wild land is allied closely to effects on landscape character and consists of two parts: firstly, the identification of the extent and condition of wild land in the vicinity of the Proposed Development based on NatureScot's published Wild Land Areas; and secondly, the assessment of the effect that the Proposed Development will have on the Wild Land Areas. The assessment of Wild Land Areas follows the methodology set out in NatureScot's 'Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas – technical guidance'[5].

Effects on visual receptors

9.4.6 The assessment of effects on visual receptors is an assessment of how the introduction of the Proposed Development will affect the views of people throughout the Study Area. The assessment of effects on visual receptors considers the effects that the Proposed Development will have on people's views from notable settlements, roads, railways, paths and other features and attractions found throughout the Study Area. The assessment uses viewpoints to represent the wider visual amenity of residents, road and rail-users, walkers and workers.

Cumulative effects

9.4.7 Cumulative effects arise where the Study Areas for two or more wind farms overlap so that both of the wind farms are experienced at proximity where they may have a greater incremental effect, or where wind farms may combine to have a sequential effect, irrespective of any overlap in Study Areas. In NatureScot guidance, cumulative effects are described as follows 'Cumulative impacts can be defined as the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments taken together.' In this LVIA, both in-conjunction and in-combination effects are assessed in respect of the cumulative context. When assessing in-conjunction effects, it is the incremental effect of the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative situation that is being assessed. When assessing in-combination effects, it is the overall cumulative effect of wind farms, including the Proposed Development, that is being assessed.

9.4.8 In accordance with NatureScot Guidance, the cumulative assessment evaluates the likely effects that will arise from the addition of the Proposed Development in-conjunction and in-combination with the baseline windfarms and cumulative wind farm scenarios.

9.4.9 A significant cumulative effect will occur where the additional effect of the Proposed Development with other existing and/or proposed wind farms will result in a landscape character or view that is defined by the presence of more than one wind farm and is characterised primarily by wind farms. It should be noted that even if the Proposed Development itself is assessed to have a significant effect on a landscape or visual receptor, it does not necessarily follow that the cumulative effect will also be significant.

[5] NatureScot (2020). 'Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas – technical guidance'

9.4.10 To assist the decision maker, the assessment also provides an overview of the likely combined cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in-combination with relevant operational and consented windfarms. The purpose of this is to consider whether the resulting pattern of development (including the Proposed Development) will result in the redefinition of landscape character or visual receptors. For example, if the existing landscape character displays a 'landscape with windfarms' characteristic, where windfarms are one of a number of defining characteristics, the assessment will consider whether this may be redefined as a 'wind farm landscape' when the addition of the Proposed Development means wind turbines become the most prevalent defining characteristic of the landscape. The in-combination cumulative assessment considers the suitability of the receiving landscapes for wind farm development, in terms of their scale, depth and shape, as well as their character. The assessment has regard to factors such as the relationship of the combination of wind farms to landscape character types, the existing pattern of wind farm development and the overall influence of the ZTV. These considerations assist in reaching an informed opinion as to the extent and nature of any combined cumulative effects.

Significance of the effects

9.4.11 The objective of the assessment of the Proposed Development is to predict the significant effects on the landscape and visual resource. In accordance with The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations)[6], the LVIA effects are assessed to be either significant or not significant. The LVIA does not define intermediate levels of significance as the Regulations do not provide for these.

9.4.12 The significance of effects is assessed through a combination of two considerations – the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of change that will result from the Proposed Development. In accordance with the Landscape Institute's GLVIA3[7], OPEN's methodology requires the application of professional judgement. Although it is not reliant on the use of a matrix, the matrix presented in Table 9.2 has been included to illustrate how combinations of the ratings for sensitivity and magnitude of change can give rise to significant effects, as well as to give an understanding of the threshold at which significant effects may arise.

Table 9.2 – Illustrative Matrix of Significant Effects

Magnitude **Sensitivity**	**High**	**Medium-high**	**Medium**	**Medium-low**	**Low**	**Negligible**
High	significant	significant	significant	Significant / not significant	not significant	not significant

[6] Scottish Government (2017). Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

[7] The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition. Routeledge.

Magnitude Sensitivity	High	Medium-high	Medium	Medium-low	Low	Negligible
Medium-high	significant	significant	Significant / not significant	Significant / not significant	not significant	not significant
Medium	significant	Significant / not significant	Significant / not significant	not significant	not significant	not significant
Medium-low	Significant / not significant	Significant / not significant	not significant	not significant	not significant	not significant
Low	Significant / not significant	not significant	not significant	not significant	not significant	not significant

9.4.13 Effects that are assessed within the darker grey boxes in the matrix are significant in terms of the requirements of the EIA Regulations. Those effects that are assessed within the light grey boxes may be significant, or not significant, depending on the specific factors and effect that is assessed in respect of a particular landscape or visual receptor. Those effects that are assessed within the white boxes are not significant. In accordance with GLVIA3, experienced professional judgement is applied to the assessment of all effects and reasoned justification is presented in respect of the findings of each case.

Sensitivity

9.4.14 Sensitivity is an expression of the ability of a landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the Proposed Development. The sensitivity is determined through a combination of the value of the receptor, and the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development.

9.4.15 The sensitivity of a landscape character receptor is an expression of its ability to accommodate the Proposed Development as part of its own character or as part of the visual setting or context to the character receptor. This is dependent on the value of the landscape receptor and its susceptibility to change.

9.4.16 The sensitivity of views and visual receptors is determined by a combination of the value of the view and the susceptibility of the viewer or visual receptor to the Proposed Development.

9.4.17 Levels of sensitivity - high, medium-high, medium, medium-low, low, and negligible, are applied in order that the judgement used in the process of assessment is made clear. The criteria used to determine sensitivity differ for the effects on landscape receptors and visual receptors, as well as the cumulative effects on both. These criteria are explained in full in **Appendix 9.A**.

Magnitude of change

9.4.18 Magnitude of change is an expression of the extent of the effect on the landscape and visual receptors that will result from the introduction of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change is assessed in terms of the size and scale of the effect and the geographical extent of the area influenced.

9.4.19 Levels of magnitude of change - high, medium-high, medium, medium-low and low, are applied in order that the judgement used in the process of assessment is made clear. The criteria used to determine magnitude of change differ for the effects on landscape receptors and visual receptors, as well as the cumulative effects on both. These criteria are explained in full in **Appendix 9.A**.

Nature of the effects

9.4.20 In relation to many forms of development, the LVIA will identify 'beneficial' and 'adverse' effects by assessing these under the term 'Nature of Effect'. The landscape and visual effects of wind farms are difficult to categorise in either of these brackets as, unlike other disciplines, there are no definitive criteria by which the effects of wind farms can be measured as being categorically 'beneficial' or 'adverse'. In some disciplines, such as noise or ecology, it is possible to quantify the effect of a wind farm in numeric terms, by objectively identifying or quantifying the proportion of a receptor that is affected by the Proposed Development and assessing the nature of that effect in justifiable terms. However, this is not the case in relation to landscape and visual effects, where the approach combines quantitative and qualitative assessment.

9.4.21 It is evident from existing research and publications on public attitudes to wind farms, that public opinion nationally towards wind farms is diverse and that some observers perceive the visual effects of a wind farm as beneficial or neutral, while others may perceive the same effects as adverse. This varied perception often depends on the type of effect, the perception/opinion of the observer and whether the public attitudes surveyed are pre or post construction.

9.4.22 The attribution of 'beneficial' and 'adverse' nature of effects is used inconsistently by landscape professionals when preparing LVIAs for wind farms and there is not a consensus of opinion that supports its use for wind farm assessments. Generally, in the development of 'new' wind farms, a precautionary approach is adopted by OPEN, which assumes that significant landscape and visual effects will be weighed on the adverse side of the planning balance. Beneficial effects may, however, arise in certain situations. Judgements on the nature of effect are based on professional experience and reasoned opinion informed by best practice guidance. Unless it is stated otherwise, the effects considered in this assessment are considered to be adverse in order that a worst-case assessment is represented.

Duration and reversibility

9.4.23 The effects of the Proposed Development are of variable duration, and are assessed as short-term or long-term, and permanent or temporary/reversible. It is proposed that the operational life of the wind farm will be 40 years. The

turbines and turbine foundations, site access tracks and substation will be apparent during this time. These effects are considered to be long-term.

9.4.24 Other infrastructure and operations, such as the construction processes and plant, the construction compound, and lay down areas, will be apparent only during the initial period of the Proposed Development and are considered to be short-term effects. The excavation and use of the borrow pits will also be short-term. At the end of the construction process, they will be restored, although the altered ground profile may remain evident in the long-term.

9.4.25 The reversibility of effects is variable. While the major effects on the landscape and visual resource, which result from the presence of the turbines are long-term, they are also reversible as the turbines will be removed on decommissioning. The effects that will occur during the construction period and decommissioning of the Proposed Development, from the use of tall cranes and heavy machinery, are temporary.

9.4.26 Permanent effects include the physical removal of landscape elements required for the construction of the Proposed Development, and any residual effects that remain following decommissioning. Underground cabling will remain but will have no permanent landscape and visual effects. The access tracks may be retained at the request of the landowner or otherwise they will be re-graded and local vegetation reinstated from the seed bank material. Turbine foundations will be left in-situ, below ground, and have no residual landscape and visual effects following the restoration of ground cover during decommissioning. In order to avoid repetition, the duration and reversibility of effects are not reiterated throughout the assessment.

9.4.27 Scottish Planning Policy[8] at paragraph 170 states "Areas identified for wind farms should be suitable for use in perpetuity. Consents may be time-limited, but wind farms should nevertheless be sited and designed to ensure impacts are minimised and to protect an acceptable level of amenity for adjacent communities." Despite the temporary nature of the consent being sought, the assessment has considered the effects of the Proposed Development as if the consent were in perpetuity.

Graphic Production

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

9.4.28 The ZTVs have been generated using GIS software (ESRI ArcGIS Version 10.5) to demonstrate the number of wind turbines that may theoretically be seen from any point in the Study Area. The hub height ZTV shows the number of wind turbine hubs of the Proposed Development theoretically visible in the Study Area. When used in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV, the hub height ZTV provides an indication of the degree to which the wind turbines may be visible.

9.4.29 There are limitations in this theoretical production, and these should be considered in the interpretation and use of the ZTV:

[8] Scottish Government, (2020). Scottish Planning Policy.

- The ZTV illustrates the 'bare ground' situation, and does not take into account the screening effects of vegetation, buildings, or other local features that may prevent or reduce visibility;
- The ZTVs are based on theoretical visibility from 2m above ground level;
- All ZTVs are based on Ordnance Survey (OS) Terrain 5 Digital Terrain Model (DTM). Due to the extensive size of the resulting dataset, and to ensure correlation with wireline outputs, the data has been interpolated to a 10m grid resolution;
- The Blade Tip ZTV does not indicate the decrease in visibility that occurs with increased distance from the Proposed Development. The nature of what is visible from 3 km away will differ markedly from what is visible from 10 km away, although both are indicated on the Blade Tip ZTV as having the same level of visibility; and
- There is a wide range of variation within the visibility shown on the ZTV, for example, an area shown on the blade tip ZTV as having visibility of five turbines may gain views of the smallest extremity of blade tips, or of five full turbines. This can make a considerable difference in the effects of the Proposed Development on that area. The hub height ZTV should be used in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV to provide an indication of the degree to which the wind turbines are visible.

9.4.30 These limitations mean that while the ZTVs are used as a starting point in the assessment, providing an indication of where the Proposed Development will theoretically be visible, the information drawn from the ZTV is checked with wirelines and in the field, to ensure that the assessment conclusions represent the visibility of the Proposed Development reasonably accurately.

9.4.31 The LVIA includes a Horizontal Angle ZTV, presented in **Figure 9.7**. This has been generated using Arcmap 10.5 software and the same data as the other ZTVs. The Horizontal Angle ZTV shows in degrees the horizontal field of view that may be affected by views of the Proposed Development and serves to provide an indication of the degree to which the magnitude of potential impact may reduce with increased distance from the wind farm. There may be small discrepancies between the areas affected by theoretical visibility when compared with the Blade Tip ZTV. These occur around the edges of the plotted areas where the field of view that may be affected by theoretical visibility of one small blade tip in the ZTV is not picked up by the horizontal angle ZTV. This appears to be as a result of the different analytical processes used by the software to generate this information. This discrepancy is not considered material. As with the Blade Tip ZTV analysis, the Horizontal Angle ZTV is a helpful starting point for assessment.

Visualisations

9.4.32 The viewpoint assessment is illustrated by a range of visualisations, including photographs and photomontages, which accord with SNH's Visual Representation of Wind Farms Version 2.2 (SNH, 2017)[9] and THC Visualisation

[9] Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.

Standards (THC, 2016)[10]. Visualisations of wind farms have a number of limitations when using them to form a judgement on a wind farm proposal. These include:

- A visualisation can never show exactly what the wind farm will look like in reality due to factors such as: different lighting, weather and seasonal conditions, which vary through time and the resolution of the image;
- The images provided give a reasonable impression of the scale of the wind turbines and the distance to them, but can never be 100% accurate;
- A static image cannot convey wind turbine movement, or lighting from the sun on the wind turbines blades as they move;
- The viewpoints illustrated are representative of views in the area, but cannot represent visibility at all locations;
- To form the best impression of the effects of the wind farm proposal these images are best viewed at the viewpoint location shown; and
- The visualisations must be printed at the right size to be viewed properly (A1 width or as otherwise specified) and viewed at a comfortable viewing distance.

9.4.33 The photographs used to produce the photomontages have been taken using Canon EOS 5D and 6D Digital SLR cameras, with a fixed lens and a full-frame (35 mm negative size) sensor. The photographs are taken on a tripod with a pano-head at a height of approximately 1.5m above ground.

9.4.34 To create the baseline panorama, the frames are individually cylindrically projected and then digitally joined to create a fully cylindrically projected panorama using PTGui software. This process avoids the wide-angle effect that would result should these frames be arranged in a perspective projection, whereby the image is not faceted to allow for the cylindrical nature of the full 360-degree view but appears essentially as a flat plane. Tonal alterations are made using Adobe software to create an even range of tones across the photographs once joined. Sections of these panoramas are then cropped and planar projected using PTGui software. These are used in the creation of the 53.5-degree field of view photomontages.

9.4.35 Wireline representations that illustrate the wind turbines set within a computer-generated image of the landform are used in the assessment to predict theoretical appearance of the wind turbines. These are produced with Resoft WindFarm software and are based on a terrain model using OS Terrain 5. Where descriptions within the assessment identify the numbers of wind turbines visible this refers to the illustrations generated and therefore the reality may differ to a degree from these impressions.

9.4.36 Photomontages have been produced for a number of agreed viewpoints, again using Resoft WindFarm software, to provide a more realistic image of the appearance of the Proposed Development. Photomontages show the wind turbines.

[10] The Highland Council (2017). Visual Representation of Windfarms Version 2.2.

9.4.37 The baseline photographs and cumulative wireline visualisations shown for each viewpoint cover a 90-degree field of view (or in some cases, up to 360-degree), which accords with NatureScot guidance. These are cylindrically projected images and provide landscape and visual context only.

9.4.38 The 53.5 and 63.5-degree field of view photographs, wirelines and photomontages are prepared using a planar projected image and should be viewed flat at a comfortable arm's length. These images are each printed on paper 841 x 297 mm (half A1), which provides for a relatively large-scale image.

9.4.39 In the wirelines, the turbines are shown with the central wind turbines facing the viewer directly, with the full rotor diameter visible at its tallest extent. In the photomontages, the wind turbine rotors are shown with a random appearance with the central wind turbines facing the viewer directly.

9.4.40 Single frame images have been prepared for some viewpoints at the request of THC. These show a photograph and wireline or a photomontage. The photographs and photomontages are produced at a standard size from a single 50mm fixed lens photographic image (39.6-degree field of view) recalibrated to show a 75mm focal length (27-degree field of view) image. The wirelines have been generated to match this size.

9.4.41 Where THC requests planar panoramas for use in its single frame panoramic viewer, these have a vertical field of view of a focal length of 75 mm (18 degrees field of view), based on a recalibration of the 50mm single frame.

9.4.42 The photographs and other graphic material such as wirelines and photomontages used in this 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. The assessments are carried out from observations in the field and, therefore, may include elements that are not visible in the photographs.

9.5.1 The baseline section of the LVIA records the existing conditions of the Study Area. Establishing a baseline helps to gain an understanding of what makes the landscape distinctive, what its important components or characteristics are, and how it is changing prior to the introduction of the Proposed Development.

9.5.2 The baseline conditions are presented under the following headings:

- Landscape character;
- Landscape designations and Wild Land Areas;
- Visual receptors and views; and
- Cumulative wind farm developments.

9.5.3 Operational and under construction wind farms are regarded as part of the baseline landscape character and visual amenity of the area, such that any changes resulting from the Proposed Development are assessed within this context.

Landscape Character

Landscape Character Assessments

9.5.4 Landscape character information, prepared by, or on behalf of NatureScot, forms the basis of the characterisation of the Study Area. NatureScot has recently reviewed and updated the 30 original Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs), produced to cover the whole of Scotland during the 1990s, by creating a single data set in a digital version[11]. Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are defined as *"tracts of countryside …which have a unity of character due to particular combinations of landform and landcover and a consistent and distinct pattern of constituent elements."* Each LCT shares distinct characteristics that are typical of that landscape. In respect of the Study Area, the LCTs presented in the updated dataset, forms the basis of the assessment.

9.5.5 The LCTs located within the 40 km Study Area, are shown in **Figure 9.2** and overlaid with the blade tip ZTV in **Figure 9.8**. Those LCTs with potential to be significantly affected are assessed in detail in Section 9.8 of this LVIA. The remaining LCTs which do not have potential to undergo significant effects, are discounted from the detailed assessment. The LCTs assessed in detail all lie within a 20 km radius of the Proposed Development. This reduced extent reflects the localised extent over which significant effects on landscape character will occur owing to the existing presence and influence of the Operational Scheme.

9.5.6 Many of the LCTs are extensive, often covering several areas that are geographically separate, as illustrated in **Figure 9.2**. The effects of the Proposed Development can vary widely across a single LCT. Where LCTs occur more than once, they are given names that associate them with their local geographical location. Where the effects of the Proposed Development vary across an LCU the extent of these different effects have been geographically defined in the assessment.

9.5.7 The landscape character assessments presented in the NatureScot dataset have been used as a basis for further, refined studies of landscape character. The Cairngorms National Park Authority[12] has identified and described 78 landscape character areas within the straths and glens of the National Park. These provide a detailed level of landscape classification within the Cairngorms National Park.

9.5.8 The LCAs produced by SNH have also been used as a basis for landscape capacity studies for wind farm development by the Moray Council and parts of the Highland Council Region. These refine the landscape classification and, in some cases, sub-divide the existing LCTs into smaller units. The Moray Region updates[13] to the original LCAs are used in the assessment of effects on landscape character. In respect of The Highland Council region, no updates have been prepared for the areas covered by the Study Area.

[11]NatureScot (2020). Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland. Available at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/landscape-character-assessment-scotland

[12] Cairngorms National Park (2009). Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment.

[13] Alison Grant and Carol Anderson (2012). Moray Wind Energy Landscape Capacity Study.

9.5.9 Those LCTs which have potential to undergo significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development, and which require to be assessed in detail, are as follows:

- Open Rolling Upland –Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava;
- Rolling Uplands – Monadhliath;
- Uplands Areas – The Strathdearn Hills
- Narrow Wooded Valley – River Findhorn; and
- Upland Valleys – River Findhorn.

9.5.10 Section 9.8: Assessment of Landscape Effects, considers the effects of the Proposed Development on the specific characteristics of each of these LCTs.

9.5.11 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.

Landscape Designations and Wild Land Areas

9.5.12 Landscape designations are used, along with LCTs, in the assessment of effects on landscape character. Those landscape designations which occur in the Study Area include the Cairngorms National Park (CNP), National Scenic Areas (NSAs), Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs), and Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs).

9.5.13 The location and extent of the designated landscapes are illustrated in **Figure 9.3** and in conjunction with the ZTV in **Figure 9.9**. The site of the Proposed Development is not covered by any known international or national landscape-related planning designations, but is situated within the regional Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA, a local designation.

9.5.14 A preliminary assessment has been carried out which identifies those areas which have potential to give rise to significant effects and which require to be assessed in detail, and are as follows:

- Cairngorms National Park (CNP);
- Cairngorms NSA;
- Cairngorms WLA; and
- Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA.

9.5.15 In the assessment of each designated or wild land area, reference is made to the assessment of the constituent LCTs which occur within the designated or wild land area in order to ensure consistency.

Cairngorms National Park (CNP)

9.5.16 The Cairngorms National Park is the largest National Park in Britain. It covers a large part of the north-east Highlands, extending from Grantown-on-Spey in the north to the Angus Glens in the south, from Ballater in the east to

Dalwhinnie and Drumochter in the west. The Park is 3,800 square kilometres in size and contains 52 summits over 900 m.

9.5.17 The north-western part of the CNP is situated across the south-east of the Study Area. The Park extends further south and east to encompass a much wider area. While the Park is centred on the Mountain Massif of the Cairngorms, it extends much further to include the wide variety of surrounding uplands, glens and straths.

9.5.18 The Proposed Development is located approximately 5 km from the closest part of the CNP boundary and consequently will be visible from parts of the CNP. In **Appendix 9.B**, the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against the aims and key strategic objectives of the CNP Authority and in particular the SLQs as set out in SNH's report of 2010[14] and referred to in the CNP Authority's scoping opinion. This assessment follows guidance set out in SNH's 'Methodology - Assessing the impacts on Special Landscape Qualities – Working Draft 11' (2018).

Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area

9.5.19 NSAs are areas of land considered to be important on a national level and are designated by SNH. The Cairngorm Mountains NSA lies to the south of the Study Area and is situated within the Cairngorms National Park. Similar to the CNP, the NSA centres on the Mountain Massif of the Cairngorm Mountains and extends over a wider area to the south and east although not nearly as extensive as the CNP boundary.

9.5.20 Although the Cairngorm Mountains NSA is more than 20 km from the closest proposed turbine, the scale of the Proposed Development combined with the sensitivity of the NSA means that there is the potential for significant effects to arise. In **Appendix 9.C**, the effects of the Proposed Development are assessed against the special qualities of the National Scenic Areas as set out in SNH's report of 2010. This assessment follows guidance set out in SNH's 'Methodology - Assessing the impacts on Special Landscape Qualities – Working Draft 11' (2018)[15].

Wild Land Areas (WLAs)

9.5.21 WLA is a mapped interest that has been defined by NatureScot.

9.5.22 While no part of the application site is located within a Wild Land Area (WLA), there are two WLA's within the Study Area, namely the Cairngorms WLA and Monadhliath WLA. The Monadhliath WLA lies at a range of approximately 15 km to the south-west of the Proposed Development, and the Cairngorms WLA which covers a large part of the Cairngorm Mountains NSA and lies at a range of approximately 23 km to the south-east.

9.5.23 The WLAs, shown in conjunction with the preliminary ZTV in **Figure 9.9**, illustrates the very limited extent of visibility across the Monadhliath WLA. While visibility is shown to be more continuous along the northern ridgeline of the Cairngorms WLA, the Proposed Development will be seen from distances of

[14] Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). The Special Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park.

[15] Scottish Natural Heritage (2018). Methodology - Assessing the impacts on Special Landscape Qualities – Working Draft 11.

beyond 25 km and associated with the existing 13 turbines of the Operational Scheme.

9.5.24 The ZTV in **Figure 9.9** illustrates the extent to which the Proposed Development will be theoretically visible across the two WLAs, with very limited visibility across the Monadhliath WLA and more continuous visibility along the northern ridgeline of the Cairngorms WLA, albeit at a minimum distance of 25 km and associated with the existing 13 turbines of the Operational Scheme. Through the scoping process, it has been agreed with THC and NatureScot that a full assessment of the effects on Cairngorms WLA be carried out as part of the LVIA. It has also been agreed that the Monadhliath WLA be scoped out of the LVIA, as there will be limited potential for a significant effect to arise, owing to a combination of its separation distance from the Proposed Development, the limited extents and levels to which the Proposed Development will be visible, and the existing influence from operational wind farms, closer to the WLAs than the Proposed Development.

9.5.25 The effects of the Proposed Development on the wildness qualities of the Cairngorms WLA are assessed in detail in **Appendix 9.D** of the LVIA, following guidance set out in NatureScot's 'Assessing Impacts on Wild Land technical guidance' (2020)[16] and with reference to SNH's 'Description of Wild Land Areas' (2017)[17].

Special Landscape Areas

9.5.26 SLAs are the local designation used by The Highland Council. While three occur in the Study Area, it is the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA in which the Proposed Development is located that is assessed in detail. This SLA covers the *Open Rolling Uplands, Narrow Wooded Valleys* and *Upland Valleys* LCTs, which lie to the immediate north of the CNP, such that the boundaries mostly meet.

9.5.27 The 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas'[18] provides detailed citations for each of the 27 SLAs which occur across the Highland Region; for each SLA summarising "*its key landscape and visual characteristics, the special qualities for which it is valued, its key sensitivities to landscape change, and possible measures for its enhancement".* It is the effect of the Proposed Development on these special qualities which is considered in the assessment in Section 9.8 of this LVIA.

<u>Principal Visual Receptors</u>

9.5.28 There are a number of principal visual receptors which represent people who may be living in settlements, travelling along roads, railways or paths or visiting attractions in the Study Area. These have been considered in the assessment, as views from them may be affected by the Proposed Development. It is not possible to consider every potential visual receptor in the Study Area due to the geographical extent that it covers. The assessment, therefore, concentrates on the 'principal' visual receptors that may gain

[16] NatureScot (2020). Assessing Impacts on Wild Land technical guidance.
[17] Scottish Natural Heritage (2017). Description of Wild Land Areas'
[18] The Highland Council (2011). Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas.

visibility of the Proposed Development. The principal visual receptors are shown in **Figure 9.4** and in conjunction with the ZTV in **Figure 9.10**.

9.5.29 Within the Study Area, the pattern of roads and settlements is largely determined by landform. The Proposed Development lies in an area of upland landscapes. These form a band across the Study Area from the north-east to the south-west. In this band, there are relatively few roads and little settlement. The four roads which cross the area, include the A9(T), the A939 and A940 and the B9007 and all mostly follow valley courses to avoid the higher land. Settlement in this upland area is relatively sparse, mainly accessed from these roads, or minor roads or tracks off them.

9.5.30 Parallel to this band of uplands, to both the north-west and south-east, lie lower-lying landscapes where there is a greater frequency of roads and settlements. To the north-west lies Inverness, and the roads and settlements extend from here along the northern coast creating a settled character to the agricultural landscape. To the south-east lies a series of settlements associated with the A9 and the Spey Valley.

Settlements

9.5.31 The Proposed Development lies within an upland area where settlement is sparse and limited to isolated properties in occasional intermediate glens and straths. Only a few isolated properties, accessed by tracks, occur within the first 5 km radius. In the 5 to 10 km radius, some small villages and hamlets occur along the A9 (T) to the south-west of the Proposed Development.

9.5.32 Beyond the 10 km radius, larger settlements occur, with Inverness set at 20 km to the north-west and Nairn at 20 km to the north, with a series of small settlements occurring along the adjoining route corridors in-between. In the lower-lying agricultural land to the north and north-east of the Proposed Development a network of small villages occurs within the rural landscape.

9.5.33 A further concentration of settlements occurs to the south between Kingussie and Aviemore, and then along the Spey valley between Boat of Garten and Bridge of Avon to the south-east. These are relatively small settlements largely contained by the valley landform and tree cover.

9.5.34 An initial assessment of the effects on the settlements based on site work, information presented in the ZTVs, and the assessment of the Operational Scheme, highlights the very limited potential for any of the settlements in the Study Area to be significantly affected. This finding relates to the low-lying and often enclosed nature of most of the settlements, which will limit the extent and levels of visibility arising, as well as the existing influence from the Operational Scheme in the same location. These factors will moderate the effect of the Proposed Development as it will not be seen as an extension with a limited additional effect.

Roads

9.5.35 It is not possible, or necessary, to assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development on every route. However, some of the key routes require consideration in the assessment. Four principal criteria have been used in determining the inclusion of routes in the assessment:

- the extent to which the route traverses the Study Area or extends across a notable part of it;
- the importance of the route in terms of recognition, signage, traffic volume and usage;
- the extent of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the route; and
- the potential for cumulative effects along the route.

9.5.36 The extent of the upland landscape surrounding the Proposed Development means that there are no roads in the first 5 km radius, only access tracks. In the 5 to 10 km radius, there is only one 'A' road, the A9 (T) to the west, and one 'B' road, the B9007 to the east. The A9 (T) is the most heavily used road in the Study Area, connecting Edinburgh (via the M9) to Inverness. It follows a series of straths and glens, setting out a relatively low-lying route that passes through the surrounding uplands. At its closest, it is situated 7 km from the Proposed Development. The B9007 connects the A938 at Duthill to the A940 at Logie, following an old military road through a largely remote upland landscape.

9.5.37 In addition to these, the A939, which is classified as a Tourist Route, follows an almost parallel route to the B9007, connecting Ballater to Nairn via Grantown-on-Spey. From Dava, the A940 spurs off north-east to Forres. At its closest, the A939 comes within 12 km of the Proposed Development.

9.5.38 An initial assessment of the effects on the roads based on site work and information presented in the ZTVs, highlights the following routes as having the potential to experience significant effects;

- A9 (T);
- B9007; and
- A939.

9.5.39 These roads are assessed in detail in Section 9.11: Effects on Principal Visual Receptors.

Railways

9.5.40 The Study Area includes three railway lines. The line connecting Inverness to Edinburgh and London passes from north to south through the Study Area, largely following the route of the A9. The line connecting Inverness to Aberdeen passes from west to east following the coast of the Moray Firth. And lastly, the line connecting Inverness to Wick and Thurso passes from east to west along the coastline of the Beauly Firth.

9.5.41 An initial assessment of the effects on the railways based on site work and information presented in the ZTVs, has identified that while the Proposed Development will be visible from sections of the Inverness to Edinburgh rail line, the combination of the limited levels and extents to which the Proposed Development will be visible, the minimum separation distance of 8 km from which the Proposed Development will be seen and the existing influence of the Operational Scheme and other operational wind farms, means there is not the

potential for significant effects to arise and, therefore, a detailed assessment is not required.

Long Distance Routes and Core Paths

9.5.42 National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1) and National Cycle Route 7 (NCR 7) occur in the Study Area. NCR1 connects Dover to Shetland with the section through the Study Area extending along the northern coastline from Forres to Inverness and north onto the Black Isle. NCR7 connects Sunderland to Inverness with the section through the Study Area largely following the route of the A9. A further cycle route has also been promoted along the Dava Way, which utilises a disused rail line from Forres to Grantown-on-Spey.

9.5.43 The long-distance footpaths in the area include the Speyside Way, the Dava Way and the Great Glen Way. The Speyside Way follows the course of the Spey valley and some of its tributaries, from Tomintoul and Aviemore in the south-west of the Study Area, to Spey Bay and Buckie in the north and north-east of the Study Area. The Dava Way has also been promoted as a walking and cycling route as noted above but is not yet marked on OS maps. The Great Glen Way follows the Great Glen from Inverness to Fort William.

9.5.44 The Highland Council Core Paths Plan show networks of paths across the Study Area. These are mostly concentrated in the more settled straths and glens, for example around the Spey Valley. The only upland core path of relevance to the assessment is the Dava Way, which comes within 14 km to the east of the Proposed Development.

9.5.45 An initial assessment of the effects on the long distance routes and core paths based on site work and information presented in the ZTVs, has identified that while the Proposed Development will be visible from sections of NCR7 and Dava Way, the combination of the limited levels and extents to which the Proposed Development will be visible, the minimum separation distance of 8 km and 13 km, respectively, from which the Proposed Development will be seen, and the existing influence of the Operational Scheme and other operational wind farms, means there is not the potential for significant effects to arise and, therefore, a detailed assessment is not required.

Attractions and Visitor Facilities

9.5.46 There are a number of attractions and facilities available for visitors across the Study Area, mainly located in the low lying and accessible straths and glens to the north-west and south-east of the Proposed Development.

9.5.47 Inverness forms the main centre for visitors to the Highlands with a number of attractions including Ness Park, Eden Court Theatre and Inverness Cathedral in the city, as well as its provision of accommodation and restaurants. To the south of Inverness lies the Caledonian Canal and the Great Glen Way, while to the east lies the Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre.

9.5.48 Aviemore provides an important centre for visitors, especially those interested in outdoor activities. Located in the Cairngorms National Park and with access to the Cairngorm Mountains and many of the highest peaks in Scotland, mountaineers and walkers are attracted all year round. There are also lower-level walking and cycling routes, lochs for water-based activities, and a ski-

resort for winter sports. There is also a steam railway which runs between Aviemore and Broomhill, with potential plans to extend to Grantown-on-Spey.

9.5.49 The Spey Valley to the south-east of the Proposed Development, contains many settlements such as Carrbridge, Nethy Bridge, Grantown-on-Spey and Boat-of-Garten, which have visitor accommodation and tourist information centres in the larger settlements. The Speyside Way and Speyside Steam Railway are popular attractions in this area, with the Speyside Way running between Aviemore and Buckie and the railway running between Aviemore and Broomhill, with potential plans to extend to Grantown-on-Spey.

9.5.50 A series of castles occur along the coastal lowlands of the Moray Firth, and through the Spey Valley, the most famous being Cawdor Castle and Brodie Castle to the north of the Proposed Development and Castle Grant and Ballindalloch Castle to the south-east. Other historic buildings and designed landscapes occur in these landscapes, many of which are open to the public.

9.5.51 The upland landscape around the Proposed Development is a popular location for shooting and fishing. Estates, such as the Cawdor Estate and neighbouring estates provide lodge accommodation for visitors in rural locations. Much of the upland landscape is managed for grouse shooting, and the rivers provide opportunities for angling, making them popular destinations during the salmon fishing season.

9.5.52 The effects of the Proposed Development on attractions and visitor facilities are not specifically assessed in the LVIA, although they have influenced the selection of representative viewpoints and are referenced where appropriate.

Viewpoints

General visibility of the Proposed Development

9.5.53 The ZTV shows a relatively well contained pattern of theoretical visibility, with the vast majority of the Study Area shown to gain no visibility. of the Proposed Development. The reason for this is best explained with reference to the landform of the Study Area. The Proposed Development is located on the northern edge of a group of upland hills. The elevation of the site ranges approximately from 400 to 550 m AOD.

9.5.54 The group of hills increases in elevation to the south with a distinct ridge formed between Carn nam Bain-tighearna (634 m AOD) and Carn Glas-choire (659 m AOD). This screens the Proposed Development from a substantial proportion of the southern and south-eastern sectors of the Study Area, including the Spey Valley and the surrounding uplands. It is only where the landform rises across the elevated parts of the Cairngorm Mountains, Braes of Abernethy and Hills of Cromdale, that visibility recurs, albeit at ranges beyond 22 km.

9.5.55 A similar situation occurs to the north and north-west, whereby the group of hills which lie in this direction and which centre around Carn nan Tri-tighearnan (615 m AOD) effectively screen the Proposed Development from most of the northern and north-western sectors of the Study Area, including Inverness and the concentration of roads and settlements which lie along the northern coast. There are a few exceptions where localised patches of visibility occur, but these are typically small and distant.

9.5.56 Visibility to the south-west is screened by the close range and afforested hills of Carn Torr Mheadhoin (545 m AOD) and Carn Gleann an Tairbhidh (570 m AOD) as well as Carn a' Choire Mhoir (627 m AOD) although only across patchy extents and with visibility resuming on the eastern facing slopes of Carn na h-Easgainn (616 m AOD) and Beinn Bhreac (600 m AOD) to the west of the A9(T). The ridge formed by these latter hills creates a more effective screen of the Proposed Development, such that visibility further south-west is very limited and occurs only as a series of small patches on the more elevated slopes and summits in this direction.

9.5.57 It is to the north-east that visibility is most extensive, relating to the relatively low-lying landform that occurs in this direction. The elevation of the uplands landscape falls away towards lower hills and the valley landscape of the River Findhorn, allowing visibility to extend out. A band of land beyond these lower hills is screened from visibility before resuming as patches across uplands in Moray along the coastal edge. The extents and levels of actual visibility in this sector is, however, limited by the wider extent of tree cover which provides localised screening.

9.5.58 In summary, a concentration of visibility occurs within the first 5 to 6 km radius to the north-west and south-east but visibility beyond this, in these directions, is typically distant and patchy. Visibility to the south-west is initially patchy across the adjacent valleys and then more continuous across the hill slopes between 7 and 12 km before becoming largely screened. Visibility to the north-east is most extensive albeit occurring as large patches following a fragmented pattern and in a more enclosed landscape.

Viewpoint selection

9.5.59 The assessment of landscape and visual effects is informed by a series of 17 viewpoints, which are shown in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV in **Figure 9.5a** and **9.5b**, with the hub height ZTV in **Figure 9.6a** and **9.6b** and listed in Table 9.3 below. These are selected to cover visual receptors of specific importance, such as recognised viewpoints, settlements, important routes, designated landscapes and remote landscapes including hill tops. Their selection attempts to achieve a good geographic spread, representative of a mix of LCTs and also takes into account visibility of cumulative wind farms. In terms of range, the majority of the viewpoints are within the first 15 km, as this is where it is most likely that significant effects will occur, but also representation is made of more distant viewpoints which are of particular sensitivity. The viewpoint list has been agreed with SNH, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and The Highland Council.

9.5.60 The process of identifying viewpoints involves extensive investigation to ensure that the final viewpoints are representative of levels of visibility around the Study Area, and that they clearly illustrate the predicted visibility of the Proposed Development. Additional potential viewpoints were also investigated, where they were suggested by statutory consultees or where they correspond with viewpoints used in previously submitted LVIAs for other wind farm developments in the area. In particular, NatureScot and THC requested additional viewpoints to represent visual receptors in those areas where visibility of the Proposed Development occurs, but visibility of the Operational

Scheme does not occur, as highlighted in the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.13**. Wirelines from three potential viewpoints are presented in **Figures 9.58** to **9.60**. These illustrate the very limited visibility of the Proposed Development which prevents the potential for significant effects to arise.

Table 9 3 – Viewpoint selection

No	Viewpoint	Grid reference	Distance / Direction	Representative
1	Balvraid Lodge	282927 831393	4.07 km SW	Residents in this small group of houses.
2	Carn Glas-choire	289155 829151	5.78 km SSE	Hilltop views of walkers on Carn Glas-choire
3	Ptarmigan Lodge	300461 804886	32.53 km SSE	Visitors to Ptarmigan Lodge visitor centre and walkers on
4	Creagan a Chaise, Hills of Cromdale	310423 824168	25.83 km ESE	Hilltop views of walkers on Cromdale Hills.
5	Minor Road north of Drynachan	286914 841527	5.61 km N	Sequential views of road-users on this rural road.
6	B9007 near Lochindorb	294275 838066	7.97 km ENE	Sequential views of road-users on the B9007.
7	Geal Charn Mor, Monadhliath	283628 812330	22.01 km S	Hilltop views of walkers on Meall a Bhuachaille.
8	A9 (T) north of Tomatin Junction	279375 830930	7.21 km SW	Sequential views of road-users on the A9 (T).
9	Meall a' Bhuachaille	299082 811537	25.99 km SSE	Hilltop views of walkers on Meall a Bhuachaille.
10	A9 (T) River Findhorn Bridge	280798 829083	7.21 km SW	Sequential views of road-users on the A9 (T).
11	Blackfold, near Dochgarroch	258833 840713	27.16 km WNW	Specific views of residents and sequential views of road-users and walkers.
12	Gorton Hill	301124 829535	15.21 km ESE	Hilltop views of walkers on Gorton Hill.
13	A939 at milestone	296710 843722	12.85 km NE	Sequential views of road-users on the A939.
14	Shore Road Lochindorb 1	298220 837163	11.65 km E	Specific views of road-users and visitors towards

No	Viewpoint	Grid reference	Distance / Direction	Representative
				Lochindorb.
15	Shore Road Lochindorb 2	297880 836377	11.23 km E	Specific views of road-users and visitors towards Lochindorb.
16	Creag Ealraich	294314 830462	8.57 km SE	Hilltop views of walkers on Creag Ealraich.
17	Dava Way	300956 838477	14.56 km ENE	Sequential views of walkers on the Dava Way.

9.5.61 The viewpoint assessment is used to inform and illustrate the assessment of effects on landscape character, as well as the assessment of effects on views and principal visual receptors. Section 9.10: Assessment of Effects on Views, provides a more detailed assessment where there is potential for significant effects to arise. The relevant information is extrapolated from the viewpoint assessments, in the assessment of effects on landscape receptors and the assessment of effects on principal visual receptors.

Cumulative Wind Farms

9.5.62 In terms of the timescale of proposals for inclusion, both NatureScot and GLVIA3 advise in their guidance that the assessment of the cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Development should encompass the effects of the proposal in combination with existing, under construction, consented and application stage wind farms awaiting determination. Schemes that are at the pre-planning or scoping stage are not generally considered in the assessment of cumulative effects because firm information on which to base the assessment is not available. However, there may be specific occasions where the inclusion of such schemes is considered to be necessary by the statutory consultees.

9.5.63 The developments to be included within the CLVIA have been agreed through discussions with the statutory consultees and are set out in Table 9.4 below. As stated in guidance (SNH, 2012, p15)[19] "*At every stage in the process the focus should be on the key cumulative effects which are likely to influence decision making, rather than an assessment of every potential cumulative effect*".

9.5.64 The baseline presented in the LVIA will be altered by the introduction of further wind farms and this is assessed in the CLVIA based on cumulative scenarios as follows:

- The first scenario involves the assessment of the addition of the Proposed Development to existing and under construction wind farms (identified in the LVIA baseline scenario) and other wind farms which

[19] Scottish Natural Heritage (2012). Assessing the cumulative impact of onshore wind energy developments.

have been consented (i.e., approved schemes which are likely to be constructed).

- The second scenario involves the assessment of the addition of the Proposed Development to existing, under construction and consented wind farms (as identified in the LVIA baseline and first scenario), together with valid (but as yet undetermined) wind farm planning applications.

9.5.65 The cumulative situation changes frequently as applications are made or withdrawn, and the layouts of submitted application wind farms are changed. It is therefore necessary to agree on a cut-off date when the sites and layouts to be included are fixed, and this is 13th October 2021. Any changes in the cumulative situation after this date are not incorporated in the assessment.

9.5.66 The scale of wind farm and other development is also of relevance to the CLVIA. The greatest influence as part of the cumulative context will arise in relation to development in close proximity to the Proposed Development. The larger the development, the higher the likelihood of a significant cumulative effect.

9.5.67 Turbines of less than 50 kW are considered by NatureScot (SNH, 2009) to be micro-renewables. These turbines are generally less than 15 m but can be up to 25 m high. '*Applications at this scale are unlikely to be required to be included in CLVIA.*' (SNH, 2012, p18). It is considered that due to their scale these turbines are unlikely to result in significant cumulative effects arising with the Proposed Development. Turbines of less than 25m are not included in the Cumulative Wind Farm Plan.

9.5.68 Turbines of less than 50 m are considered by NatureScot to be small scale wind turbines (SNH, 2012). It is considered that the cumulative interaction with the Proposed Development with this scale of turbine would not result in significant cumulative effects. The exclusion of turbines of less than 50 m from the CLVIA has been agreed through the scoping process.

9.5.69 A total of 29 sites lie within a 40 km radius of the Proposed Development and these are listed in Table 9.4 below. Although 29 sites are listed in the table, there are a number which have a consent and a resubmission for the same site.

9.5.70 Despite a request from NatureScot and THC to include all sites within a 60 km radius, sites that lie outwith a 40 km radius of the Proposed Development have been discounted due to their distance from the Proposed Development which ensures that either one or both will be seen from a considerable distance away as well as the existing influence from the Operational Scheme, both of which will notably moderate the effect on intermediate landscape and visual receptors.

9.5.71 Table 9.4 highlights whether or not cumulative wind farms are included in the LVIA. Their separation distance from the Proposed Development, turbine height and number are the key reasons for excluding sites within the cumulative context as they are considered to not have the potential to contribute to the Proposed Development having a significant cumulative effect.

9.5.72 Table 9.4 indicates that under Scenario 1, one of the consented wind farm developments will have the potential to make a material change to the predicted baseline cumulative situation, namely, Cairn Duhie. The other consented developments have been discounted from the cumulative assessment owing largely to their separation distance from the Operational Development, the limited extents to which theoretical intervisibility between the consented wind farms and the Proposed Development arises and their location in areas where there is already a notable influence from operational wind farms. A Scenario 1 cumulative assessment is included at Section 9.12 of this LVIA.

9.5.73 Table 9.4 indicates that under Scenario 2, one of the application stage developments will have the potential to make a material change to the predicted baseline cumulative situation, namely, Lethen Wind Farm. The other application stage developments have been discounted from the cumulative assessment owing largely to their separation distance from the Operational Scheme, the limited extents to which theoretical intervisibility between the application stage wind farms and the Proposed Development arises and their location in areas where there is already a notable influence from operational wind farms. A Scenario 2 cumulative assessment is included at Section 9.12 of this LVIA.

Table 9.4 – Cumulative Wind Farms

Wind Farm	Status	Number of turbines	Size of turbines	Distance (km) and direction	Relevant to assessment
Auction Mart near Dingwall	Operational	1	46.2	39.92	No – single turbine at distance.
Berry Burn	Operational	29	100	21.19	Yes
Bognie Farm	Operational	1	60.98	30.49	No – single turbine at distance.
Paul's Hill	Operational	28	99.5	24.73	Yes
Cluny Farm	Operational	1	61	27.26	No – single turbine at distance.
Corriegarth	Operational	23	120	34.02	No – at distance with limited intervisibility.
Culisse	Operational	1	66.79	39.77	No – single turbine at distance.
Dunmaglass Estate	Operational	33	120	25.13	Yes
Farr	Operational	40	102	12.42	Yes

Wind Farm	Status	Number of turbines	Size of turbines	Distance (km) and direction	Relevant to assessment
Findhorn	Operational	3	44	33.99	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Glen Kyllachy	Operational	20	110	12.58	Yes
Hill of Glaschyle	Operational	12	99.91	19.91	Yes
Hunthill	Operational	4	67	37.74	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Kellas	Operational	4	110	33.72	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Moy	Operational	20	126.5	6.90	Yes
Paul's Hill	Operational	28	99.5	23.95	Yes
Rothes I	Operational	22	99.5	33.38	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Rothes II	Operational	18	110-125	32.30	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Tom nan Clach	Operational	13	125	0.38	Yes
Aberarder	Consented	12	130	24.21	Yes
Belladrum	Consented	1	54	33.87	No – single turbine at distance.
Cairn Duhie	Consented	20	110	11.74	Yes
Meikle Hill	Consented	6	126.5	30.89	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Paul's Hill II	Consented	6	134-149.9	25.99	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.

Wind Farm	Status	Number of turbines	Size of turbines	Distance (km) and direction	Relevant to assessment
Berry Burn II	Application	9	149.9	23.36	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Clash Gour	Application	48	130-180	18.63	Yes
Corriegarth 2	Application	16	149.9	33.57	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Lethen	Application	17	185	4.28	Yes
Rothes III	Application	23	150-225	33.67	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.
Rothes III (alternative)	Application	13	149.9-175	33.67	No – separation distance and limited intervisibility.

Description of the Proposed Development

9.6.1 Chapter 3 provides descriptions of the site, the main components, the associated infrastructure and the phases of construction, operation and decommissioning.

9.6.2 The Proposed Development comprises seven wind turbines, which will have a maximum blade tip height of 149.9 m, and a rotor diameter of up to 133 m. Access into the site will be taken from the existing site entrance on the B9007 and will use existing tracks with new and upgraded tracks added to access the Operational Scheme turbines. Other permanent infrastructure will include an onsite substation, control building and maintenance building, and temporary infrastructure will include a construction compound, with the intention being that the borrow pit used for the operational site will be reopened for the construction of the Proposed Development. The Site Layout is shown in **Figure 3.1**.

Phasing of the Proposed Development

9.6.3 The Proposed Development has three stages during which impacts on the landscape and visual resource will occur: construction, operation and decommissioning. The key operations and potential effects that may occur during these phases are outlined in Table 9.5 below.

Table 9.5 – Potential Effects

Activity / Potential Effects	Specific Element	Potential of receptors to be affected

Activity / Potential Effects	Specific Element	Potential of receptors to be affected
Construction Short-term physical effects on landscape elements, landscape character and views. Short-term cumulative effects.	Construction plant; Temporary construction facilities; Construction / upgrading of access tracks; Construction of turbine foundations / crane pads; Presence and activity of cranes; Presence of emerging wind turbines; Earthworks for infrastructure; Re-opening of borrow pit; and Movement of associated traffic.	Heather moorland removed or altered where construction plant and facilities will be located and where tracks, foundations and crane pads will be built. Landscape character of immediate and surrounding LCTs potentially affected by the addition of construction facilities and plant, the presence and activity of the cranes and emergence of wind turbines. Viewpoints and principal visual receptors potentially affected by the addition of construction facilities and plant, the presence and activity of the cranes and emergence of wind turbines.
Operation Long term/reversible effects on landscape character, and views. Long term/reversible cumulative effects with other wind farms.	Wind turbines; Access tracks; Substation; Construction compounds; Earthworks; and Permanent meteorological masts.	Landscape character potentially affected by the presence of wind turbines and other infrastructure. Viewpoints and principal visual receptors potentially affected by the presence of wind turbines and other infrastructure. Landscape and visual receptors potentially cumulatively affected by presence of wind turbines and other infrastructure in conjunction with other wind farm developments.
Decommissioning Short-term physical effects on landscape elements. Short-term effects on landscape character. Short-term effects on views.	Decommissioning plant; Temporary construction facilities; Presence and activity of cranes; and Presence of dismantled wind turbines. Movement of associated traffic.	Heather moorland removed or altered where decommissioning plant and facilities will be located. Landscape character of immediate and surrounding LCTs potentially affected by the addition of decommissioning facilities and plant, the presence and activity of the cranes and deconstruction of wind turbines. Viewpoints and principal visual receptors potentially affected by the addition of decommissioning facilities and plant, the presence and activity of the cranes and deconstruction of

Activity / Potential Effects	Specific Element	Potential of receptors to be affected
		wind turbines.

9.7.1 In respect of the mitigation of landscape and visual effects these are carried out throughout the iterative design process and are therefore embedded in the final layout. Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development, describes the components of the Proposed Development and Chapter 2: EIA Process describes the iterative design process which was followed in order to prevent, reduce or offset potential landscape and visual effects.

9.7.2 The residual effects of the Proposed Development, those effects remaining after mitigation that will materialise when the Proposed Development is under construction, operation or decommissioning, are assessed in Section 9.8: Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character, Section 9.9: Assessment of Effects on Landscape Designations, Section 9.10: Assessment of Effects on Views, Section 9.11: Assessment of Effects on Principal Visual Receptors and Section 9.12: Assessment of Cumulative Effects.

9.8 Assessment of Landscape Effects

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Elements

9.8.1 The first category of effects covered in the assessment of landscape effects is effects on landscape elements, which are direct effects on the fabric of the site, such as the removal of ground cover vegetation to facilitate construction of the access tracks and crane pads. Physical effects are found only on the site, where existing landscape elements may be removed or altered by the Proposed Development. Owing to the homogenous nature of landcover on and around the site there is only one landscape element that will be affected, which is heather moorland. The methodology for the assessment of physical effects is described in full in **Appendix 9.A**.

Heather Moorland

Baseline Condition

9.8.2 Heather moorland is the predominant landcover across the site. It comprises heathers and rough grasses, which grow from soil that tends to be peat based and sometimes waterlogged in all but a few hilltop locations. This type of landcover is typical throughout much of the Highlands and wider Scottish uplands. It contributes to the open and exposed character of the upland landscapes, characterising them with the dark hues of brown and purple. While ecological diversity occurs at a detailed scale, the general effect is of a homogenous landcover, albeit with the marks of muirburn often forming an abstract pattern across it.

Sensitivity

9.8.3 The value of the heather moorland, of the type that covers most of the site, is medium. It is a characteristic element of the Highlands landscape, extensive across upland areas associated with, and managed for, grouse shooting. Heather moorlands contribute to the rough and less modified character of the upland landscape. While it is a relatively abundant landscape element that is not rare or recognised for its value, within the diversity at the detailed scale

there are landscape elements which are of greater value owing to the importance of the flora and fauna.

9.8.4 The susceptibility of the heather moorland to the Proposed Development is medium-low. A relatively small proportion of this much wider landscape resource will be removed as a result of the construction of the access tracks, the turbine foundations, the crane pads, the sub-station, and the construction compound. The heathers and grasses are sufficiently invasive to enable them to re-colonise disturbed areas and this reduces the susceptibility of this landscape element to its removal.

9.8.5 The combination of the value of the heather moorland and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development results in an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

9.8.6 Changes to the heather moorland on the site will result from the removal of the soil and vegetation from the routes of the new access tracks, from the areas of construction for crane pads, turbine foundations and the temporary construction compound and the longer-term sub-station. The magnitude of change on the landscape element of heather moorland will be **low** as the Proposed Development will result in the removal of a relatively small proportion of this extensive landscape element. This rating has also taken into account the relative ease with which this vegetation type re-colonises. The locations of the turbines, tracks and other associated infrastructure have been carefully located so as to avoid the more sensitive habitats within this landscape element.

Significance of Effect

9.8.7 The physical effect of the Proposed Development on the heather moorland is considered to be **not significant**. This is primarily due to the medium sensitivity of the landscape element, the limited proportion of the landscape element that will be affected, and the high potential for the visual mitigation of any direct effects through reinstatement of the heather moorland ground cover. Although the effect will be not significant, the nature of the effect will be adverse.

Summary of Effects on Landscape Elements

9.8.8 The principal effect that the Proposed Development will have on the landscape elements of the site is the removal of relatively small areas of heather moorland. This effect has been assessed as not significant.

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character Types

9.8.9 The second category of effects covered in the assessment of landscape effects is effects on the Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which are the direct and indirect effects on landscape character as defined and described through the LCTs.

9.8.10 The detailed methodology for the assessment of effects on landscape character is described in **Appendix 9.A**. An initial assessment has been carried out to identify those LCTs which have the potential to undergo significant effects and,

therefore, require a detailed assessment. This has been informed by a review of ZTVs for the Proposed Development combined with site work.

9.8.11 It should be noted that levels of magnitude of change on LCTs are generally found to be lower than the magnitude of change on viewpoints that are located within them. This means that if a viewpoint is assessed to undergo a medium-high magnitude of change it does not necessarily follow that the LCT within which it lies will also undergo a medium-high magnitude of change, but may undergo a medium magnitude of change instead, for example.

9.8.12 This is because the effects on viewpoints are assessed within the context of a specific outlook of the site and are usually especially selected to gain a direct view over the site. The Proposed Development is the principal consideration in the viewpoint assessment and influences that lie in other areas of the view are considered to a lesser degree. The landscape character of a receptor is not, however, determined so specifically by the outlook over the Proposed Development, and there are many other considerations, both visual and perceptual, that combine to give an area its landscape character. This means that the degree of influence of the Proposed Development may be slightly less on landscape character than on a specific view. Viewpoints are referred to in this assessment as they give a useful indication of the appearance of the Proposed Development from the landscape areas, but the level of magnitude of change may vary between the viewpoint assessment and the landscape character assessment.

9.8.13 This is particularly true of areas that lie slightly further away from the site. In the immediate vicinity of the site, up to around 2 km away, the magnitude of change on viewpoints and landscape character is likely to be similar, but beyond this, the magnitude of change on landscape character is found to often diminish more rapidly as the influence of the turbines is subsumed in the many other influences on landscape character.

9.8.14 The LCTs that cover the Study Area are shown in **Figure 9.2** and shown in conjunction with the ZTV in **Figure 9.8**. It should be noted that many of the LCTs included in the assessment cover large areas, and that the effects of the Proposed Development can therefore vary widely across a single LCT. The distinction within single LCTs, where effects may be significant and not significant, is of particular importance in the assessment, and where this is the case, the assessment describes in detail the boundaries which separate these areas.

9.8.15 The initial assessment has indicated that parts of five LCTs have potential to be significantly affected as a result of the Proposed Development. These are:

- Open Rolling Upland – Drynachan, Lochindorb, Dava;
- Rolling Uplands – Monadhliath;
- Upland Areas – The Strathdearn Hills;
- Narrow Wooded Valley – River Findhorn; and
- Upland Valleys – River Findhorn.

9.8.16 The effect on each of these LCTs is assessed below. The other LCTs in the Study Area were found through the initial assessment to not have the potential

to undergo a significant effect and have, therefore, not been assessed in any further detail.

9.8.17 The scope of the assessment of effects on LCTs has been agreed with NatureScot and THC through the scoping process and pre-application consultations.

Open Rolling Upland – Drynachan, Lochindorb, Dava

Key Characteristics – extract from NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment;

- *"High, rolling moorland with gentle gradients and limited relief in the west becomes hillier in the eastern reaches.*
- *Simple, rolling landscape of heather moorland and grassland, with few plantations or structures, and the contrasting setting it provides for the occasional farmed valleys at the margins and close to roads.*
- *Interest provided by occasional natural and built point features in the simple landscape, such as lochans, summits, small farms, stone bridges, crofts and abandoned shielings.*
- *General lack of modern structures (pylons, wind turbines, masts and houses), particularly in the central area close to roads and the Dava Way, from where most people experience the area. However due to the openness of this landscape there are views to commercial wind energy development in neighbouring areas to the east.*
- *Elevated, open and expansive views across the landscape, and long-distance views from the edge of the plateau to the north and south. Difference in extent and focus of views between east and west.*
- *Sense of remoteness from lack of roads and built development, coupled with abandoned buildings, rail lines and historic roads."*

Baseline

9.8.18 The Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava area of the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT lies to the north-east of the *Rolling Uplands* LCT that covers the Monadhliath Hills and to the north of the *Upland Areas* LCT that covers the Strathdearn Hills. It occurs to the north and south of the *Upland Valleys* LCT which cuts west to east through this upland area, and with *Narrow Wooded Valley* LCT also occurring to the north of the site, and the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT of Moray to the east.

9.8.19 Essentially, this area of *Open Rolling Upland* LCT forms the hill range to the north of the Spey Valley. The abrupt change in landscape classification to the west, from *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT to *Rolling Uplands* LCT relates to the change in administrative boundary between Moray and THC. In reality., these landscapes are contiguous as far west as the A9 corridor, where the comparatively lower-lying landform then forms a physical transition with the Monadhliath range to the south-west.

9.8.20 The *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT is defined by upland plateau and high moorland. The upland plateau is formed by a series of broad and rounded hills of a

relatively uniform height, which combine to form an expansive landscape of gently undulating uplands. The upland plateau is predominant across the western part of the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT where the landform merges with the Strathdearn Hills to the south, and the north-eastern extension of the Monadhliath Hills to the south-west. This is an open and often featureless landscape - a characteristic pronounced by the almost homogenous blanket cover of heather moorland. The upland plateau is almost continuous across the western part of the LCT with the exception of where the burns and rivers form incisions through the landform, the most notable example occurring where the River Findhorn *Narrow Wooded Valley* LCT and *Upland Valleys* LCT cut a deep and steep channel through the moorland from south-west to north-east around the site.

9.8.21 The eastern part of the LCT is characterised by high moorland where there are no distinct hill forms, only a broad expanse of gently undulating moorland, albeit at a height of 250 to 350 m AOD. The heather moorland extends across this landscape interspersed with patches of blanket bog and coniferous forestry encroaching on the margins. There is a sense of space and simplicity, and despite the upland plateau being relatively low, it forms a well-defined enclosing ridgeline to this expanse of open moorland. The upland plateau also forms a gently undulating ridge when seen from the higher mountains to the south, while from the west and north, the distinction is not as apparent owing to the hills merging with neighbouring hill groups.

9.8.22 The site lies within this LCT, set to the immediate east and south of the Operational Scheme, which is centred on a plateau hilltop, referred to as Tom nan Clach on OS mapping, and lies a couple of kilometres south and east of the winding and deeply incised valley of the River Findhorn. The hills are managed as grouse moor, as is evident in the extent of heather moorland and muirburn, as well as the presence of access tracks across the hills and occasional grouse butts. Forest plantations cover the lower hill slopes towards the river valleys and marginal farming occurs within the more sheltered glens where the bright green of improved pasture forms a stark contrast with the dark hues of the surrounding heather moorland.

9.8.23 Built development is otherwise typically sparse and much of the landscape remains open and largely featureless. Roads traverse this LCT, the B9007 and A939 aligned north to south, following the route of the original military roads. Operational Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy Wind Farms are visible from elevated parts of this LCT, with Moy occurring to the west of the LCT boundary, and Farr and Glen Kyllachy occurring in the Monadhliath Hills to the south-west.

Sensitivity

9.8.24 The value of this LCT is medium-high. The majority of the LCT, including the Site, lies within the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA which is a local designation recognising the value of the special qualities of the upland plateau and moorland landscapes.

9.8.25 The susceptibility of this LCT to the Proposed Development will be medium-low. The Operational Scheme occurs in this LCT, while Operational Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms are set on the edge of the Monadhliath Mountains in the Rolling Uplands LCT to the south-west, while Moy Wind Farm occurs in the

same LCT but at closer range to the north-west. These wind farms already present a direct and indirect influence on the character of this LCT, which reduces its susceptibility to the Proposed Development.

9.8.26 The combination of the value of this LCT and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development leads to an overall sensitivity of **medium**.

Magnitude of change

9.8.27 The Proposed Development will be located within the south-west boundary of this LCT, which means there will be direct and indirect effects. The ZTV in **Figure 9.8** shows a concentration of high levels of theoretical visibility in the western part of the LCT, becoming increasingly patchy in extent towards the east of the LCT. Despite the location of the Operational Scheme to the immediate north, the location of the Proposed Development in this part of the LCT and its closer influence on those parts to the immediate south-east and east, means that the magnitude of change will be **medium-high**. This effect will extend out to 4 to 5 km in these directions and will include those marginal areas shown in the Cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.13**, where visibility of the Proposed Development will arise without baseline visibility of the Operational Scheme.

9.8.28 Where the Operational Scheme is located to the immediate north, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low** as this area is already strongly influenced by the presence of the Operational Scheme turbines and associated infrastructure. In this context, the Proposed Development will have a lesser influence. There is a band of no visibility to the north-west and the south-east where the hill slopes fall away from the upland plateau into the adjacent valleys. Visibility resumes towards the south-east boundary of the LCT between a range of 3 to 5 km, where the Carn Glas-choire ridgeline occurs, and to the north and north-west between 3 to 6 km, where the Carn nan Tri-tighearnan ridgeline occurs. These ridgelines reduce the extent of visibility further north, and further south across the Strathdearn Hills and the Dulnain and Spey straths, where there is practically no visibility and, therefore, **no change**.

9.8.29 To the east, a large patch of visibility occurs across the high moorland on either side of the B9007 and within a 5 to 10 km range of the Proposed Development. The upland plateau, on which the Proposed Development sits, forms part of the ridgeline that encloses the western aspect of the high moorland. The cumulative ZTV, shown in **Figure 9.13**, shows that visibility of the Proposed Development will largely occur in those parts of the LCT where there is already visibility of the Operational Scheme. While the Proposed Development will add a further seven turbines to the operational 13 turbines, these will be clearly seen as an extension to the existing wind farm and will contain the influence from this type of development in one localised part of this LCT. The proposed turbines will be seen as a well-defined group with a close association with the Operational Scheme turbines; these factors moderating the potential additional influence. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low**.

9.8.30 This eastern patch of visibility extends further north-east towards the A939 to cover an area in the range of 10 to 15 km from the Proposed Development. The more distant influence of the Proposed Development, combined with the existing influence of Paul's Hill and Berry Burn Wind Farms, which are located in the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT to the north-east, means that the magnitude of change will be reduced to **low**.

9.8.31 The magnitude of change ratings described above will also apply during the construction phase. The effects will relate to the presence of associated plant and the components of the Proposed Development as they are constructed. The use of tall cranes for the construction of the turbines will have the most notable effect, although this will not be greater in magnitude than the effect of the turbines during the operational phase.

Significance of effect

9.8.32 The effect of the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT will be **significant** in the area around the Proposed Development and extending 4 to 5 km to the south and south-east, during both the construction and operational phases and will relate to the stronger influence from the proposed turbines and the lesser influence from the Operational Scheme turbines. The effect on the remainder of the LCT will be **not significant** during both the construction and operational phases and will relate to the stronger influence from the Operational Scheme turbines and the lesser influence from the Operational Scheme turbines, and in some areas **no effect** from either. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Rolling Uplands – Monadhliath

Key Characteristics – extract from NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment;

- *"A series of large scale, smooth, rounded hills with summits of similar height forming broad, undulating upland plateaux containing occasional steep-sided straths.*
- *Open heather moorland dominates, the uniform colour and texture accentuating the landform.*
- *Straths floors contain inbye pastures, trees and small patches of woodland.*
- *Conifer forests limited to the lower edges of uplands and strath sides.*
- *Settlement limited to a few isolated farms in remote straths.*
- *A few mainly single track roads, integrated within the landform.*
- *Uninhabited interior, largely inaccessible to vehicles.*
- *Archaeological evidence of settlement and farming from prehistoric times to the19th century.*
- *Striking colour and textural contrast between strath floors and moorland vegetation above.*
- *Expansive views from the hill tops and plateaux create a strong sense of openness and exposure.*
- *Scale and distance difficult to judge.*

- *Few signs of active management in the interiors, creating a strong perception of remoteness, although this is affected by a number of large wind farm developments."*

Baseline

9.8.33 The *Rolling Uplands* LCT occurs in the Inverness District and covers the expansive range of the Monadhliath Mountains which extend from the centre of the Study Area all the way to the south-west boundary at 40 km and beyond. The LCT is bounded by the Great Glen to the west and the Cairngorm Mountains and foothills to the east. The north-eastern end of the LCT comprises a group of low hills which flank the north-east and south-west sides of the A9 (T)corridor. The hills on the north-east side of the A9 (T) form the south-westerly continuation of the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT where the Proposed Development is located. These hills are the most relevant part of this LCT to the assessment.

9.8.34 The *Rolling Uplands* LCT is characterised by a broad extent of smooth rounded hills, which in the main mass have summits of a similar height, ranging between 700 and 800 m AOD. These hills interlock to form areas of undulating upland plateau, only occasionally incised by narrow glens radiating out from the main ridges. The hill mass follows the general north-east to south-west alignment of the wider landscape.

9.8.35 On the north-eastern boundary of the LCT, which lies closest to the Site, the hills are slightly lower, with most approximately 600 m AOD in height. These form an enclosure around the River Findhorn valley and the A9 (T) road corridor that lie to the north-east. Coniferous forestry and deciduous woodland add further to the enclosure of the valley, in which small settlements and pockets of farmland add to the settled character.

9.8.36 In contrast, the smooth rounded form of the hills is accentuated by the low blanket covering of heather moorland to give a simple and largely featureless appearance. The exceptions to this occur with Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms, which are located in this LCT and the Operational Scheme, which is located in the adjacent *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT. The Operational Scheme is located on the north-east boundary of this LCT, while Moy is located a minimum of approximately 7 km to the north-west of the Proposed Development, and Farr and Glen Kyllachy are located a minimum of approximately 12 km to the south-west. These wind farms form readily visible features amidst the open hills.

Sensitivity

9.8.37 The *Rolling Uplands* LCT is not covered by any national or local landscape designations, with the exception of a small area in the north-east which falls within the boundary of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA. This general absence of designations across the Monadhliath Mountains denotes the comparatively lesser value that has been attached to this landscape, possibly in relation to the less dramatic landform or the modified character relating to the grouse moors and forest plantations. The value of the LCT is medium.

9.8.38 The susceptibility of the LCT to the Proposed Development is influenced by the presence of Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms all located in the north-

east end of this LCT, closest to the Proposed Development, with Farr and Glen Kyllachy to the south-west of the A9 (T) and Moy to the north-east. The presence of these operational wind farms reduces the susceptibility of the LCT to the Proposed Development as it would not introduce a new feature, nor would it occur as the nearest development of this type to this LCT. Furthermore, the Operational Scheme sits on the north-eastern boundary of this LCT. The susceptibility of the *Rolling Uplands* LCT to the Proposed Development is medium-low.

9.8.39 The combination of the value of the LCT and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development gives rise to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.8.40 The Proposed Development will be located close to the north-east boundary of the *Rolling Uplands* LCT with one turbine extending over the boundary. The ZTV in **Figure 9.8** shows visibility in the section between the north-east boundary and the A9 (T) to be limited to a strip of visibility along the boundary and patches of lower-level visibility across east facing slopes. This is due to some higher summits sitting to the immediate west of the Site reducing the extent of visibility beyond. To the west of the A9, visibility is shown to be almost continuous across the east facing slopes at a distance of 8 to 13 km. Visibility in the vicinity of the A9 and settlements is shown to be typically lower in levels and actual visibility will be further reduced by the extent of tree cover in this area. Beyond the ridgeline, to the west of the A9, visibility is shown to occur occasionally as small patches on elevated north-east facing slopes at distances from 12 to 35 km.

9.8.41 A **medium** magnitude of change will occur where there is a strip of visibility shown along the north-east boundary at a range of 1 to 2 km from the Proposed Development. This relates to the proximity of the Proposed Development to this part of the LCT despite the baseline influence occurring from the close-range Operational Scheme.

9.8.42 Where a patch of visibility occurs on the eastern slopes of Meall a' Bhreacraibh (551 m AOD) the magnitude of change will be reduced by being 3 to 6 km from the Proposed Development such that the turbines will not appear quite so large in comparison to the wider landscape which will have more of an influence. Moreover, they will be seen in the context of the Operational Scheme, which already has an influence across similar extents of this LCT, along with Moy Wind Farm, located to the immediate north of the hill, and Farr and Glen Kyllachy Wind Farms to the south-west. Here the magnitude of change will be **medium-low**.

9.8.43 In the area to the south-west, at a range of 3 to 7 km, dispersed patches of lower levels of visibility will occur. Despite the relatively close range, the magnitude of change will also be **medium** as the influence of the turbines will be moderated by their partial concealment behind the intervening landform, as well as the existing presence of Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms. Infrastructure, such as access tracks, crane pads and foundations, will be largely concealed by the intervening landform.

9.8.44 A more substantial patch of visibility covers the hills to the south-west of the A9(T) and while visibility along the A9(T) corridor will be limited by intervening

landform and tree cover, it will be continuous across the open hill slopes above, from which the Proposed Development will form a readily apparent feature owing to the orientation of the landform in this north-easterly direction. At the range of 8 to 12.5 km the Proposed Development will appear relatively compact, both in horizontal and vertical extent, such that its influence, relative to the influence of the wider landscape will be moderated. It is within this wider landscape that operational Farr, Glen Kyllachy and Moy wind farms will already have a closer range influence that through comparison of size and scale, will diminish the influence of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change will be **low**.

9.8.45 The ZTV shows that deeper into the Monadhliath Hills, from ranges of 10 to 40 km, smaller patches of visibility occur across summits and upper north-east facing slopes. The more distant location of the Proposed Development, combined with the existing influence from the Operational Scheme, the greater sense of containment within the Monadhliath Hills, and the closer range influence of Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms, reduces the magnitude of change to **low**, reducing to **negligible** with distance.

9.8.46 Effects will also occur during the construction phase, largely owing to the presence of the tall cranes and the emerging turbines, which will be the most readily visible components of the Proposed Development during these phases. The magnitude of change will not be greater than as assessed in relation to the operational phase of the Proposed Development.

Significance of effect

9.8.47 The effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape character of the *Rolling Uplands* LCT will be **significant** along the north-east boundary of the LCT which makes up the 'core' of visibility around the turbines. From this small and localised area, the influence of the Proposed Development will redefine the character of the landscape, despite the existing influence from the Operational Scheme. These effects will occur during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. The effects on the remaining parts of the LCT will be **not significant**. This is largely due to the existing influence from the Operational Scheme and other operational wind farms in this LCT. The nature of the effects will be adverse.

Uplands Areas – The Strathdearn Hills

Baseline

9.8.48 The *Upland Areas* LCT comprises the southern part of the Strathdearn Hills which falls within the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park. The boundary of the LCT follows the CNP boundary along the northern ridge of the hills to the north of the Spey Valley and Dulnain Valley. This boundary abuts the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT to the north in the eastern section and the *Rolling Uplands* LCT to the north in the western section. Despite all these boundaries, the character of the hills in this local area appears relatively seamless.

9.8.49 The Strathdearn Hills form the northern enclosure to the Spey and Dulnain straths and act as the foothills to the Cairngorm Mountains to the south and the Monadhliath Hills to the south-west. They follow a north-east to south-west alignment, extending from Bridge of Avon in the north-east to Slochd on the

A9 in the south-west. The hills are highest between Slochd and the B9007 where the rounded summits combine to form a gently undulating upland plateau with the highest summit being Carn Glas-choire at 659 m AOD (Viewpoint 2). The hills are characterised by heather moorland, with its management and use as grouse moor made evident by the muirburn and access tracks which extend across it.

9.8.50 To the east of the B9007, while the landform becomes generally lower and the slopes more subtle, the hills on the northern edge are craggier in character creating some distinctive profiles, such as Creag Ealraich (504 m AOD). Farmland and forestry encroach into the southern part of this LCT, which along with the roads and nearby settlements, contribute to a more settled character.

9.8.51 There are no wind farm developments in this LCT. Operational Farr, Glen Kyllachy and Moy wind farms occur in the *Rolling Uplands* LCT to the north-west at ranges beyond 10 km from the closest LCT boundary. Operational Berry Burn and Paul's Hill occur in the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT to the north-east, while the Operational Scheme, also occurs in this LCT, approximately 5 km to the north.

Sensitivity

9.8.52 The value of this LCT is medium-high. It is not covered by an NSA or SLA designation but is covered by the CNP designation and this raises its value. The landscape is typical of the wider foothills and lacks the scale, mass and character of the Cairngorm Mountains to the south, where the greater scenic value is recognised through the NSA designation.

9.8.53 The susceptibility of the LCT to the Proposed Development will be medium. There is no other wind farm development in this LCT, and development is generally sparse on the hills, although more evident as typically small scale and rural development on the southern edge of the LCT. There are, however, other wind farm developments with an influence on the character of the LCT, especially to the north-west, north and north-east, where Farr, Glen Kyllachy, Moy, the Operational Scheme, Berry Burn and Paul's Hill are located.

9.8.54 The combination of the value of the LCT and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development gives rise to an overall **medium-high** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.8.55 The ZTV in **Figure 9.8** shows that visibility across this LCT will be very limited, comprising a fine line along the northern ridgeline at a range of 5 to 10 km, a larger patch to the east of Lochindorb at a range of 10 to 12 km and patches to the east of the A940 at ranges of 14 to 24 km.

9.8.56 Although there will be an influence along the northern boundary line of the LCT, this will be so limited in extent that it will not alter the landscape character of this close-range part of the LCT. Visual effects will occur, and these are assessed in relation to the representative viewpoint at Carn Glas-choire (Viewpoint 2) along the northern ridgeline.

9.8.57 Where visibility occurs across the eastern shore of Lochindorb and over the low hill ridge, that runs south from the loch to Cam Sgriob (385 m AOD), the influence of the Proposed Development will be moderated by the existing

influence from the Operational Scheme in the same location, the distant range of the Proposed Development beyond 10 km, and the extent of intervening upland and high moorland that forms a separation within this distance. Here, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low**, with the LCT being influenced by a range of well-defined landscapes within closer proximity. Again, visual effects will occur in relation to the viewpoints representative of the specific sensitivities associated with the loch and the castle and these are assessed separately in relation to Viewpoints 14 and 15.

9.8.58 Where visibility occurs to the east of the A940, the association between this eastern part of the Strathdearn Hills and the western part of the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT, where the Proposed Development will be situated, is further weakened by distance and intervening landform such that the magnitude of change will be **low**. This rating also takes into account the stronger influence of closer range Paul's Hill and Berry Burn Wind Farms on this part of the LCT as well as the influence of the Operational Scheme in the same location as the Proposed Development.

9.8.59 Effects will also occur during the construction phase, largely owing to the tall cranes and emerging turbines which will be the most readily visible components of the Proposed Development during this phase. The magnitude of change will not, however, be greater than as assessed in relation to the operational phase of the Proposed Development.

Significance of effect

9.8.60 The effect of the Proposed Development on the *Upland Areas* LCT will be **not significant**. Despite the medium-high sensitivity relating to the CNP designation which covers this LCT, the very limited extent of visibility as shown on the ZTV combined with the distant range where visibility does occur and the greater influence of the wider landscape and existing operational wind farms, means the Proposed Development will not redefine the character of the LCT. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

<u>Narrow Wooded Valley – River Findhorn</u>

Key Characteristics – extract from NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment;

- *"Variety of natural geological features in and around the course of the river, the narrow gorges, coupled with the fast-moving, natural flow, pools, falls and occasional inaccessible gravel and sand beaches.*
- *Diversity of species and ages of woodland, forest cover and trees, mixed with pockets of pasture.*
- *Strong sense of history provided by the continuation of farming and forest management practices by estates, the presence of historic buildings and relicts, the many large, ancient trees, and the lack of major new developments or detracting structures.*
- *Winding, often narrow roads, following the land form, and crossing the river in enclosed niches over historic, small-scale stone bridges.*

- *Shelter and seclusion provided by intricate, enclosed landform, woodland cover and general lack of roads and river crossings."*

Baseline

9.8.61 The *Narrow Wooded Valley* LCT covers the middle reaches of the Findhorn Valley from where it flows north from the Strathdearn Hills towards the Moray coast. Although the source of the River Findhorn is much further south-west, up until the *Narrow Wooded Valley* LCT it forms a contained feature within the wider upland landscape. While there are sections in which the valley floor opens into narrow flood plains, for much of this LCT, the landform rises from the river edge and there are some sections in which narrow gorges occur.

9.8.62 The landscape around the River Findhorn comprises low and gently undulating hills and is characterised by a landscape pattern of dense coniferous plantations and deciduous woodland, such that views are either enclosed or closely contained. This means that the landscape character is largely drawn from the immediate surroundings with little or no influence from the wider surroundings, including the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT where the Proposed Development will be located.

9.8.63 Settlement is an intrinsic characteristic of the LCT with farmsteads, accessed by minor roads, scattered across the valley. Although there are operational wind farms in the surrounding hills, including the Operational Scheme to the south-west, their influence on this landscape is very limited owing to the enclosure created by the surrounding tree cover and landform.

Sensitivity

9.8.64 The value of this LCT is medium. It is not subject to any national or local landscape designations which would otherwise increase its value. Its value relates to the stark contrast the dense enclosure and intimacy of the woodland and valley landform create, in comparison to the vast openness of the neighbouring high moorlands.

9.8.65 The susceptibility of this LCT to the Proposed Development will be medium. The extent of dense forestry across much of this LCT means that the character is typically insular and, as such, the limited association with the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT where the Proposed Development will be located will reduce the susceptibility.

9.8.66 The combination of the value of the LCT and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development leads to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.8.67 The ZTV in **Figure 9.8** shows that theoretical visibility will be limited across the western part of the LCT, which at 5 to 8 km is the closest part of the LCT to the Proposed Development. This is because of the screening effect of the hills which line the northern edge of the *Open Rolling Upland* LCT and with actual visibility further reduced by the screening effect of the extensive tree cover in this LCT. In this part of the LCT there will mostly be **no change**. A **low** magnitude of change will potentially occur in those localised patches where actual visibility will arise, the effect moderated by the existing influence

from the adjacent Operational Scheme, and the separation distances of over 5 km.

9.8.68 In the area around Dulsie and further along the course of the River Findhorn to the north-east, while larger patches of theoretical visibility are shown on the ZTV, again the screening effect of coniferous plantations and deciduous woodland will notably reduce the extent of actual visibility with very few areas being subject to open views of the hills to the south-east. The magnitude of change will be **low** or **negligible** owing to the very limited extent over which actual visibility will occur but also taking into account the separation distance of over 8 km and the existing influence of the Operational Scheme in the same location. Infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development will not be readily visible from this LCT, owing to the screening effect of the intervening valley landform.

9.8.69 During the construction phase, the tall cranes used in the erection of the emerging turbines will be visible from the few areas where actual visibility occurs, although the magnitude of change will not be greater than as assessed in relation to the operational phase of the turbines.

Significance of effect

9.8.70 The effect of the Proposed Development on the character of this LCT will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases, largely owing to the very limited extent of the valley that will be influenced by the Proposed Development, the limited strength of this influence, and the existing influence from the Operational Scheme across broadly similar extents. The nature of the effects will be adverse.

Upland Valleys – River Findhorn

9.8.6 Key Characteristics – extract from NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment;

- *"Narrow, incised, enclosed glens merging with lower hill slopes containing them, with some hill spurs and side valleys.*
- *Winding sinuous river channels.*
- *Undulating valley floor.*
- *Mainly agricultural land use with improved pasture, predominantly sheep grazed, and arable land on narrow valley floor contrasting with open heather and rough grass of higher slopes.*
- *Mature deciduous and mixed woodlands aligned along rivers and burns creating intimate scale landscape, with large scale geometric conifer forests on valley sides.*
- *Simple landcover of upper slopes and surrounding hills contrasting with more intricate valley floor vegetation patterns.*
- *Dispersed settlement of traditional farmsteads and houses, well integrated into the lower valley landscapes.*
- *Distilleries with distinctive modern buildings.*

- *Scenic B roads following the valley floors, which are popular recreation routes used to access walking routes into the hills and the whisky trail.*
- *Views to the distinctively profiled Ben Rinnes which sits between the valleys."*

Baseline

9.8.7 The *Upland Valley* LCT covers the middle reaches of the Findhorn Valley and is set to the west of the *Narrow Wooded Valley* LCT, described and assessed above. This is a relatively small LCT covering the section of the valley that lies between the western edge of the coniferous forestry covering Carn na Caillich (372 m AOD) in the east and the property named 'Ropeway' in the south-west. This section differs from the section classified as *Narrow Wooded Valley* LCT owing to the much more open character of the landscape, with considerably less woodland cover and more fields of rough pasture for livestock grazing. The landform is also different, with the valley slopes along this section being much steeper and narrow valley floors opening up in parts.

9.8.8 The landscape around this LCT comprises undulating hills on either side which enclose the valley landscape and keep many of the views contained. The valley sides are largely open, albeit with dense coniferous forestry across the eastern part of the LCT. The landscape character is largely drawn from the immediate surroundings with little or no influence from the wider surroundings, including the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT to the south, where the Proposed Development will be located. Settlement is an intrinsic characteristic of the LCT with farmsteads, accessed by minor roads, scattered across the valley.

9.8.9 Variance in the landscape character does occur in the south-east and eastern margins where the influence of the high moorland encroaches, with the landscape becoming more open and exposed, and characterised by the flatter landform and heather moorland landcover. These areas are more closely associated with the neighbouring *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT than the *Upland Valley* LCT.

Sensitivity

9.8.10 The value of this LCT is medium. It is not subject to any national or local landscape designations which would otherwise increase its value. Its value relates to the enclosure and intimacy that the valley landform creates, in comparison to the vast openness of the neighbouring high moorlands.

9.8.11 The susceptibility of this LCT to the Proposed Development will be medium. The enclosure of the valley landform means that much of the character of this LCT is drawn from the close-range landscapes. Furthermore, there is already an influence in parts of this LCT from the Operational Scheme, which is located to the immediate south, which will moderate the effect on landscape character from further wind farm development.

9.8.12 The combination of the value of the LCT and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development leads to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.8.13 The ZTV in **Figure 9.8** shows theoretical visibility to be concentrated on the northern side of the LCT where the south-east and south-facing slopes of the

valley landscape occur. There is practically no visibility along the valley floor and north-west and north facing valley slopes on the southern side of the LCT, with the exception of a few small patches along the upper slopes. As much of this LCT is open, actual visibility will mostly match theoretical visibility, with the exception across the eastern part where woodland cover occurs. Where there is no visibility, there will be no change.

9.8.14 As this LCT sits to the north of the Proposed Development, the Operational Scheme already forms a closer range wind farm with an existing influence on the character of this LCT. Where visibility arises, the Proposed Development will be seen at a range of 3 to 6 km, which is relatively close, and it will form an apparent feature owing to its location on the ridgeline behind a flat and expansive high moorland. The magnitude of change will, however, be **low** owing to the limited extents of actual visibility, and the location of the Proposed Development to the rear and side of the Operational Scheme, which means that it will not form a new influence and furthermore, will be closely associated with an existing influence. Infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development will not be readily visible from this LCT owing to the screening effect of the intervening landform.

9.8.15 During the construction phases the tall cranes used in the erection of the emerging turbines will be visible from the few areas where actual visibility occurs, although the magnitude of change will not be greater than as assessed in relation to the operational phase of the turbines, which will be **low**.

Significance of effect

9.8.16 The effect of the Proposed Development on the character of this LCT will be **not significant**, largely owing to the very limited extent of this valley landscape that will be influenced by the Proposed Development, the limited strength of this influence, and the existing influence from the Operational Scheme across broadly similar extents. The nature of the effects will be adverse.

9.9 Assessment of Effects on Landscape Designations and Wild Land Areas

9.9.1 The second group of receptors covered in the assessment of effects on landscape character are the landscape designations and WLAs that cover the Study Area as shown in **Figure 9.3** and shown in conjunction with the ZTV in **Figure 9.9**.

9.9.2 It should be noted that the designated areas and WLA included in the assessment cover large areas, and that the effects of the Proposed Development can, therefore, vary widely across each of these areas. The distinction within these areas, where effects may be significant and not significant, is of particular importance in the assessment, and where this is the case, the assessment describes in detail the boundaries which separate these areas.

9.9.3 An initial assessment has been carried out to identify those landscape designations and WLAs which have the potential to undergo significant effects and, therefore, require a detailed assessment. This has been informed by the findings of the LVIA, as well as review of ZTVs for the Proposed Development combined with site work. This assessment has indicated that parts of three

designated areas have potential to undergo significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development. These are:

- The Cairngorms National Park;
- The Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area; and
- The Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Special Landscape Area.

9.9.4 The effect of the Proposed Development on the CNP and on the Cairngorm Mountains NSA is assessed in **Appendix 9.B** and **Appendix 9.C** respectively. The effect of the Proposed Development on the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Special Landscape Area is presented in this Section 9.9 of the LVIA. The other landscape designations in the Study Area were found through the initial assessment to not have the potential to undergo a significant effect. As such they have not been assessed in any further detail. The scope of this assessment has been agreed with THC and NatureScot through the scoping process.

9.9.5 The third group of receptors covered in the assessment of effects on landscape character is the mapped interest of WLAs that occur in the Study Area as shown in **Figure 9.3** and shown in conjunction with the ZTV in **Figure 9.9**.

9.9.6 The initial assessment indicated only the Cairngorms WLA has the potential to be significantly affected as a result of the Proposed Development. The effect of the Proposed Development on the Cairngorms WLA is assessed in **Appendix 9.D**.

9.9.7 The scope of the assessment of effects on landscape designations and WLAs has been agreed with NatureScot and THC through the scoping process and pre-application consultations.

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA

Location

9.9.8 The Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA comprises the area of high moorland that lies between the lower uplands of Nairn to the north and the river valleys of the Spey and Dulnain to the south. It extends from Carn nan Tri-tighearnan (614 m AOD) in the west, to Lang Hill (543 m AOD) and Carn Kitty (522 m AOD) in the east. The SLA is shown in **Figure 9.3**.

Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas

9.9.9 THC's 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' provides a citation for the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA, which lists out its key landscape and visual characteristics, as well as its special qualities. This provides a useful basis on which to establish the sensitivity of the SLA and to determine the magnitude of change the Proposed Development may have on the SLA.

"Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics

- *Rounded slopes leading to summits of relatively uniform height with a large expanse of elevated, undulating blanket bog, and moorland smooth and heather clad. Woodland cover is limited in extent and there are few buildings or structures.*

- *Where buildings do exist, they are of a distinct estate architectural character.*
- *The strongly horizontal composition of elements is dominated by the sky and moorland, and a simple and prominent skyline in between. Occasional foci do exist, however, such as small craggy hills, lochans and lodges.*
- *Views across the undulating moorland offer wide, open horizons and broad panoramas in all directions, providing visual connectivity with the higher mountain ranges to the north, west and south.*
- *The heather moors are defined by distinctive, geometric muirburn patterns which create an abstract mosaic of colour and texture across the slopes, and identify this as partly a manmade landscape where land management for grouse shooting is the primary activity.*
- *There are isolated fragments of native pine-birch woodland scattered across the area. This is an attractive feature which serves (by contrast) to emphasise the dominance of the horizontal dimension and unbroken skylines that predominate across the open landscape.*
- *The moorland plateau is dissected by a series of incised river valleys, many of which are flanked by estate access tracks leading into the moorland core. Distinctive rocky outcrops occur and the more steep-sided valleys, such as that of the River Findhorn at Drynachan, offer enclosed and intimate relief from the surrounding expansive moorland.*
- *The limited network of public roads through the area, lack of habitation and other built features and open character convey a sense of remoteness and isolation. This is reinforced by the notable consistency of this character throughout its extent. There is a strong sense of tranquillity in many parts of this landscape.*
- *Some access tracks are cut into the slope, resulting in visible excavation and consequent erosion.*
- *Lochindorb stands out as the only major tract of open water in the area (largest surface body of water in East Highland plus whole of Grampian Region) and has the added interest of a ruined castle on an island in the middle. The loch has low-lying shores and is fringed with pockets of sheltered pastoral farmland, offering a pleasant contrast to the dominant surrounding moorland."*

9.9.10 The key landscape and visual characteristics listed above describe a landscape that is defined by the openness and simplicity of the upland moorland landscape. These characteristics are not inherent, but largely the product of land management practices. Long-term and extensive deforestation has created a moorland landscape which has subsequently been managed as grouse moorland.

9.9.11 The Operational Scheme is located in the western part of this SLA, where direct effects occur and with indirect effects extending across much of the wider extent of the SLA. This thirteen-turbine wind farm development has an existing effect on the landscape character of this SLA. There is also an

influence from close range Moy Wind Farm to the immediate north-west and medium range Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms to the south-west. While there is little built development in the high moorlands in the core of this SLA, there is also an influence from the undesignated landscape to the south-west which contains the A9 (T) corridor, with the rail line and associated small scale development.

9.9.12 Table 9.6 below, lists out the sensitivities to change, identified in the 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' and describes how the Proposed Development may affect these sensitivities.

Table 9.6 - Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA Sensitivity to change

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA sensitivity to change	Susceptibility in relation to Proposed Development
"The undifferentiated moorland landscape, characterised by expansive horizons and broad panoramas may be diminished by further features which break up the composition."	The Proposed Development will not be located in the core area of high moorland but on the western edge, which means its influence will be limited in extent across the wider SLA, dissipating with distance. It will also be seen in the immediate context of the Operational Scheme and the wider context of operational Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms, which will moderate the effect as there is already an existing influence from wind farm development on the character of this SLA. While the proposed turbines could be seen to break up the western horizon of the wider moorland area, the location of the seven additional turbines adjacent to the 13 Operational Scheme turbines will ensure that it appears as an extension and will keep the effect contained within this western part of the SLA.
"The sense of isolation, extensive panoramas and impression of wildness could be compromised by the introduction of further buildings or other structures."	In the western part of the SLA, the existing influence of the Operational Scheme, combined with land use practices associated with the grouse moorland and forestry, reduce the sense of isolation and wildness. In respect of this baseline, the addition of the Proposed Development will not introduce a notable change. Across the high moorland, in the centre of the SLA, there is some sense of isolation and wildness, although also moderated by visibility of operational wind farms and current land use practices. While the Proposed Development will increase the existing influence of the operational wind farm developments, this increase will be contained in extent and closely associated with the Operational Scheme.
"The consistency of appearance of the moorland character could be damaged by variation in land management practices that led to significant changes in the balance of ground cover types."	The Proposed Development will not affect this sensitivity to change. While areas of heather moorland will be removed to construct the access tracks and turbine foundations, the limited extent of these areas ensures that the changes will be limited in extent and not be significant.
"The introduction of further	The Proposed Development will not affect this sensitivity

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA sensitivity to change	Susceptibility in relation to Proposed Development
woodland or forest development in areas of open moorland, remote from watercourses, which would break up the continuity of land cover and interrupt or obstruct views."	to change as it does not involve the planting of forestry.
"Key landscape management priorities should be to protect it from fragmentation and encroachment by unsympathetic forms of development which could disrupt the wide and uncluttered horizontal views."	The location of the Proposed Development on the western margins of the SLA, where wind farm development already has an influence, will help to prevent the wider spread into the central parts of the SLA. The Proposed Development will, nonetheless, add to the existing influence from wind farm development, albeit contained in extent and closely associated with the Operational Scheme.

Sensitivity

9.9.13 The value of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA is medium-high. It is a scenic designation which denotes the local value of this landscape. While the distinctive character of the expansive high moorland presents an important example of this type of landscape, other examples occur in upland areas across the Highlands of Scotland.

9.9.14 The susceptibility of the SLA to the Proposed Development will be medium-low, largely owing to the location of the Operational Scheme in the SLA and the close proximity of the Proposed Development to this existing wind farm. This rating is also moderated by the extent to which the landscape has been modified by land use practices associated with forestry and grouse moors, as well as the further influence of wind farm developments such as Moy, Farr, Glen Kyllachy, Paul's Hill and Berry Burn around the periphery of the SLA.

9.9.15 The combination of the value of the SLA and its susceptibility to the Proposed Development leads to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

9.9.16 Table 9.7 below sets out the special qualities of the SLA, taken from THC's 'Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas' and using them as the basis to assess the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development.

Table 9.7 - Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA Special Qualities

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA special qualities	Magnitude of change / Significance of the effect
Special Qualities - A Sense of Solitude, Views over Heather Moorland, and Big Skies	
Expansive views and broad panoramas across open, rolling moorland and vast skies instil a boundless sense of scale and space, enhanced by the consistency of moorland cover and landform character.	The Proposed Development will have an effect on the views and panoramas from parts of the SLA to the east, where views look west over the open moorland, with the Proposed Development seen as a feature on the ridgeline. The magnitude of change will be **low** in this part of the SLA from 5 to 10 km and will give rise to **not significant** effects. Views of the open moorland will also be affected around the Site where

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA special qualities	Magnitude of change / Significance of the effect
	visibility occurs and the magnitude of change will be **medium** out to 5 km to the east and south and out to 2 km to the west, and in these parts the effect will be significant. To the north and north-west, the Operational Scheme will be closer range, and this will moderate the effect of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will be seen in the context of the Operational Scheme, as well as Moy Wind Farm on the western edge of the SLA. Here, the magnitude of change will be **low** and the effect **not significant**.
A narrow, deep section of the Findhorn River valley at Streens offers enclosed and intimate relief in contrast to the elevated and exposed moorland. Elsewhere, valleys frame views to Lochindorb.	The ZTV shows that the extent and levels of visibility through the Findhorn River Valley will be limited both in extent and number of turbines visible. Actual visibility will be further reduced in parts by mature tree cover. The magnitude of change will be **low**, **negligible** or **no change** and the effect will be **not significant** or there will be **no effect**. Views of the Proposed Development will not occur framed by valleys, and it will only be seen on the background hills to the west of Lochindorb.
Land management practices create distinctive abstract muirburn patterns, accentuated by ever-changing weather and light patterns.	The Proposed Development will have no effect on the special quality associated with the muirburn patterns. There will be **no effect**.
The limited extent of tree cover and human habitation creates a simple yet powerful moorland image of tranquillity, simplicity and isolation which is emphasised by Lochindorb and its ruined castle.	Commercial forestry covers a substantial tract of land to the immediate south-west of the Proposed Development, and this detracts from the special qualities of tranquillity, simplicity and isolation. In respect of Lochindorb, there will be visual effects from specific points along the lochshore, as represented by Viewpoints 14 and 15, but the effects on the wider landscape will be of a **medium-low** magnitude and **not significant**. Forestry is evident around Lochindorb and will become more apparent with the growth of Dunearn Plantation.
Where buildings exist, these are of a distinctive estate character. Also building remains from pre clearance farmsteads, with enclosures, head dykes and associated field systems and improved land form one of the few built and 'managed' elements within the landscape. These engender a strong atmosphere which can arouse contemplative emotions of past human endeavour and hardship.	The Proposed Development will not have a **not significant** effect or **no effect** on this special quality as it is not sited close to any ruined buildings, nor at a proximity to such structures that it will affect the experience of the special quality associated with them.
The long, fairly straight routes through this landscape allow an easy appreciation of the openness and simplicity of the	The Proposed Development will be seen as a feature on the skyline ridge when viewed from sections of the B9007 and the A939. The detailed assessment of these routes has determined that the magnitude of

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA special qualities	Magnitude of change / Significance of the effect
landscape. These are typically lined with permanent snow poles which serve to reinforce the impression that this is a landscape exposed to adverse weather.	change will be **medium-low** or **low** on those sections of the B9007 and on the A939 where visibility will arise and will give rise to a **not significant** effect. These are visual effects that relate to the experience of road-users and are not necessarily related to landscape character.

Significance of effect

9.9.17 The Proposed Development will have a **significant** effect on the SLA in respect of the special quality of 'Expansive views and broad panoramas'. The geographical extent of the significant effect will include part of the 5 km radius of the Proposed Development to the south and south-east and parts of the 2 km radius to the west. The effect on all other parts of the SLA will be **not significant**. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

9.9.18 In respect of the effect of the Proposed Development on the SLA as a whole, the effect will be **not significant**. This assessment relates to the small extent of the much wider area that would be significantly affected, combined with the fact that within that area only one of the six special qualities would be significantly affected. The majority of the SLA and the majority of the special qualities that characterise it, would not be significantly affected or not be affected at all and the integrity of the designation would remain intact.

Summary on Effects on Landscape

9.9.19 The effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated areas and Wild Land Areas that were assessed in detail as having the potential to undergo a significant effect are summarised in Table 9.8 below. The other landscape character receptors have been assessed as not having potential to undergo significant effects.

Table 9.8 - Summary of Effects on Landscape

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during operation	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
Heather Moorland	Medium	Low	Not significant	N/A	N/A
Open Rolling Uplands LCT	Medium	Medium-high Medium-low / Low / No change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east Not significant / No effect for remainder	Medium-high Medium-low / Low / No change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east Not significant / No effect for remainder
Rolling Uplands LCT	Medium	Medium	Significant in parts out to 2 km west	Medium	Significant in parts out to 2 km west

Landscape Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during operation	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
		Medium-low / Low / Negligible	Not significant for remainder	Medium-low / Low / Negligible	Not significant for remainder
Upland Areas LCT	Medium-high	Medium-low / Low	Not significant	Medium-low / Low	Not significant
Narrow Wooded Valley LCT	Medium	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant
Upland Valley LCT	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA	Medium	Medium Medium-low / low / no change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east and 2 km west Not significant for remainder	Medium Medium-low / low / no change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east and 2 km west Not significant for remainder
Cairngorms National Park	Medium-high	Medium-low / low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Medium-low / low / negligible / no change	Not significant
Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area	High	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant
Cairngorms WLA	Medium-high	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant

9.10 Assessment of Effects on Views

Introduction

9.10.1 Effects on views are the changes to views that result from the introduction of the Proposed Development. The assessment of effects on views includes effects on the viewpoints which represent visibility of the Proposed Development from around the 40 km radius Study Area and effects on principal visual receptors such as settlements and routes. The assessment of effects on views has been carried out through comprehensive site survey along with the use of wirelines, photomontages and ZTVs, following the full methodology described in **Appendix 9.A**.

9.10.2 The viewpoint locations are shown in conjunction with the blade tip ZTV in **Figure 9.5a** (40 km radius) and **Figure 9.5b** (20 km radius). The hub height ZTVs are shown in **Figure 9.6a** (40 km radius) and **Figure 9.6b** (20 km radius).

9.10.3 The viewpoints are illustrated to NatureScot standards in **Figures 9.24 to 9.40** and the THC standards in **Figures 9.41 to 9.57**, where baseline photographs of each view are accompanied by computer-generated cumulative wirelines. These have been prepared using cylindrical projection to show the landscape and visual context and show fields of view of 90, 180, 270 or 360 degrees as required. In addition, baseline wirelines and computer-generated photomontages have also been prepared using planar projection with fields of view of 53.5 degrees. The limitations of planar projection images do not allow for substantially wider views to be prepared to accurately represent the Proposed Development. Where the Proposed Development does not fit in one 53.5-degree view then more than one 53.5-degree panorama has been provided to illustrate its full extent.

9.10.4 In the wirelines, the Proposed Development wind turbines are shown in red, operational wind farms are shown in black, under-construction wind farms are indicated in purple, consented wind farms in green and application stage wind turbines are shown in blue. Scoping stage wind turbines are shown in orange.

9.10.5 Relevant components of the Proposed Development infrastructure have been montaged into visualisations for those views where infrastructure makes a notable contribution to the effects of the Proposed Development.

9.10.6 This assessment is based on the viewpoints that were used in the assessment of the Operational Scheme and have been agreed with THC and NatureScot through the scoping process and pre-application consultations.

Effects on Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1: Balvraid (**Figures 9.24** and **9.41**)

Baseline

9.10.7 This viewpoint is located on the minor road that accesses Balvraid and Balvraid Lodge from the settlements of Findhornbridge and Tomatin, as well as the A9(T). The viewpoint is located just south of the cluster of properties at Balvraid as this presents a slightly greater level of visibility owing to the slightly higher elevation. The view looks north-east towards the Proposed Development, at a minimum distance of 4.07 km. This view is experienced by a limited number of people, predominantly residents of the nearby properties and the lodge. The viewpoint is not located in a designated landscape.

9.10.8 The foreground is characterised by the minor road and cluster of properties which it accesses. These are located in the relatively flat floodplain of Allt Bruachaig and are surrounded by small fields of semi-improved pasture. As the landform rises to the north, the land-use changes and forestry covers the hill slopes, forming a continuous blanket that extends across the rounded hills and ridgelines. These forested hills form the defining feature of the view.

9.10.9 The relatively even elevation of the ridgeline and the homogenous covering of forestry presents a view in which there are no distinct focal features, other

than the close-range properties. The view has a distinctly rural character, with no large-scale developments visible other than the blade tips of the Operational Scheme, seen set behind the ridgeline. The presence of the farmland and forestry, as well as the roads and properties, do, however, denote the settled and modified nature of this landscape, where there is no real sense of isolation or wildness.

Sensitivity

9.10.10 The viewpoint is not located in a designated landscape and is not a place visitors will be attracted to for the views. It is therefore an informal viewpoint selected to represent the views of the small number of local residents and other visitors to the local properties, as well as possibly a small number of walkers. The value of the view is medium.

9.10.11 The susceptibility of residents will be high. There is the possibility that the views from the internal living space of some of the properties will be affected, as well as views from the garden grounds. As these are views that will be experienced, potentially, over long periods of time, residents will be more susceptible than the other visual receptors, such as visitors and walkers, whose susceptibility will be medium-high.

9.10.12 The combination of the medium value of the view and the high susceptibility of residents leads to a **medium-high** sensitivity, while the medium value in combination with the medium-high susceptibility of visitors and walkers leads also to a **medium-high** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.13 The wireline in **Figure 9.24e** shows that of the seven proposed turbines, one blade will theoretically be visible. This will be set behind the afforested summit of Carn Gleann an Tairbhidh (570 m AOD). The Operational Scheme is shown in the wireline as one tip and one blade set behind Meall Mor (474 m AOD), close to where it folds with Tom a Ghealagaidh (469 m AOD) to the left of Carn Gleann an Tairbhidh. The photomontage in **Figure 9.22f** shows that the forest cover which blankets the hills slopes, up to and over the ridge, will effectively screen the single blade of the Proposed Development. The forest cover will also largely screen the two operational blades such that only one tip will be visible above the treetops.

9.10.14 Even taking into account the potential for the forest cover to be removed from the hillsides and hilltops, the single blade of the Proposed Development will have a **negligible** magnitude of change on the view from Balvraid Lodge. It will form a very small-scale features in this view and its location behind the ridge will ensure a separation from the immediate landscape and in so doing, reduce its visual influence.

9.10.15 Without the forest cover, the blade of the Proposed Development turbine will be seen behind the same hill as the two Operational Scheme turbines. While the proposed turbine will increase the extent to which wind farm development will be visible from this viewpoint, the very limited extent to which it will be visible means that the addition will be incremental. Furthermore, the blade will be seen in the context of a landscape modified by forestry and farming and in which small-scale, built development is an

established feature, including the close-range houses and the nearby telegraph poles.

9.10.16 The intervening landform will screen the site infrastructure, as well as the majority of the construction operations and plant, with the exception of the tall cranes which will be limited to a small extent during the construction of the turbines visible from this viewpoint. The magnitude of change will be no greater than that assessed in respect of the operational phase.

9.10.17 Taking all these factors into account the magnitude of change that the Proposed Development will bring to this view will be **negligible** during both the construction and operational phases.

Significance of the effect

9.10.18 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view from Balvraid will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This finding relates chiefly to the limited extent to which only one of the proposed turbines will be visible. The nature of this effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 2: Carn Glas-choire (**Figures 9.25** and **9.42**)

Baseline

9.10.19 This viewpoint has been selected to represent the visual effects of the Proposed Development on walkers on the group of hills that form the northern edge of the Cairngorms National Park. At 659 m AOD, Carn Glas-choire forms the highest point along the long and rounded ridge, such that the clearest views are experienced from its summit. The hill is most easily and commonly accessed from the south-east, where a vehicular track provides access from the B9007 to the shoulder of the hill, and then from where walkers navigate the remaining 600 m over the heather and low vegetation.

9.10.20 Carn Glas-choire is similar to the three other hills in this group, in that it is characterised by its broad and rounded form, its dark and tight groundcover, and its open and relatively featureless appearance. These hills form the foothills to the larger Monadhliath Mountains to the south-west, from which they are separated by the A9, as it drives a pass over the Slochd summit. They are all of similar height (627 m to 659 m AOD) and interlock to form an upland area from which the landform falls away in elevation to the north, east and south. Beyond the low-lying valleys of River Dulnain and River Spey, the landform rises dramatically to form the Cairngorm Mountains to the south and south-east.

9.10.21 The view from the summit is expansive in all directions. It is largely characterised by the high moorland of the surrounding hills with their gently undulating landform and dark blanket covering of heather moorland. This landscape is exposed and largely featureless, giving some sense of remoteness, albeit moderated by the tracks and muirburn associated with the management of the grouse moor.

9.10.22 The hills extend into the wider landscape, creating tiers of increasingly distant ridgelines. The most dramatic and scenic of these lies to the south, where the distinct outline of the Cairngorm Mountains presents the main attraction of the wider view. In contrast, the hills to the north, where the

Proposed Development will be located, appear low and relatively uniform in their scale and form.

9.10.23 While there is very little development visible in the view to the south, the Operational Scheme is visible in the view to the immediate north at a minimum distance of 5.78 km. Other operational wind farms are also visible, with Moy seen to the north-west at a minimum distance of 11.8 km.

Sensitivity

9.10.24 The viewpoint is located on the northern edge of the CNP, making it representative of this designated area, albeit with the view looking northwards, away from the park, rather than southwards towards it. It is also covered by the local landscape designation of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA. The viewpoint represents the summit of the hill, which although not a formal viewpoint, is the point where walkers are most likely to stop for some time and appreciate the view. The value of the view is rated as medium-high, and not high as it is not included in the Cairngorm Mountains NSA, and the landscape which surrounds the viewpoint, whilst of scenic value, is not as impressive as the more elevated or well-defined hill ranges in the wider area.

9.10.25 An important part of the hill walkers experience is the experience of panoramic views from the summit. The susceptibility of walkers to the Proposed Development will be medium. For many walkers, the appreciation of the hilltop views is an important part of the overall hillwalking experience. Expectations are often based on experiencing a largely undeveloped upland landscape. While the wider landscape to the south is largely undeveloped, the presence of the Operational Scheme, within the close-range to the north, establishes wind farm development as an established feature of the baseline view and, in so doing, moderates the susceptibility of walkers to this type of development.

9.10.26 The combination of the value of the view and the susceptibility of the walkers to the Proposed Development will lead to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.27 The viewpoint is located 5.78 km from the nearest turbine of the Proposed Development. The wireline in Figure 9.25f shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be theoretically visible, with four seen with parts of their towers visible, two seen to just below the nacelle and one as a blade. The three turbines on the left are seen set within the existing extent of the Operational Scheme turbines and although the blades are slightly longer the overall difference in scale is tempered by the extent to which these turbines are screened by the foreground landform of Carn an t-Sean Liathanaich (635 m AOD). The four turbines on the right sit to the right of the Operational Scheme turbines and are more exposed owing to their position behind the downslope.

9.10.28 Those factors which will add to the magnitude of change include the more exposed nature of the four turbines on the right and their slightly larger scale compared to the Operational Scheme turbines. The magnitude of change will not, however, rise above medium owing to the small number of additional turbines, their compact layout which means the additional horizontal extent is

limited, their close association with the Operational Scheme turbines which makes it clear that they form an extension, and their consolidation in a small proportion of an unremarkable sector of a much wider scenic view. The prominence of the proposed turbines will be moderated by their relatively low-lying position and their containment below the more distant skyline, which will also screen the site infrastructure

9.10.29 The openness and simplicity of the landscape, and in particular its extensive scale, will allow the Proposed Development to be accommodated in this landscape without the defining characteristics being compromised. Furthermore, the existing presence and influence of the Operational Scheme and operational Moy Wind Farm, ensure that the Proposed Development is not introducing a new or unfamiliar feature to this sector of the view. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low**.

9.10.30 In terms of the extent to which the magnitude of impact will be experienced, this will be largely contained around the summit. As the approach to the summit of Carn Glas-choire is typically from the south, and as the ridge itself screens views to the north from much of the approach, visibility of the Proposed Development occurs only across the upper slopes and top. Instead, views during the approach are typically drawn south across the Dulnain and Spey valleys, towards the dramatic massif of the Cairngorm Mountains.

9.10.31 The majority of the construction operations and plant will also be screened with the exception of the tall cranes which will be used during the construction and decommissioning of the turbines. The presence and movement of the cranes combined with the emergence of the proposed turbines during these phases, seen from the minimum distance of 5.78 km, will give rise to a **medium-low** magnitude of change.

Significance of the effect

9.10.32 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view from Carn Glas-choire will be **significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates principally to the close proximity of the viewpoint to the Proposed Development as well as the sensitivity attached to the location of the viewpoint in the SLA designation and on the edge of the CNP designation, and despite the existing baseline influence from the Operational Scheme. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 3: Ptarmigan Lodge (**Figures 9.26** and **9.43**)

Baseline

9.10.33 This viewpoint is located on the viewing platform at the Ptarmigan Lodge visitor centre (~1,080 m) at the top of the Cairngorm Funicular Railway, approximately 165 m below the summit of Cairngorm. The open aspect is to the north and the view is experienced by thousands of visitors each year, all year round, especially those attracted by snow sports in the winter. The viewpoint is located in the Cairngorms National Park and the Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area. The view is typical of the views experienced from the northern aspect of the Cairngorm Mountains, albeit with the influence of the infrastructure associated with the snow sports facilities evident.

9.10.34 The view extends from the west to the east, with the northern aspect forming the central sector of the full view. Views of Cairngorm to the south are screened by the visitor centre and access onto the hill from the centre is restricted. The view extends out across Rothiemurchas Basin and Strathspey to the Monadhliath Mountains to the west, the Cromdale Hills to the east and the group of uplands to the north where the Proposed Development is located. The hills are not as dramatic in terms of scale and mass, as the Cairngorm Mountains. Collectively they form a relatively long and level skyline, without any distinctive features, such that they appear as the enclosing backdrop the view.

9.10.35 The attention of viewers is typically drawn by the visual interest of the foreground and middle-ground. The downward slopes of the foreground are characterised by the extent of chespale fencing, tracks, ski tows and other infrastructure associated with the recreational use of the mountain for snow sports. The visitor centre and funicular railway appear especially as obvious interventions at variance with the character of the mountain.

9.10.36 The lowland landscape, which occupies the middle-ground of the view, presents a strong contrast with the mountain landscape on account of its distinct low and level landform, as well as greener and more wooded landcover. There is also evidence of a greater level of human intervention with settlements and roads visible, the most evident being Aviemore, with its light-coloured buildings standing out amidst the context of dark woodland cover.

9.10.37 In clear conditions, the elevated nature of the viewpoint provides an expansive view across a range of landscapes. Beyond the first tier of hills, further tiers occur giving a complex layering of horizons and a sense of depth to the wider landscape. In these hills existing wind farm development is evident as distant features, with Paul's Hill and Berry Burn visible to the north-east at ranges of 36.5 km and 38.1 km, respectively, and the Operational Scheme, Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy visible to the north-west at ranges of 32.5 km, 33.2 km, 35.2 km and 37.9 km, respectively.

Sensitivity

9.10.38 The value of this view is medium-high. It is a formal viewpoint located on a terrace that has been designed to encourage visitors to view the landscape. Furthermore, its orientation is north towards the location of the Proposed Development. It is also representative of the Cairngorm Mountains NSA and CNP. The value is prevented from being high by the extent of built development on the mountain which detracts from the quality of the view.

9.10.39 The susceptibility of viewers to the Proposed Development is medium. They will be visiting the viewing terrace with the intention of enjoying the views and the Proposed Development will lie within the central sector of the available view. There are, however, a number of factors which will moderate their susceptibility, including the distant location of the Proposed Development, the presence of other existing wind farms visible from this viewpoint and the influence of closer range developments on the character of the view.

9.10.40 The combination of the value of the view and the susceptibility of the walkers to the Proposed Development will lead to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.41 The Proposed Development will be located 32.53 km from the viewpoint. This means it will be seen as a small scale and distant component in the view and only visible during clear weather conditions. It will be seen to the north of the viewpoint and set on the distant ridgeline of lower hills that collectively form a gently undulating ridgeline. The turbines will be visible more as a small group rather than individual turbines, with blade movements not apparent from such a range. They will be backclothed by tiers of more distant hills.

9.10.42 The Proposed Development will not form a new feature in this view, as wind farm development is already visible, most notably with the Operational Scheme it will be closely associated with, but with also Farr and Moy wind farms seen to the north-west and Paul's Hill and Berry Burn wind farms visible to the north-east, all at similar ranges to that of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will occupy a position amidst these existing developments and, therefore, will not increase the parameters of this type of development. It will also be seen to comply with the existing pattern in which wind farm developments are concentrated in the broad band of foothills to the north and east of the Cairngorm Mountains. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change will be **negligible**.

9.10.43 From the distance of 32.53 km, infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development will not be readily visible. The processes and plant associated with the construction and decommissioning phases will also not be readily visible, with the exception of the tall cranes which may be discernible, albeit too distant to alter the rating of a **negligible** magnitude of change.

Significance of the effect

9.10.44 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view from Ptarmigan Lodge will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates chiefly to the distance at which the Proposed Development will be located from the viewpoint, which means it will be seen as a small-scale feature, and furthermore, it will be seen integrated with the Operational Scheme and the wider existing pattern of wind farm development in this northern sector of the view. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 4: Creagan a' Chaise (**Figures 9.27** and **9.44**)

Baseline

9.10.45 This viewpoint has been selected to represent the visual effects of the Proposed Development on walkers in the Cromdale Hills. Creagan a' Chaise has been selected as it forms the highest, and possibly the most popular summit in the range. The view looks north-west towards the Proposed Development which will be seen at a minimum distance of 25.83 km. The viewpoint is located in the Cairngorms National Park and on the edge of the Blackwater, Ben Rinnes and Tomintoul AGLV.

9.10.46 The Cromdale Hills form a distinct north-east to south-west ridge of hills, separated from the surrounding uplands by the low-lying Spey valley to the north-west, and the Avon valley to the east and south-east. The summit of Creagan a' Chaise lies in the southern part of the ridge. It is marked by the

large Jubilee Cairn and can be reached from either Cromdale in the north or Milton in the east. Tracks leading onto the grouse moors, assist access from both directions, with navigation over the heather moorland required to reach the summit.

9.10.47 The view from the summit is panoramic. Upland landscapes occur in every sector from the viewpoint, collectively forming an almost continuous ridge around the Cromdale Hills. The upland landscape to the south comprises the mountain massif of the Cairngorm Mountains. These form the main attraction of the wider view on account of their scale and mass, as well as their more dramatic skyline profile. There is very little, large-scale or small-scale development evident in this sector. To the south-east the profile of the hills becomes lower and smoother, and parts of Strath Avon become visible between the hills, denoting a more settled aspect to this landscape, albeit with large scale development still not evident.

9.10.48 To the north-east, the ridge of the Cromdale Hills forms a closer range feature, with the distinct profile of Ben Rinnes visible to the right and wind farm development evident across the long and level ridgeline to the left, with Rothes and Rothes Extension visible at 2.67 km and 2.55 km respectively, Paul's Hill at 15.4 km and Berry Burn at 18.1 km. To the north-west, the background hills appear to flatten further and the views across the Spey Valley open up to reveal a landscape which is both farmed and forested and in which settlement is mostly dispersed, albeit with the town of Grantown on Spey readily evident. Wind farms form a more distant feature than in the north-east sector, with the Operational Scheme visible at 25.8 km and Moy visible at 32.8 km. It is in this sector that the Proposed Development will be seen to the fore of the Operational Scheme and Moy.

9.10.49 The Strathdearn Hills, in which the Proposed Development will be located, form a background feature in this view, their distance accentuated by the broad expanse of the valley landscape evident in the middle-ground. Without any distinct profile, they merge with the wider ridgeline of the upland landscape, in which there are no focal points or features, other than the distinctive outline of the Ben Wyvis range visible in the far distance, albeit only on clear days.

Sensitivity

9.10.50 The value of the view is medium-high. The summit of the hill marks a semi-formal viewpoint which walkers visit with the intention of enjoying the panoramic view and this, along with the inclusion of the viewpoint in the designated area of the CNP and on the edge of the AGLV, raises the value of the viewpoint. The value of the viewpoint is not rated as high as it is not representative of an NSA, which has the highest scenic value.

9.10.51 The susceptibility of walkers to the Proposed Development will be medium-high. The expectation of walkers will be to enjoy a panoramic view of a largely undeveloped landscape. The presence of operational wind farms in the view will reduce susceptibility by making this type of development an established feature of the view. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will be located in a sector of the view which is less remarkable than the other sectors and in which wind farm development already occurs.

9.10.52 The combination of the medium-high value of the view and the medium-high susceptibility of walkers leads to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.53 The wireline in **Figure 9.27f** shows the Proposed Development seen set in the Strathdearn Hills at a distance of 25.83 km. The proposed turbines will appear as relatively small-scale components, especially in the context of the much wider upland ridge that extends through this sector and adjoining sectors. They will be seen to largely coincide with the horizontal extent of the Operational Scheme, such that the influence of the additional turbines will be concentrated in a location where this influence already occurs. While the proposed turbines will be slightly larger than the Operational Scheme turbines, from a range of 25.83 km, these differences will be indiscernible.

9.10.54 The Proposed Development will form a compact group that will appear integrated with the Operational Scheme, which will help moderate any additional effect. The turbines will be seen situated on a section of a much wider ridgeline that is set lower than the adjacent ridgeline and this further reduces their prominence. There is also an existing influence from other operational wind farm developments in these hills including Moy Wind Farm, set to the rear and Paul's Hill Wind Farm in the sector to the right. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change that the Proposed Development will have on the view during the operational phase will be **low**. This assessment relates principally to the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, the unremarkable nature of the hills with which it will be associated and the existing influence of other wind farm developments on this view.

9.10.55 The distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development means that associated infrastructure will not be visible, and although the tall cranes used in construction and decommissioning may be discernible, they will not increase the magnitude of change rating owing to their comparatively small scale at this range, which during the construction phase will also be **low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.56 The effect of the Proposed Development on this view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. Despite the medium-high sensitivity relating to the value of the CNP designation and the susceptibility of walkers, the limited visual influence of the Proposed Development and the existing influence from the operational wind farms means that the Proposed Development will not redefine the character of the view. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 5: Minor Road north of Drynachan (**Figures 9.28** and **9.45**)

Baseline

9.10.57 This viewpoint has been selected to represent views of the Proposed Development from the minor road between the village of Cawdor and the hamlet of Drynachan. The Proposed Development will be visible to south-bound road-users over a short section to the north of Drynachan. The

frequency of road-users is typically low, with most associated with Cawdor Estate. The viewpoint is not located in a designated landscape.

9.10.58 The road and landform channel the view of south-bound road-users southwards over rolling moorland towards the plateau of Tom nan Clach. The Operational Scheme is seen set across the hillside and forms the defining feature of the view. The ridgeline falls away towards the River Findhorn glen, which separates the viewpoint from the Site. The landscape pattern is simple, with open rough grasslands on the lower slopes and heather moorland on the upper slopes, and only occasional enclosure. Muirburn patterns on the hillsides denote the management of this landscape for recreational shooting and forest blocks add to the contrast of the land cover. Other than the Operational Scheme and the minor road, there is a distinct absence of built features in the view.

Sensitivity

9.10.59 The value of the view is medium. The view is not taken from a formal viewpoint, but instead from an arbitrary point along the minor road, making it representative of the views of road-users whilst in transit. Furthermore, the viewpoint is not located in a landscape designation which would otherwise denote a special scenic value. The hills onto which the view looks are, however, covered by an SLA designation.

9.10.60 The susceptibility of south-bound road-users to the Proposed Development will be medium. While the alignment of the road south towards the hills where the Site is located, emphasises its presence in the view, their susceptibility will be moderated by the existing influence of the Operational Scheme on the intervening hillside.

9.10.61 The combination of the medium value of the view and the medium susceptibility of the road-users will give rise to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.62 The wireline and photomontage in **Figures 9.28b** and **9.28c** show that all seven of the turbines will be visible from this viewpoint, albeit partly screened by the intervening landform. The Proposed Development will occur at a minimum of 5.6 km from the viewpoint, with the Operational Scheme at a minimum of 6.1 km. The Proposed Development will be seen as an extension to the Operational Scheme and while T5 will be seen to the rear of the Operational Scheme turbines, the remaining six turbines will be seen to the left of the group. The prominence of these turbines will be tempered by the screening effect of the landform with the two furthest left seen behind the ridge as blades and the remaining four seen within the fold between ridges with the towers mostly screened. This screening effect combined with their slightly longer range, means that despite the proposed turbines being slightly larger than the Operational Scheme turbines, they will appear comparable in terms of vertical extents from this viewpoint. In terms of associated infrastructure, the access tracks will be largely screened by intervening landform such that they will not be readily visible.

9.10.63 The continuity of landform and landcover across the open uplands ensures that the landscape is perceived to be of broad scale. This has the effect of

making the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme appear as a contained feature within a wider landscape setting. The simplicity of the landscape and its general lack of features, means that there are few references against which to scale the turbines, and this reduces their perceived scale. The Proposed Development appears well integrated with the Operational Scheme, with the turbines fairly evenly spaced and with an absence of outliers. It relates well to the landform by sitting along a relatively even section of the high moorland with turbines set at similar elevations.

9.10.64 Taking all these factors into consideration, the magnitude of change will be **medium-low** during the operational phase. Despite the relative proximity of the Proposed Development and the additional horizontal extent it will give rise to, it will form a relatively compact and well-integrated extension to an operational wind farm in an open upland moorland where there is capacity to accommodate these seven additional turbines.

9.10.65 During the construction phase, some of the associated plant and processes will be apparent from this viewpoint, most notably the presence and movement of tall cranes used to construct the turbines. These additional artefacts and activities will be seen in the context of the Operational Scheme and this existing influence will moderate the magnitude of change during the construction works, such that it will be **medium-low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.66 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view from the minor road will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates to the fact that there is already a notable influence on this view from the Operational Scheme and the location of the Proposed Development to the side and rear of this will moderate the additional effect. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 6: B9007 north of Lochindorb junction (**Figures 9.29** and **9.46**)

Baseline

9.10.67 This viewpoint is located on the B9007, to the north of the junction with the minor road to Lochindorb. As the Proposed Development lies to the west of this north to south route, both north-bound and south-bound road-users will gain views, with visibility occurring along a notable section. The viewpoint is located at an informal layby off the B9007 and close to the subtle high point that occurs along this section of the road.

9.10.68 To the east, the view is contained within the short range by the rising landform. Woodland is planted here and over time this aspect of the view will become more enclosed around the road. In contrast, to the west, the view opens out across the extensive high moorland to the rim of upland hills. These collectively form a long and gently undulating skyline which encloses the westwards extent of the view. The landform establishes a strong horizontal emphasis to the view with the Operational Scheme set midway along its length. The landscape pattern is simple and uniform, largely owing to the subtle relief and the blanket covering of heather. There are few built features other than the Operational Scheme, the B9007 and the broad fenced enclosures of the land.

9.10.69 To the north and south, the B9007 stretches into the distance, with forestry evident on the periphery of the moorland to the north and more pronounced landform features evident to the south. Despite the openness of the landscape, there are no other wind farm developments readily visible from this viewpoint, other than the Operational Scheme readily visible in the centre of the ridgeline.

Sensitivity

9.10.70 The value of the view is medium-high. There are no formal viewpoints or formal laybys along the B9007, and the view is taken from an informal layby in the absence of any formal stopping points. The value of the view relates to its location within, and outlook across, the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA. The scenic value of this landscape relates to its openness, simplicity, broad scale and consistency of character.

9.10.71 The susceptibility of road-users to the Proposed Development is medium. There is an existing influence on the views of road-users from the Operational Scheme, which establishes this type of development as a feature of the baseline view. The susceptibility of road-users is also moderated by the transitory nature of the views experienced as well as the often, oblique angle at which the Proposed Development will be seen in relation to both north and south-bound road-users.

9.10.72 The combination of the medium-high value of the view and the medium susceptibility of the road-users will give rise to an overall **medium-high** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.73 The wireline in Figure 9.29e shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be visible, almost all seen at their full height, with four set to the fore, two set to the rear, and one set on the skyline ridge. The Proposed Development will overlap with the Operational Scheme, with the three proposed turbines on the right seen to the fore of the Operational Scheme turbines. The four other proposed turbines will be seen to the left, forming a small increase to the overall horizontal extent. While the proposed turbines will be seen to be slightly larger in scale than the Operational Scheme turbines, this disparity will be slight and could be accounted for by their closer proximity.

9.10.74 The simplicity of the ridgeline, it's even elevation and wide horizontal extent all act to decrease the prominence of the proposed and Operational Scheme turbines in the following ways. Firstly, the simplicity of the ridgeline ensures there are no features against which the scale of the turbines can be referenced other than the scale of the landscape itself and as this is sufficiently deep in extent it reduces their perceived scale. Secondly, the even elevation of the ridgeline means that there are no existing focal features, such as distinctive summits or craggy outcrops, from which the Proposed Development might otherwise detract. Instead, the ridgeline presents an uncomplicated setting into which the turbines can fit without visual conflict arising. Thirdly, the broad extent of the ridge and the continuity of the landscape character along this ridge, presents a landscape that appears vast in scale. This makes the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme appear as a comparatively well contained feature within a view defined by the scale and

character of the landscape. The turbines are fairly evenly spaced and of relatively similar elevation to present a well-designed group.

9.10.75 At the range of 7.97 km the turbines will be seen as medium range components and the movement of their blades will be apparent. While the openness of the landscape will allow road-users largely uninterrupted views for a considerable section of the B9007, the oblique to perpendicular angle of these views will limit the overall magnitude of change by making the Proposed Development less prominent in their views. Access tracks connecting the turbines will also be visible from this viewpoint, albeit as relatively distant and small-scale features. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development on the view from the B9007 will be **medium-low**.

9.10.76 During the construction phase, the majority of the plant and associated processes will be too distant to have a notable influence on the character of this view. The exception to this will be the tall cranes used to erect the turbines, which will be readily visible from this viewpoint. While these will be seen set along the prominent skyline ridge, at a distance of 7.97 km, they will not give rise to a greater magnitude of change than the turbines will on their own during the operational phase, and the magnitude of change will also be **medium-low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.77 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view from the B9007 will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates to the existing influence from the Operational Scheme on the views of road-users and the proximity of the Proposed Development to the Operational Scheme which will ensure they appear as one development, despite the slightly larger size of the proposed turbines. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 7: Geal Charn Mor (**Figures 9.30** and **9.47**)

Baseline

9.10.78 This viewpoint is located at the summit of Geal Charn Mor and is representative of the views of hill walkers. It is accessed via a vehicular track that extends from Lynwilg to the shoulder of the hill, from where walkers must navigate over the heather moorland. The view from the summit is expansive in all directions. The Proposed Development will be located to the north of the viewpoint at a minimum distance of 22.01 km. The viewpoint is located on the northern edge of the CNP boundary but outwith the Cairngorm Mountains NSA.

9.10.79 The main attraction of the wider view is south and south-east towards the Cairngorm Mountains made distinct by their scale, mass and elevated ridgelines, as well as the covering of snow which often persists on these north facing slopes. The attraction of the mountain scenery is accentuated by the contrast with the low-lying extent of Strathspey which features in the midground of the view to the south-east. While large scale development is not a feature in the Cairngorms, the marks on the landscape from the ski runs at the Mountain Resort are evident.

9.10.80 The Monadhliath Hills, which occupy the south-west sector of the view, are characterised by hills with lower and more level profiles which collectively form what appears as an upland plateau of open moorland. Here, there are no distinct summits or ridgeline profiles, only a simple and expansive range of hills. Dunmaglass Wind Farm, which is currently under construction, will be visible on the skyline of the Monadhliath Hills at a distance of 19.33 km.

9.10.81 The view to the north, where the Proposed Development will be located, is also less dramatic than the Cairngorm Mountains, with the hills appearing smaller in scale and their profiles more gently rounded. From the northern edge of the Monadhliath Hills the land falls away into the Slochd pass and the valleys which extend from it on either side. From here the land rises again to form the Strathdearn Hills which form the backdrop to this northern sector. Collectively the hills interlock to form what appears as a continuous upland ridge, without any distinct summits or ridgeline profiles.

Sensitivity

9.10.82 The value of the view is medium-high. The summit of the hill marks a semi-formal viewpoint which walkers visit with the intention of enjoying the panoramic view and this along with the location of the viewpoint on the edge of the CNP raises the value of the viewpoint. The value of the viewpoint is not rated as high as it is not representative of an NSA which has the highest scenic value, and it also features a number of wind farm developments which detract from the overall value.

9.10.83 The susceptibility of walkers to the Proposed Development will be medium-high. The expectation of walkers will be to enjoy a panoramic view of the landscape. The presence of operational wind farms in the view will reduce susceptibility by making this type of development an established feature of the view. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will be located in a sector of the view which is less remarkable than the other sectors.

9.10.84 The combination of the medium-high value of the view and the medium-high susceptibility of walkers leads to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.85 The wireline in **Figure 9.30f** shows the Proposed Development set behind the intervening hill ridge of Carn Glas-choire (659 m AOD) at a minimum of 22.01 km. Of the seven proposed turbines, five are shown to be theoretically visible, albeit with the three tips and one blade on the right most likely to be indiscernible from this range. The one remaining turbine will be seen more fully, although with the bottom half of the tower screened also by the ridge. It will be seen to the right of the more fully visible Operational Scheme turbines and will appear as part of this wind farm.

9.10.86 Operational wind farms are an existing feature of the sector of the view to the north. This means the Proposed Development will be seen set between Farr (18.4 km) and Moy (24.4 km) on the left and the more distant Berry Burn (38.8 km) and Paul's Hill (39.2 km) on the right. This reduces the magnitude of change as the Proposed Development will be seen as part of the wider pattern of wind farm development that occurs across this upland landscape.

9.10.87 Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change during the operational phase will be **low**. From this viewpoint, the Proposed Development will effectively be seen as one additional turbine to the existing group of Operational Scheme turbines. This will give rise to a very limited change, especially in the context of a much wider panorama where wind farm development is already a feature in this northerly sector and where more scenic sectors occur to the east and south.

9.10.88 The viewpoint is too distant for the associated infrastructure to be visible and while the tall cranes used during the construction phase may be visible, they will not give rise to a greater magnitude of change than the turbines on their own during the operational phase, which will also be **low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.89 The effect of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**. Despite the medium-high sensitivity relating to the value of the CNP designation and the susceptibility of walkers, the limited visual influence of the Proposed Development means that it will not redefine the character of the view. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 8: A9 north of Tomatin junction (**Figures 9.31** and **9.48**)

Baseline

9.10.90 This viewpoint is located adjacent to the A9(T) on the path of National Cycle Route 7 (NCR7) and with the East Coast Rail Line to the immediate west. These three routes all run parallel through the same north-south route corridor. This viewpoint is representative of the views of road-users, cyclists and train travellers. The viewpoint looks north-east towards the Proposed Development at a range of 7.5 km. The viewpoint is not located in a designated landscape.

9.10.91 The view looks out over the tops of the coniferous trees, which line the eastern side of this section of the A9, towards the upland ridge which encloses the view. The trees screen the view of the Findhorn Valley which sits below the A9, and which contains a narrow band of fields of improved pasture in the level flood plain and across the lower slopes.

9.10.92 Instead, the principal feature of the view is the ridge of hills and the long and level skyline they collectively form. The hills on the right are characterised by heather moorland, apparent owing to the dark purples and typical burnt patches of muirburn, while on the right they are clothed in a dense blanket of coniferous forestry. There are no distinct summits or characteristic profiles to act as a focus in the view and as a result the hills form a background to the view rather than a key feature.

9.10.93 The Operational Scheme is screened from this viewpoint, by the intervening close range forest cover but theoretically visible as four blades and three tips set behind the intervening ridgeline. The other feature visible from the viewpoint is the A9. This is a busy and fast road, and the movement and noise of the traffic detract from the peaceful nature of the landscape. Train traffic is less frequent with only a single train line occurring between Inverness

and Dunkeld, such that only 24 trains pass every day apart from on Sundays when there are fewer.

Sensitivity

9.10.94 The value of the view is medium. It is not a formal viewpoint but instead an informal viewpoint that is experienced incidentally, by passing road-users, cyclists and train travellers. It is also not representative of any landscape designations that would otherwise have raised its value.

9.10.95 The susceptibility of train travellers is medium. The train line is elevated above the A9 and with the orientation of the windows to the side, passengers are able to look out eastwards towards the Proposed Development. The susceptibility of cyclists is also medium. Although the route dips down to be parallel with the A9, from where the viewpoint is, they will experience an elevated view towards the Proposed Development. The susceptibility of road-users will be medium-low. Although the Proposed Development will be screened from this section of road, the viewpoint is representative of glimpsed views experienced 400 m further north along the road. This view will be more readily apparent to north-bound road-users who will experience it at an angle oblique to their direction of travel.

9.10.96 The combination of the medium value of the view and the medium or medium-low susceptibility of viewers leads to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.97 A comparison between the wireline in **Figure 9.29e** and the photomontage in **Figure 9.29f** shows that although theoretically four turbines will be visible, these will be largely screened by the intervening close range forest cover. In order for the purposes of this assessment to represent the worst-case scenario, the forest cover is assumed to be removed. In this case one turbine will be seen to its full extent, with the turbines to the right seen as a blade and the two to the left seen as tips. The most prominent feature will be the central proposed turbine as it will be seen to almost full height, albeit set in a trough along the ridgeline. A combination of tips and blades belonging to the Operational Scheme will be seen set behind the ridgeline further to the left.

9.10.98 The result is that the Proposed Development, at a distance of 7.5 km will form a relatively discreet feature from this viewpoint. Not only will the horizontal and vertical extents be very limited, but the turbines will be associated with a relatively non-descript section of the ridgeline. Furthermore, with the direction of travel mostly being perpendicular to the position of the Proposed Development, it will not have the same prominence as if it were positioned in direct alignment with the direction of travel. Similar views will be experienced by road-users, train travellers and cyclists in the short section of the A9(T) that passes the access track to Invereen Farm, whereby only a small number of largely concealed turbines will be visible set behind the intervening landform. The ridgeline will also screen the associated infrastructure.

9.10.99 Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development during the operational phase will be **low**. The very limited visual influence of this development combined with the existing

influence of the Operational Scheme, albeit even more limited, means that it will not notably alter the character of the view.

9.10.100 During the construction phase, the intervening landform will screen the majority of the plant and processes associated with the construction phase. The exception will be short-term visibility of the tall cranes used to construct the few emerging turbines visible, although the limited extent to which they will be visible will not alter the magnitude of change rating of **low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.101 The effect of the Proposed Development on this viewpoint will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This finding relates principally to the limited vertical and horizontal extents of the Proposed Development that will be visible, but also the limited sensitivity of the viewpoint and the transitory nature of the viewers. The nature of the effect will be adverse. This assessment considers the removal of the close-range forest cover to ensure a worst-case scenario has been considered.

Viewpoint 9: Meall a' Bhuachaille (**Figures 9.32** and **9.49**)

Baseline

9.10.102 The viewpoint is located on the summit of Meall a' Bhuachaille, a popular recreational hilltop to the east of Aviemore and above Loch Morlich. It is accessed via a well-established and way-marked footpath and the summit provides expansive views in all directions. The Proposed Development is located 25.23 km to the north-north-west. The viewpoint is located in the CNP and the Cairngorm Mountains NSA.

9.10.103 A variety of different landscapes make up this extensive panoramic view, with the Monadhliath Mountains to the west and north-west, the Cairngorm Mountains to the south and south-east, the Cromdale Hills to the north-east and the Strathdearn Hills to the north. The main attraction of this panoramic view is the Cairngorm Mountains range on account of its dramatic scale and mass, as well as its distinctive summits and corries, and varied ridgeline profile. The mountains appear largely undeveloped with the exception of the Cairngorm Mountain Resort, evident in the form of the road leading up to the main cluster of buildings, the funicular railway, the Ptarmigan Lodge visitor centre and the ski tows and ski runs. In contrast, the key feature of the Monadhliath Mountains to the west is the long and level ridgeline, which is devoid of any distinctive landform features, although wind farms do form a distant human-made feature, with operational Farr at a distance of 29.9 km and operational Dunmaglass at 34.4 km.

9.10.104 The view to the north-east and north differ in that, more distant hills are seen set beyond the broad extent of the strath landscapes. These lower-lying areas are characterised by the mosaic of bright greens of improved and semi-improved farmland and the dark green of forestry blocks. Although settlement is typically dispersed there is some evidence of villages occurring at intervals across the strath. The ridge of the Cromdale Hills and the distinctive outline of Ben Rinnes characterise the view to the north-east, where wind farm development is not a feature.

9.10.105 To the north, the Strathdearn Hills form a longer and more level ridgeline which lacks any distinctive summits or other landform features. A cluster of distant wind farm developments occur in the adjoining uplands to the east of the Strathdearn Hills and include Pauls Hill at 30.8 km, Berry Burn at 32.0 km and the more distant Rothes and Rothes Extension. The Proposed Development will be located at the western end of the Strathdearn Hills, where the Operational Scheme is visible at a minimum distance of 26.0 km and operational Moy at a minimum distance of 31.6 km.

Sensitivity

9.10.106 The value of the view from Meall a' Bhuachaille is high. The hill forms a popular walk, and the summit forms a natural viewpoint, both of which raise the value of the view. Furthermore, the viewpoint is located in the CNP and NSA.

9.10.107 The susceptibility of walkers to the Proposed Development is medium. The main draw of this panoramic view is south and south-east towards the dramatic Cairngorm Mountains. The Proposed Development will be located in the opposite direction to the north, where the landscape is less remarkable and, therefore, forms less of an attraction. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will be located at a distance of 25.2 km from the viewpoint and seen in a sector where wind farm development already has an influence on the character of the view, and these factors reduce the susceptibility of walkers.

9.10.108 The combination of the high value of the view and the medium susceptibility of hill walkers leads to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.109 Although the wireline in Figure 9.32f shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be theoretically visible, the visual influence of the Proposed Development will be very limited owing to a combination of the minimum distance of 25.2 km, which will make the turbines appear especially small in scale, and the screening effect of the intervening landform, which will mean none of the proposed turbines will be visible to their full extent. Of the seven turbines, two will be seen to just below the nacelle while the remaining five will be seen as blades or tips. The Proposed Development will be seen in the same sector of the view as the Operational Scheme, with a slight increase in horizontal extent to the right. This existing influence will moderate the additional effect of the proposed turbines and their slightly larger scale will not be discernible owing to the distant range and the screening effect of the intervening landform.

9.10.110 The Proposed Development will be associated with a relatively low and level ridgeline which appears comparatively unremarkable in the context of the wider view. It will also occupy a small proportion of this ridgeline and an even smaller proportion of the uplands throughout the wider view. The other wind farms also act to moderate the impact by establishing this type of development as a baseline feature in the northerly direction and creating a pattern of small to medium scale groups set along the distant skyline of the uplands, with which the Proposed Development would appear to fit. The infrastructure will not be visible from this viewpoint. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development will be **negligible**.

9.10.111 The plant and processes associated with the construction phase of the Proposed Development will not be visible with the exception of the tall cranes and the few visible emerging turbines, although their distant location means that they will not alter the magnitude of change rating of **negligible**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.112 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. Despite the sensitivity of the viewpoint and the viewers, the limited visual influence of the Proposed Development and the existing influence of operational wind farms in the same sector, means that the Proposed Development will not redefine the character of the view. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 10: A9 River Findhorn Bridge (**Figures 9.33** and **9.48**)

Baseline

9.10.113 This viewpoint is located on the A9 (T) road bridge over the River Findhorn, to the east of the village of Tomatin. The A9 (T) road forms the main route between Perth and Inverness and is used by a large volume of road-users including tourists. The view will be apparent to north-bound road-users but will not be apparent to south-bound road-users, owing to the oblique location of the Proposed Development relative to the position of south-bound road-users. The Proposed Development will be located to the north-east at a minimum distance of 7.2 km. The viewpoint is not located in a designated landscape.

9.10.114 The road on either side of the bridge is largely enclosed by roadside forestry and it is only as it passes over the bridge that the view opens up. For south-bound road-users the view is channelled by the river corridor to the south-west, while for north-bound road-users it is channelled to the north-east in the direction towards the Proposed Development. The elevated position of the bridge, high above the River Findhorn, means views are projected across the strath to the range of rounded hills which form the backdrop. The strath contains a range of farm and estate buildings set within a diverse pattern of small woods and improved pastures, which gradually give way to rising ground leading to open moorland and afforested hills. The extent to which this landscape has been modified by human intervention is evident through these land use practices.

9.10.115 The rounded hills collectively form an undulating skyline ridge, accentuated by the dense and dark covering of coniferous plantations. The Operational Scheme is visible, seen as ten turbines set across the hillside and ridge. There is no other evidence of wind farm development in this sector, nor in the wider view, despite the relatively close proximity of operational Farr Wind Farm, 6.0 km to the west, and operational Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm, 5.5 km also to the west.

Sensitivity

9.10.116 The value of the view is medium. It is not seen from a formal viewpoint, but instead from an arbitrary point on the bridge, and in the absence of any formal laybys or stopping points along this section of the A9 (T) it is representative of the transitory view that will be experienced by road-users. The viewpoint is not

located in a designated landscape, and it is only the more distant hills to the east which are covered by the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA.

9.10.117 The susceptibility of north-bound road-users to the Proposed Development is medium, while for south-bound road-users their susceptibility is low. This reflects the potential for gaining views whilst travelling in the different directions and also takes into account the following factors. The Operational Scheme is already visible in the same sector of the view as the Site, which makes wind farm development an existing feature. Visibility of other wind farm developments also occur intermittently from other sections of the A9 (T). Visibility of the Proposed Development will occur for only a short section and be experienced whilst in transit at 50 to 60 mph, at a direction oblique to the direction of travel. These factors will moderate the susceptibility of road-users.

9.10.118 The combination of the medium value of the view and the medium susceptibility of north-bound road-users will give rise to a **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.119 The wireline in **Figure 9.33f** shows that the Proposed Development will be theoretically visible as three turbines, although with two occurring as tips and seen behind an afforested ridgeline, actual visibility will likely comprise one turbine. This one turbine will be seen to just below the nacelle with most of the tower screened by the intervening landform. This will be seen to the right of the Operational Scheme, and close enough to be seen as part of this wind farm. While the proposed turbine will be seen to be slightly larger than the Operational Scheme turbines, the variance will be tempered by the limited extent to which this proposed turbine will be visible.

9.10.120 The River Findhorn valley channels the viewer's attention towards the hills in the background, where the Operational Scheme will be seen to form a prominent feature on the skyline. The Proposed Development will add only one readily visible turbine to this group. Furthermore, road-users pass across the bridge at speeds of 50 to 60 mph making this view short-lived, and although the Operational Scheme forms a notable feature, the Proposed Development will give rise to only a low magnitude of change. Blade movements will be visible but will not seem incongruous from the context of the busy A9 (T) and the infrastructure will be screened by the ridgeline. Taking all these factors into account the magnitude of change during the operational phase will be **low**.

9.10.121 During the construction phase, the majority of the plant and processes will be screened by the ridgeline. The exception to this is the presence of the tall cranes used to erect the emerging turbines, which will be visible above the ridgeline. The magnitude of change as a result of the cranes will not be any greater than the **low** assessed for the operational phase.

Significance of the effect

9.10.122 The effect of the Proposed Development on road-users will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates to the existing influence from the Operational Scheme in the same sector of the view and the more limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible comparatively. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 11: Blackfold, near Dochgarroch (**Figures 9.34** and **9.51**)

Baseline

9.10.123 The viewpoint is located on a minor road to the west of Dochgarroch, on the elevated slopes above the Great Glen. The minor road forks off from the A82, passing through forestry as it ascends the western slopes of the Great Glen, before emerging into an area of rural farmland. The view is looking east-south-east and is seen by a small number of viewers, mostly local residents, road-users and long-distance walkers. The distance to the nearest proposed wind turbine is 28.4 km. The viewpoint is not located within a designated landscape but is located on the route of the Great Glen Way.

9.10.124 The landform draws the view south-eastwards across the Great Glen towards the Monadhliath Mountains. The foreground to the middleground of the view is characterised by the landform folding in towards the glen, with the hill slopes concealing visibility of Loch Ness, and the mosaic of farm fields and forest blocks that occur across the landform. The fields are characterised by the bright green of the improved pasture and the post and wire enclosures, and the forest blocks are characterised by the geometric blocks of single age and species conifers. This is a managed landscape which has been modified by farming and forestry practices. Settlement is typically sparse and small scale in character.

9.10.125 Behind the low hills that enclose the Great Glen, sit the Monadhliath Hills, made distinct by their higher elevation, the long and level ridgelines they form, and the more muted tones of the heather moorland. Forestry is seen to encroach onto the lower, and some upper, hill slopes. This landscape appears broad in scale and relatively simple in appearance, with few features or evidence of enclosure, other than the marks of muirburn, the encroaching forestry and wind farm development.

9.10.126 Farr and Glen Kyllachy are the closest operational wind farms located a minimum distance of 17.0 km and 17.4 km respectively from the viewpoint and seen set along the long and level ridge of the Monadhliath Hills in the right of the view. Operational Moy and the Operational Scheme are also visible at a minimum distance of 19.5 km and 27.2 km respectively, seen set in the lower foothills to the north of the Monadhliath Mountains.

Sensitivity

9.10.127 The value of the view is medium. The viewpoint is not a formal viewpoint that people would visit with the intention of enjoying the views, but an informal viewpoint road-users and walkers would experience whilst passing on the minor road or experience from their homes. The viewpoint is not subject to any landscape designations but is representative of the Great Glen Way long distance footpath, although this is not a scenic designation.

9.10.128 The susceptibility of road-users is medium-low. The Proposed Development will be positioned at a perpendicular angle to the direction of travel along this minor road and this will reduce its prominence in the views of transitory road-users. Furthermore, its distance from the viewpoint combined with the presence of other operational and farms within the same sector of the view, will also moderate the susceptibility of road-users.

9.10.129 The same factors apply to walkers with the exception that their speed will be slower and their focus more towards the surrounding landscape rather than the road, and this means they will have more time to observe the view in more detail. The susceptibility of walkers is medium.

9.10.130 In respect of the residents of the few properties dispersed along the roadside, their susceptibility is also medium. Although the orientation of the houses is typically east over the Great Glen, the distant range of the Proposed Development and the influence of the operational wind farms, moderates the susceptibility of residents.

9.10.131 The combination of the value of the view and the susceptibility of the different viewers leads to overall sensitivity ratings of **medium-low** for road-users and **medium** for walkers and residents.

Magnitude of change

9.10.132 The wireline in **Figure 9.34d** shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be theoretically visible although seen as four tips and three blades. These will be seen at a minimum of 28.4 km making the turbines appear as small scale and distant elements in the view. The three blades will be seen within the extents and to the rear of the Operational Scheme turbines, and the two tips seen at either end will be largely indiscernible, such that the extent of wind farm development will not be seen to increase notably, if at all. The Proposed Development will be integrated as part of the Operational Scheme, such that they will appear as one development.

9.10.133 The Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme will be seen to occupy a small proportion of a much longer ridgeline, in a location where there are no distinctive features or characteristics to otherwise draw the viewers' attention. The scale of the ridge will act to reduce the scale of the Proposed Development, and the simplicity of its appearance will reduce the complexity that the Proposed Development might otherwise introduce.

9.10.134 Wind farm development is already a feature, with Farr and Glen Kyllachy forming a substantial development on the right of the view. The Proposed Development will be seen to follow the pattern of turbines being set along the ridgeline and its impact will be reduced by its location to the rear of the Operational Scheme and operational Moy Wind Farm. Infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development will not be readily visible from this viewpoint owing to the separation distance and the screening effect of the intervening landform. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development during the operational phase will be **negligible**.

9.10.135 Plant and processes associated with the construction phase may be visible but will not give rise to a greater magnitude of change than that assessed for the turbines during the operational phase, which will be **negligible**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.136 The effect of the Proposed Development on the road-users, walkers and residents will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. The Proposed Development will not redefine the character of this view, or views from this area, principally owing to its distance from the viewpoint, as

well as its location behind operational wind farms. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 12: Gorton Hill (**Figures 9.35** and **9.52**)

Baseline

9.10.137 This viewpoint is located on the summit of Gorton Hill, a low hill located to the north-west of Grantown-on-Spey. It is not a well-known hill, owing to its relatively small scale and discreet location, and while it may attract some local hill walkers, the forest walks around Beachan Woods, appear to be more popular. The view is orientated north-west towards the Proposed Development, which is located at a minimum distance of 14.3 km. The viewpoint is located just within the northern boundary of the CNP and the view to the north-west is orientated in the opposite direction to the CNP.

9.10.138 The view comprises an open and extensive panorama over undulating moorland hills to distant, but indistinct hill ranges. Various small rocky outcrops provide foreground interest, while the bright greens of the semi-improved pastures on the lower slopes and in the straths, provide a striking contrast with the dark and muted colours of the higher heather-clad hills. The main attraction of the view lies in the opposite direction to the south, where the Cairngorms form a high mountain massif that dominates the outlook on account of their scale, mass and the distinctive elevated ridgeline they form.

9.10.139 The Operational Scheme is visible from this viewpoint, with all 13 turbines seen set within the upland landscape at a minimum of 15.2 km. Operational Dunmaglass also forms a distant feature at a minimum of 36.9 km to the west. Berry Burn, at a minimum of 14.6 km to the north could become visible were closer range forestry removed. To the south, the Laggan Hill radio mast provides a local landmark feature, and small-scale development in the strath presents a more settled character. To the north, access tracks and muirburn patterns are evident across the hills, denoting the influence of land-use practices in this area.

Sensitivity

9.10.140 The value of the view is medium-high. Despite the location of the viewpoint on the edge of the CNP, the view towards the Proposed Development looks out across the local designations of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA and not across the CNP or towards the more distant Cairngorm Mountains NSA, both of which are national level designations.

9.10.141 The susceptibility of walkers to the Proposed Development is medium. Gorton Hill is neither wild nor remote. It is part of a landscape that is managed through farming and forestry practices and where development is evident, such as the close-range masts on Laggan Hill and middle-range Operational Scheme. It is in this context, that the susceptibility of walkers will be moderated as the Proposed Development will not appear as out of character as it might from an unmanaged hilltop where there is no evidence of development.

9.10.142 The combination of the value of the view and the susceptibility of walkers gives rise to an overall **medium-high** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.143 The wireline in **Figure 9.35f** shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be visible to almost their full extents, set along the upland ridgeline to the north-west, albeit set behind the more prominent closer-range ridgeline. At the minimum distance of 14.3 km the proposed turbines will be seen set to the immediate fore of the Operational Scheme turbines. The Proposed Development will largely fall within the horizontal extent of the Operational Scheme and although the two turbines on the left will form a slight increase, this will appear incremental from this range. The Proposed Development will be seen as an extension to the Operational Scheme, and this will moderate the overall effect.

9.10.144 With seven additional turbines visible, the Proposed Development will appear as a relatively compact feature, occupying only a small proportion of the much longer upland ridge in this sector of the view, and an even smaller proportion of the upland landscape in the wider view, as illustrated in Figure 9.7 where the horizontal angle is shown to be 5 to 10 degrees of the full 360-degree view. The Proposed Development will be located adjacent to the Operational Scheme and in association with a relatively non-descript section of the skyline. Furthermore, it will be seen in the opposite direction of the main attraction of the wider view, which will remain as the Cairngorm Mountains. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development during the operational phase will be **low**.

9.10.145 Plant and processes associated with the construction phase may be visible but will not give rise to a greater magnitude of change than that assessed for the turbines during the operational phase, which will be **low**. From this distance of 14.3 km, much of the smaller scale ground-level works will not be readily visible. While the tall cranes used in the construction of the turbines will be visible, their effect will be moderated by the existing influence of the Operational Scheme turbines.

Significance of the effect

9.10.146 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. The Proposed Development will be seen as an additional seven turbines in a location where wind farm development already has an influence. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 13: A939 at milestone (**Figures 9.36** and **9.53**)

Baseline

9.10.147 The viewpoint is located on the A939, just south of the village of Ferness and the cross-roads with the B9007. The route is locally important, linking Grantown-on-Spey with Nairn and Forres to the north, as well as being part of a recognised tourist route. The view towards the Proposed Development is orientated south-west and, therefore, will be apparent to south-bound road-users but not north-bound road-users, unless they are looking to the side and behind. The minimum distance between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development will be 12.4 km. The viewpoint is not located in a designated landscape but is on a recognised tourist route.

9.10.148 The view comprises an open outlook over rough pasture and heather moorland, interspersed with clumps of trees and forestry plantations, seen set against a backcloth of distant moorland hills. The broad and level upland plateau extends from the foreground into the middleground, while the transition to the uplands in the background is marked by a distinct change in elevation. The view is open and relatively featureless, characterised principally by the simple and large-scale mosaic of land cover and the enclosure of the distant hills. The upland ridge forms a long and gently undulating profile, extending across this sector of the view and, in so doing, establishing a strong horizontal emphasis.

9.10.149 The one wind farm visible in the view is the Operational Scheme which can be seen to occupy a short section of the distant ridgeline. Other than this wind farm, the A939 and nearby farmstead, there is a general absence of development in this view. Furthermore, land management is generally non-intensive apart from where coniferous plantations have been established and farmland pasture has been improved.

Sensitivity

9.10.150 The value of the view is medium. The viewpoint is not covered by any national or local landscape designations which would otherwise denote a special scenic value, although it is on a recognised tourist route. The viewpoint is located at an arbitrary point along the A939 and is not, therefore, a formal viewpoint, nor is it representative of the view from a formal layby.

9.10.151 The susceptibility of road-users to the Proposed Development is medium. The Proposed Development will be located at a range of 12.5 km and seen in the same section of the ridgeline as the Operational Scheme at the similar range of 12.9 km. It will be seen at an oblique angle to the direction of the road, such that it will not form a prominent feature in the views of road-users. In the absence of any formal laybys, the view will be experienced whilst in transit and at speeds of 40 to 60mph. These factors moderate the susceptibility of road-users.

9.10.152 The combination of the medium value of the view and the medium susceptibility of the road-users will give rise to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.153 The wireline in **Figure 9.36e** shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be visible seen at a minimum of 12.5 km. The proposed turbines will be seen at almost their full height; the three proposed turbines on the right will overlap with the Operational Scheme turbines, while the four turbines on the left will be seen to form a slight increase in the horizontal extent of wind farm development in this direction. While the Operational Scheme turbines are mostly seen set along the ridgeline, the proposed turbines will appear to the fore, and their slightly lower elevation will mean that despite being slightly larger, their vertical extents will be comparable.

9.10.154 Those factors which will moderate the magnitude of change include the distance of the Proposed Development from the viewpoint, which means that the turbines will appear as medium to small scale elements, and the wide horizontal extent of the upland ridge, which will reduce the perceived

horizontal extent of the Proposed Development, which will appear contained in comparison. While the vertical scale of the hills is more limited, the turbines will appear in proportion. The depth of the foreground and middle-ground of the view does make the ridge recede into the background of the view and this also reduces the influence of associated features such as the Proposed Development.

9.10.155 This view will be mostly experienced by road-users and despite them being in transit and with views occurring at perpendicular or oblique angles to the direction of travel, the openness of the landscape and the prominence of the ridgeline means that views will occur for an approximate 2 km section of the A939. Infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development will not be readily discernible from the distance of 12.5 km. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change of the Proposed Development during the operational phase will be **low**.

9.10.156 Plant and processes associated with the construction phase will not be readily visible owing to a combination of the separation distance and scale of the works. The exception will be the use of tall cranes used in the construction of the emerging turbines, although these will not give rise to a greater magnitude of change than that assessed for the turbines during the operational phase, which will be **low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.157 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates to a combination of the separation distance between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, the existing influence of the Operational Scheme in the same sector of the view, and the appearance of the Proposed Development as an extension to the Operational Scheme. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 14: Shore Road Lochindorb 1 (**Figures 9.37** and **9.54**)

Baseline

9.10.158 The viewpoint is located close to the minor road, which connects the A939 with the B9007 via the eastern shore of Lochindorb, at a point at the northern end where an access track connects, and informal parking occurs. The viewpoint is representative of south-bound road-users and visitors to the loch who stop at this northern end. The view is orientated east towards the Proposed Development which is located a minimum distance of 10.8 km from the viewpoint. Lochindorb is the only large loch to occur in the broad context of the high moorland landscape and this scarcity raises its scenic value. It's attraction to visitors is further enhanced by the presence of the listed ruins of Lochindorb Castle. The viewpoint is located in the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA.

9.10.159 With the location of the minor road on the eastern side of the loch, the natural draw of views is out towards the west. The land to the east of the loch rises to form small hills which contain the extent of views in this direction. The views to the east look out across the loch to a backdrop comprising low hills that collectively form a long and level skyline, extending all the way from the south, through the west to the north. These hills are largely featureless, apart from

the Operational Scheme which is visible along the central section of the ridgeline, with ten turbines, albeit visible to varying degrees owing to the screening effect of the intervening landform. The hills are typified by the blanket covering of heather moorland, with occasional forest blocks. While some variation in relief is apparent where slopes dip and interlock there is an over-riding horizontal emphasis to the view.

9.10.160 Despite the expansiveness of the view, there are no other wind farm developments readily visible in this view, nor any other type of development, except for Lochindorb Castle and some rural farmsteads. Human intervention is apparent through the presence of the road, tracks and fences, as well as the nearby farmland, commercial forestry and grouse moor.

Sensitivity

9.10.161 The value of this view is medium-high. Lochindorb is an important visitor attraction in this area, principally on account of the scenic views across the loch to the castle. Furthermore, it is located in the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA. The value is prevented from being rated high owing to the absence of a national level designation or a formal viewpoint.

9.10.162 The susceptibility of road-users, walkers and other recreational users is medium-high. While the Proposed Development will be located some distance from the loch and associated with the Operational Scheme on the low hills in the background, it will still feature in the main outlook over the loch. Most viewers will be in this area to enjoy the scenic views. Their susceptibility will, however, be moderated to some extent by the presence of the Operational Scheme and the modified nature of the farmed and afforested landscape.

9.10.163 The combination of the medium-high value of the view and the medium-high susceptibility of visitors will give rise to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.164 The wireline in **Figure 9.37d** shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be theoretically visible at a range of 10.8 km. The three turbines on the right will be seen to coincide with the horizontal extent of the Operational Scheme, while the four turbines on the left will be seen to form a slight increase in this direction. The three turbines on the right will have a limited additional influence owing to their location amidst the Operational Scheme turbines but also the screening of the intervening landform which means that they are seen as a tip, a blade and to just below the nacelle. The four turbines on the left will be seen to below their nacelles, albeit with the towers visible to variable extents. The Proposed Development will from an apparent extension to the Operational Scheme owing to their close proximity.

9.10.165 The Proposed Development occupies only a small proportion of the much wider ridgeline, and the turbines are located in a relatively low-lying and unremarkable section along which commercial forestry is evident. It will be seen in close association with the only other wind farm development visible in the view and this will act to contain this type of influence. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will occupy only 5 to 10 degrees of the full 360-degree view, as shown in the horizontal angle ZTV in **Figure 9.7**, and the turbines will be seen as relatively small-scale and distant features. These factors reduce the

prominence of the Proposed Development in this view, such that it appears as a feature contained in a much wider landscape setting.

9.10.166 Forestry at Dunearn covers the ridgeline and as it grows the screening effect of the turbines will increase and this will gradually reduce the magnitude of change. Owing to the screening effect of the ridgeline, infrastructure will not be visible from this viewpoint. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development will be **medium-low**.

9.10.167 During the construction phase, plant and processes will not be readily visible, with the exception of the tall cranes used in the construction of the emerging turbines. The magnitude of change as a result of the cranes and emerging turbines will not, however, be greater than that of the turbines during the operational phase, which will be **medium-low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.168 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. The minimum distance of 10.8 km combined with the relatively contained extent of the turbines, and the existing influence of the Operational Scheme turbines, means that the Proposed Development will not redefine the character of this view. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 15: Shore Road Lochindorb 2 (**Figure 9.38** and **Figure 9.55**)

Baseline

9.10.169 The viewpoint is located on the loch shore close to the minor road, at a point where the view of Lochindorb Castle lines up with the Proposed Development in the background. The view will be experienced by visitors to the loch, most of whom are road-users, but also some of whom are walkers or anglers.

9.10.170 There is only a limited section of the shore from which the Proposed Development will be seen directly behind Lochindorb Castle. From the majority of the minor road, the Proposed Development will be seen offset to the right or left of the castle. The view is orientated west towards the Proposed Development which is located a minimum distance of 10.4 km from the viewpoint. The viewpoint is located in the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA.

9.10.171 Lochindorb Castle forms the focal feature of the view, to which the loch and surrounding hills form the setting. The hills from the centre of the view to the right, appear low and level, without any distinctive summits or other landform features. Forestry is seen to trim the ridgeline with blocks evident in the centre and on the shoreline to the left, denoting the modified nature of parts of this landscape. The hills on the left of the view are slightly higher and more rounded to produce a more substantial sense of enclosure to the loch.

9.10.172 As in the view from Shore Road Lochindorb 1, the only wind farm development visible in this view is the Operational Scheme, while other small-scale developments include only the minor road and farmsteads visible in adjacent sectors.

Sensitivity

9.10.173 The value of this view is medium-high. Lochindorb is an important visitor attraction in this area, principally on account of the scenic views across the loch to the castle. Furthermore, it is located in the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA. The value is prevented from being rated high owing to the absence of a national level designation or a formal viewpoint.

9.10.174 The susceptibility of road-users, walkers and other recreational users is medium-high. While the Proposed Development will be located some distance from the loch and associated with the Operational Scheme on the low hills in the background, it will still feature in the main outlook over the loch. Most viewers will be in this area to enjoy the scenic views. Their susceptibility will, however, be moderated to some extent by the presence of the Operational Scheme and the modified nature of the farmed and forested landscape.

9.10.175 The combination of the medium-high value of the view and the medium-high susceptibility of visitors will give rise to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.176 The wireline in **Figure 9.38d** shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be theoretically visible at a range of 10.4 km. The three turbines on the right will be seen to coincide with the horizontal extent of the Operational Scheme, while the four turbines on the left will be seen to form a slight increase in this direction. Although the three turbines on the right will be slightly larger, from this viewpoint they will appear comparable in scale to the Operational Scheme turbines owing to the separation distance and their relatively lower base level. The four turbines on the left will be seen to almost their full extents and will be seen evenly spaced along the ridgeline to form a compact group. The Proposed Development will from an apparent extension to the Operational Scheme owing to their close proximity and continuity in terms of perceived scale and linear layout.

9.10.177 The Proposed Development occupies only a small proportion of the much wider ridgeline, and the turbines are located in a relatively low-lying and unremarkable section along which commercial forestry is evident. It will be seen in close association with the only other wind farm development visible in the view and this will act to contain this type of influence. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will occupy only 5 to 10 degrees of the full 360-degree view, as shown in the horizontal angle ZTV in **Figure 9.7**, and the turbines will be seen as relatively small-scale and distant features. These factors reduce the prominence of the Proposed Development in this view, such that it appears as a feature contained in a much wider landscape setting.

9.10.178 Visual conflict does, however, arise in relation to Lochindorb Castle. From this specific viewpoint the Proposed Development is seen directly behind Lochindorb Castle, and this gives rise to a competing focus. Lochindorb Castle will still appear as the primary focus, with the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme forming a secondary focus, and although seen to be relatively small in scale, the movement of the blades will be discernible and will add to the prominence of the turbines. Taking all these factors into account,

the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development will be **medium-low**.

9.10.179 During the construction phase, plant and processes will not be readily visible, with the exception of the tall cranes used in the construction of the emerging turbines. The magnitude of change as a result of the cranes and emerging turbines will not, however, be greater than that of the turbines during the operational phase, which will be **medium-low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.180 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. The minimum distance of 10.4 km combined with the relatively contained extent of the turbines, and the existing influence of the Operational Scheme turbines, means that the Proposed Development will not redefine the character of this view. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Viewpoint 16: Creag Ealraich (**Figure 9.39** and **Figure 9.56**)

Baseline

9.10.181 This viewpoint has been selected to represent the visual effects of the Proposed Development on walkers on this small hill that forms part of the northern edge of the CNP. Creag Ealraich (504 m AOD) forms the highest point in a west to east ridgeline formed by a series of small but craggy hills, set between Carn Glas-choire (659 m AOD) approximately 5 km to the west and Gorton Hill (434 m AOD) approximately 7 km to the east. Creag Ealraich sits to the immediate east of the B9007 which makes it easily accessible. There are, however, no paths to the summit and walkers must navigate through boggy ground and moorland vegetation.

9.10.182 Creag Ealraich is similar to the other hills in this group, in that it is characterised by its broad and rounded form, its steep and often craggy sides, its dark and tight groundcover, and its open and relatively featureless appearance. Locally, they are made distinct by the lower lying landform around Lochindorb to the north and Dulnain Strath to the south, with the views opening up in these directions. Carn na Leitire (~460 m AOD) sits to the immediate west of the B9007 and contains the extent of the view in this direction, as does Creag an Righ (480 m AOD) to the east. Wider views do, nonetheless, extend around the sides of these hills and it is to the north-west that the hills to the north of the Site are visible.

9.10.183 The view from the summit is largely characterised by the high moorland of the surrounding hills with their gently undulating landform and dark blanket covering of heather moorland. This landscape is exposed and largely featureless, giving some sense of remoteness, albeit moderated by the tracks and muirburn associated with the management of the grouse moor. The most dramatic and scenic views lie to the south, where the distinct outline of the Cairngorm Mountains presents the main attraction of the wider view. In contrast, the hills to the north-west, where the Proposed Development will be located, appear low and relatively uniform in their scale and form.

9.10.184 There is very little development visible in the view, and while the Operational Scheme is located to the north-west at a minimum of 8.6 km, it is visible only

as two blades with the other Operational Scheme turbines screened by the intervening landform of adjacent Carn na Leitire.

Sensitivity

9.10.185 The viewpoint is located on the northern edge of the CNP, making it representative of this designated area, albeit with the view looking north-west away from the CNP, rather than southwards towards it. It is also covered by the local landscape designation of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA. The viewpoint represents the summit of the hill, which although not a formal viewpoint, is the point where walkers are most likely to stop for some time and appreciate the view. The value of the view is rated as medium-high, and not high as it is not included in the Cairngorm Mountains NSA, and the landscape which surrounds the viewpoint, whilst of scenic value, is not as impressive as the more elevated or well-defined hill ranges in the wider area.

9.10.186 An important part of the hill walkers experience is the experience of panoramic views from the summit. The susceptibility of walkers to the Proposed Development will be medium. For many walkers, the appreciation of the hilltop views is an important part of the overall hillwalking experience. Expectations are often based on experiencing a largely undeveloped upland landscape. The limited extent to which the Operational Scheme is visible means that the landscape does appear largely undeveloped and the susceptibility of walkers to wind farm development will remain medium-high.

9.10.187 The combination of the value of the view and the susceptibility of the walkers to the Proposed Development will lead to an overall sensitivity of **medium-high**.

Magnitude of change

9.10.188 The wireline in **Figure 9.39f** shows that the Proposed Development will be theoretically visible as two turbines, although with one seen as a blade and one as a tip, such that the tip may not be readily discernible owing to its small scale. These two turbines will be seen set behind the northern downslope of Carn na Leitire to the north-west of Creag Ealraich. The tip will lie to the left and the blade to the right of the two tips of the Operational Scheme that are already visible.

9.10.189 The limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible will limit its influence on the views of walkers on Creag Ealraich and the magnitude of change will be **low**. While the Operational Scheme is also theoretically visible from this viewpoint, its influence is also limited by the limited extent to which the two tips will be readily apparent.

9.10.190 During the construction phase, the majority of the plant and processes will be screened by the intervening landform. While there may be some visibility of the tall cranes used to construct the two turbines partly visible from this hilltop, visibility will be limited in extents and short-lived. The magnitude of change during the construction phase will be **low**.

Significance of effect

9.10.191 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This is largely due to the very

limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible and the existing influence from the Operational Scheme turbines in the same location, albeit also limited in terms of extent of visibility.

Viewpoint 17: Dava Way (**Figure 9.40** and **Figure 9.57**)

Baseline

9.10.192 This viewpoint is located on the Dava Way long-distance footpath and is representative of the views of walkers. Dava Way follows the route of the dismantled railway between Grantown-on-Spey to Forres. The viewpoint is located close to the village of Dava on the eastern edge of the high moorland. The viewpoint is orientated west towards the Proposed Development which will be located at a distance of 13.8 km. The viewpoint is located in the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA.

9.10.193 The views of walkers will typically be drawn along the linear path in their northerly or southerly direction of travel. The surrounding view is contained in extent by rising landform to the east, forestry to the north, and low hills to the south, such that the most open aspect is west, and this tends to be the direction in which the attention of viewers is drawn, when the focus is not on the path. The view extends out over the undulating landform of the high moorland to the enclosing ridgeline of hills where the Proposed Development will be located. It is the open expanse of moorland that characterises this view; the simple landform, homogenous landcover and largely featureless expanse.

9.10.194 The geometric edge of the dense woodland block around Dava, presents a stark contrast with the open expanse of moorland, which characterises the wider view, and this, along with the rooftops visible in the centre of the view and the minor road, leading across the midground to Lochindorb, present a more settled landscape. The only large-scale developments visible in the view is the Operational Scheme, seen as a distant feature on the upland ridgeline to the west.

Sensitivity

9.10.195 The value of the view is medium-high. Although there are no formal viewpoints along the walk, the viewpoint is representative of a recognised long-distance footpath, as well as the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA, and these factors raise the value of the view.

9.10.196 The susceptibility of walkers is medium. The Dava Way is a long-distance, low-level walk which passes through farmed and forested landscapes and close to settlements and roads. The expectations of walkers will be to experience a modified landscape which contains small scale rural developments. While there is very little development visible in this landscape, the Operational Scheme evident on the ridgeline to the west, moderates the susceptibility of walkers to this type of development.

9.10.197 The combination of the medium-high value of the view and the medium susceptibility of walkers will give rise to an overall **medium-high** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.10.198 The wireline in **Figure 9.40e** shows that all seven of the proposed turbines will be theoretically visible at a range of 13.8 km. The three turbines on the right will be seen to coincide with the horizontal extent of the Operational Scheme, while the four turbines on the left will be seen to form a slight increase in this direction. Although the three turbines on the right will be slightly larger, from this viewpoint they will appear comparable in scale to the Operational Scheme turbines owing to the separation distance and their relatively lower base level. The four turbines on the left will be seen to almost their full extents and will be seen evenly spaced along the ridgeline to form a compact group. The Proposed Development will from an apparent extension to the Operational Scheme owing to their close proximity and continuity in terms of perceived scale and linear layout.

9.10.199 The Proposed Development occupies only a small proportion of the much wider ridgeline, and the turbines are located in a relatively low-lying and unremarkable section which sits behind the closer range ridgeline. It will be seen in close association with the only other wind farm development readily visible in the view and this will act to contain this type of influence. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will occupy only 5 to 10 degrees of the full 360-degree view, as shown in the horizontal angle ZTV in **Figure 9.7**, and the turbines will be seen as relatively small-scale and distant features. These factors reduce the prominence of the Proposed Development in this view, such that it appears as a feature contained in a much wider landscape setting. Taking all these factors into account, the magnitude of change as a result of the Proposed Development will be **low**.

9.10.200 During the construction phase, plant and processes will not be readily visible, with the exception of the tall cranes used in the construction of the emerging turbines. The magnitude of change as a result of the cranes and emerging turbines will not, however, be greater than that of the turbines during the operational phase, which will be **low**.

Significance of the effect

9.10.201 The effect of the Proposed Development on the view will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This is largely due to the distance between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development, the relatively compact feature it forms on the distant skyline and the existing influence from the Operational Scheme turbines in the same location.

Assessment of Effects on Principal Visual Receptors

9.10.202 The second part of the assessment of effects on views is the assessment of effects on principal visual receptors. The principal visual receptors considered in the assessment include settlements and route corridors, such as roads, railways, national cycle routes, long distance footpaths and core paths. These are shown in **Figure 9.4**, and in conjunction with the ZTV in **Figure 9.10**. The criteria used to select the principal visual receptors are described in the baseline section of this chapter.

9.10.203 The first step in the assessment of effects on principal visual receptors is an initial assessment to ascertain which of the receptors have potential to be

significantly affected by visibility of the Proposed Development. This process is carried out through a desk study and site survey which examines the visibility of the Proposed Development from the principal visual receptors, using the ZTV and wirelines, along with the findings of the assessment of the associated representative viewpoints.

9.10.204 This initial assessment has indicated that of the principal visual receptors, three roads, and one long distance cycleway require detailed assessment;

- A9(T) / Edinburgh to Inverness rail line / NCR 7 (Viewpoint 8);
- B9007 (Viewpoint 6); and
- A939 (Viewpoint 13).

9.10.205 Reference is made to the viewpoints which have been selected to represent these principal visual receptors and which have been assessed in detail in the previous section. The effects on the principal visual receptors are described below. The other principal visual receptors, or sections of principal visual receptors, were discounted through the initial assessment as they were considered to not have the potential to undergo a significant effect.

A9 (T)

Baseline

9.11.1 The ZTV indicates that there would be no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the A9(T) from Newtonmore on the southern edge of the 40 km Study Area to south of Tomatin and then from Moy to the Black Isle on the northern edge of the 40 km Study Area. Therefore, this assessment focuses on the section of the A9(T) between Tomatin and Moy, which is closest to the Proposed Development and where theoretical visibility is shown to occur. The extents of actual visibility, as experienced from the A9(T) are described below.

North-bound

9.11.2 In the section of the A9(T), from south of Tomatin to the bridge over the River Findhorn, the views are largely screened by roadside planting, especially on the eastern side towards the Proposed Development. Prior to this, in the section between Slochd summit and Tomatin, views open up to the west revealing a landscape of undulating bare hills, where Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms are typically seen as blades and tips set behind the intervening ridgeline and seen intermittently over a section of approximately 2 km.

9.11.3 Nearing the Findhorn Bridge, the outlook firstly opens up to the west, revealing a view of the river valley in which the railway viaduct forms a key focal feature. At the bridge, the view also opens up to the east revealing the river valley with forest plantations across the valley slopes and the Operational Scheme set across the background hills at a range of approximately 7 km. Beyond the bridge, there is a brief glimpse of Farr Wind Farm to the west, before views are mostly blocked by cuttings and roadside vegetation. Where roadside vegetation is absent, short-range views to the nearby hills to the west and to the nearby farmland to the east are available, with short-lived longer-range views occurring in the vicinity of the track to Invereen.

9.11.4 For a section of approximately 1 km to the north of Dalmagarry, Moy Wind Farm is visible at relatively close range, seen set behind the forested ridgeline of Beinn na h'Iolaire, 2 to 3 km from the A9 (T). It will also be potentially visible from the A9 (T) north-west of the village of Moy, although by this stage the turbines will lie behind the direction of the road-users and will, therefore, not be readily visible in their forward-facing views.

South-bound

9.11.5 For south-bound road-users, Moy Wind Farm is visible for a short stretch from where it emerges from the forestry before passing Moy village. The turbines are seen at a range of approximately 3 km and form a prominent feature owing to the alignment of the road in this direction. Near Loch Moy, the view to the east is largely blocked by roadside vegetation. To the west, the view is limited by the rising slopes of Carn na Loinne. South of Loch Moy, the view eastwards is towards the valley of the Funtack Burn with the forested hills behind limiting the view. The road then turns southwards, directing the view towards the nearby hills and the distant Monadhliath Hills beyond, before roadside vegetation screens the view until the River Findhorn bridge. Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms are not readily visible from this section.

9.11.6 At the bridge, the view opens up on both sides, revealing to the west the river valley with the railway viaduct and the hills beyond, and to the east, the Operational Scheme, albeit at an oblique angle relative to the direction of travel. Beyond the bridge, roadside vegetation screens views to both the east and west. As the road rises to Slochd Summit the view begins to open up towards a landscape of bare hills towards the south and south-west. Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms are not readily visible to south-bound road-users on the A9 (T) owing to the screening effect of road-side tree cover.

Sensitivity

9.11.7 The value of views from the section of the A9 (T) between Slochd and Moy are medium. This section is not subject to any landscape designations and there are no formal viewpoints passed along the way. The A9 (T) is not part of a tourist route although a large number of tourists will use this route to access the Highlands.

9.11.8 The susceptibility of road-users to the Proposed Development will be medium. The section of the A9 between Slochd and Moy is largely enclosed by road-side trees such that the majority of views are contained within the close range. Where more open views do occur, they are often of short-duration owing to the speed of road-users being typically 50 to 60mph. Although not widely evident, owing to the factors described above, other wind farm developments can be seen along this section, including the Operational Scheme at approximately 7 km, operational Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms at approximately 5 to 6 km, and the closer range and more prominent Moy Wind Farm at approximately 3 to 4 km. These existing wind farms will further moderate susceptibility as the Proposed Development will not appear as a new feature to road-users.

9.11.9 The combination of the value of the views and the susceptibility of the road-users gives rise to an overall **medium** sensitivity.

Magnitude of change

9.11.10 The ZTV shows that the Proposed Development will not be visible from the majority of the section of the A9 (T) which passes through the Study Area. It is only the section from beyond Slochd summit to Moy that theoretical visibility is shown to occur. While theoretical visibility is shown to occur almost continuously in this section, actual visibility will be reduced by the factors described below.

9.11.11 This section of the A9 (T) lies on the eastern margin of an area of visibility, and as such, the levels of visibility shown on the ZTV are typically low. This is partly because the A9 (T) is routed along the lowest lying passage through this landscape with the landform rising up on either side. The slopes to the east are west-facing, away from the Proposed Development and therefore with no visibility occurring, while the slopes to the west are east-facing and theoretical visibility is shown to occur. The A9 (T) lies between these hill slopes with the effect that the slopes to the east, either fully or partially screen visibility. This means that the nature of the views will typically comprise blades or tips seen behind the intervening hills. Furthermore, the section of the A9 (T) between Slochd and Moy is largely enclosed by road-side tree cover or forestry, and this means the views of road-users are contained within the close range with the exception of short sections in which longer range views occur.

9.11.12 As the Proposed Development lies to the north-east of the north-west to south-east alignment of the A9 (T), the views of north and south-bound road-users will be different. For north-bound road-users visibility will occur for the short section across the Findhorn bridge as represented by Viewpoint 10. In the sequence of views across the bridge the Proposed Development will be seen as a small number of turbines largely screened by the ridgeline and set to the right of the more readily visible Operational Scheme. The proposed turbines will be seen at a minimum distance of 7.2 km and the magnitude of change they will give rise to will be limited by the existing influence of the Operational Scheme turbines. The views will be experienced whilst travelling at speed and at an angle oblique to the direction of travel. The magnitude of change will be **low**.

9.11.13 Visibility to the north of the bridge will be predominantly screened by road-side tree cover, with the exception of an open area around the access into Invereen. Over this short section, the extent of the Proposed Development that will be visible will be very limited, with the majority of the proposed and Operational Scheme turbines concealed by the intervening landform. The limited extent and duration of visibility, combined with the speed of travel will give rise to a **negligible** magnitude of change. Further north, the Proposed Development will be behind the direction of travel and not readily visible to road-users.

9.11.14 For south-bound road-users visibility will occur in the vicinity of Dalmagarry, where there will be very short glimpses of the Proposed Development seen amidst forest plantations which will screen most of the turbines. Here, the magnitude of change will be **low**. Views will then be screened by roadside vegetation until the track to Invereen, where visibility of the Proposed Development will occur for a short duration and with the turbines seen at an

oblique angle to the direction of travel. These views will typically comprise a very small number of blades and tips set behind the forested ridgeline to the east and seen in the context of the Operational Scheme. Here, the magnitude of change will be **low**.

9.11.15 Views will then be screened by roadside vegetation until the River Findhorn Bridge and while Viewpoint 10 shows the extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible, for south-bound road-users this will not be readily apparent as it will be behind their direction of travel. The magnitude of change will be **low**.

9.11.16 Owing to the screening effect of the intervening hills, infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development will not be visible from the A9 (T). The intervening hills will also screen the majority of the plant and processes associated with the construction phase, with the exception of the tall cranes used in the erection of the emerging turbines. The visual effect of the tall cranes and emerging turbines will not be greater than the visual effect of the turbines during the operational phase, with a **low** magnitude of change.

Significance of effect

9.11.17 The effect of the Proposed Development on north-bound and south bound road-users of the A9 (T) will be **not significant**. The extent of the A9 (T) from which the Proposed Development will be visible, will be limited by a combination of intervening landform and roadside vegetation. Where visibility will occur, it will be short in duration and limited in terms of the extent to which the turbines will be visible. Furthermore, the small number of proposed turbines visible, will be seen in the context of the existing Operational Scheme turbines and this will moderate the overall effect. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

B9007

Baseline

9.11.18 The ZTV in **Figure 9.10** shows that there will be no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the B9007 until just north of its junction with the Lochindorb minor road. Theoretical visibility is shown to occur between this point and Ferness extending over approximately 9 km of the route and occurring within a range of approximately 7 to 15 km of the Proposed Development. Actual visibility will, however, only occur in the section between just north of the Lochindorb junction and the property named Knockandhu, owing to large sections of this route further to the north-east being enclosed by forestry.

North-bound

9.11.19 North from the Lochindorb junction, the view towards the west and north-west comprises large-scale open moorland covered in grasses and heather. The Operational Scheme is readily visible on the ridgeline of the moorland to the west, with other human interventions limited to access tracks and occasional small huts. The landscape rises slowly to a prominent and gently undulating skyline of hills which enclose the extent of the wider view. The views are

characterised by the openness and simplicity of the landscape and lack any sense of focus or direction.

9.11.20 Rising ground to the immediate east of the B9007, combined with the covering of young forestry, restricts the extent of the view in this direction, thus placing more emphasis on the views to the west. Further north and after a prominent bend in the road, views become more expansive on both sides and the greater presence of forestry and woodland denotes a more modified character to the landscape. Approaching Ferness, views are contained by forestry on either side of the road.

South-bound

9.11.21 Travelling south from Ferness, views are mostly screened by forest plantations. Beyond Burnside, the views begin to open up and as the road rises, an expansive open view develops to the south-west. This extends across an undulating open moorland to a prominent hill range which forms the skyline. The Operational Scheme is seen as a readily visible feature along this ridgeline, albeit relatively distant and small in scale. To the east, rising afforested ground restricts the view with the result that the attention of road-users tends to be drawn south and south-west across the high moorland where views are consistently uninterrupted. Eventually, the rising ground of Carn nan Clach Garbha (418 m AOD) to the west restricts the view of road-users on the approach to the Lochindorb junction.

Sensitivity

9.11.22 The value of the views from the B9007 is medium. While the section between Creag Ealraich and Knockandhu is covered by the local designation of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA, it does not form part of a National Tourist Route nor are there any formal laybys that would otherwise encourage road-users to stop and appreciate the views. The views are characterised by the openness and simplicity of the high moorland, a landscape which occurs in other parts of Scotland.

9.11.23 The susceptibility of road-users to the Proposed Development will be medium. While the general absence of large-scale development and limited occurrence of small-scale development adds to the undeveloped character of the landscape, the Operational Scheme is readily visible from this central section of the B9007. This establishes wind farm development as a feature in the views of road-users and moderates their susceptibility to this type of development. Road-users will be experiencing views only whilst in transit, as there are no formal laybys which encourage stopping or appreciation of the views.

9.11.24 The combination of the value of the views and the susceptibility of the road-users leads to an overall sensitivity of **medium**.

Magnitude of change

9.11.25 For north-bound road-users, the Proposed Development will be visible from an approximate 4.5 km section of the B9007 north of the junction with the minor road to Lochindorb. This extent of visibility will largely coincide with visibility of the Operational Scheme, such that the Proposed Development will not be seen as a new intervention in this landscape, but rather an extension to an existing intervention.

9.11.26 For the first 1 km of this 4.5 km north-bound section, the Proposed Development will be at an angle perpendicular to the direction of travel. Beyond this section, the Proposed Development will be set behind the peripheral view of road-users. The first 1 km section is represented by Viewpoint 6 which shows that the Proposed Development will be set along the prominent ridgeline to the west, seen in the context of the Operational Scheme, in respect of which, the Proposed Development will be seen as an extension. The seven proposed turbines will be visible and seen to overlap with the Operational Scheme turbines, such that there will only be an incremental increase in the horizontal extent to the south. Despite the slightly larger size of the proposed turbines, from the road they will appear comparable in scale, partly due also to their slightly lower base elevation. Overall, the magnitude of change for north-bound road-users will be **medium-low** for the first 1 km stretch and then **low** for the following 3.5 km. This visibility is likely to reduce substantially as the tree belt to the west of the road matures.

9.11.27 For south-bound road-users leaving Ferness, views will be screened by forest plantations until just south of Knockandhu. Then, as views southwards open up, the alignment of the road will generally be towards the south-west where the Proposed Development will be seen adjacent to the existing Operational Scheme. The seven proposed turbines will be seen to form a relatively compact extension to the existing 13 Operational Scheme turbines, and it is this association that will moderate the magnitude of change. The Proposed Development will be aligned with the road for an approximate 1 km stretch of the B9007 during which the magnitude of change on south-bound road-users will be **medium-low**. For the following 3 km, the Proposed Development will still be visible, albeit with the Proposed Development becoming increasingly oblique in terms of its alignment to the direction of travel. In this section the magnitude of change will be **low**. Beyond 3 km the Proposed Development will lie outwith the peripheral view of road-users and as a result the magnitude of change will be **negligible**.

9.11.28 While the majority of the plant and processes associated with the construction phase will be too distant to have a notable influence on the magnitude of change, the use of tall cranes in the erection of the turbines will form prominent features visible from the viewpoint. The magnitude of change during the construction phases will not be greater than the magnitude of change resulting from the turbines during the operational phase with the same ratings applying to the same sections as described above.

Significance of the effect

9.11.29 The effect of the Proposed Development on the views of north-bound and south-bound road-users of the B9007 will be **not significant** during both the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates to the combination of the separation distance between the Proposed Development and the road-users, the relatively compact extent of the Proposed Development, and its close association with the Operational Scheme to which it will form an extension.

A939

Baseline

9.11.30 The ZTV indicates that there would be no theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the A939 apart from the 5 km section between the north of Ferness and the junction with the minor road to the B9007, via Little Aitnoch, and the 2 km section to the south of Dava. Actual visibility from these sections will be greatly reduced by the extent of roadside vegetation.

North-bound

9.11.31 The landscape character changes at Upper Deraid, from the enclosed and cultivated valley landform to the south, to the more open and exposed moorland to the north. The views open up to the west, looking across a small strath characterised by few trees and undulating hills, and backclothed by a hill range in the distance. The road has a winding character which means the direction of the view is continuously changing. The views to the west are intermittently blocked by local landforms such as Cairn Ruigh (484 m AOD) and Craig Tiribeg (486 m AOD). Towards Dava the view becomes more open and distant, particularly to the north-west, while some visibility of the Operational Scheme arises in views towards the distant ridgeline to the west.

9.11.32 Just north of Dava, the road makes a sharp turn westwards, directing the view over open moorland to the hills beyond, although the rising ground of the Hill of Aitnoch then begins to limit the view in this westerly direction. The route then turns generally northwards again and the views to the west become partially blocked by roadside landform and vegetation, with the rising slopes of Carn Duhie becoming the main focus of the view. Approaching Ferness, blocks of forest enclose the road and limit views in all directions.

South-bound

9.11.33 From Ferness the view is initially enclosed by forest cover but then opens up to the south and south-east over open moorland, and views are generally continuous to the west side but contained on the east side by the rising slopes of Carn Duhie. Further south, views to the south and south-west are contained by the ridge of the Hill of Aitnoch, and when the road turns to the east, all views are focused towards the junction at Dava and the locally prominent hill of Carn na Glaisneach.

9.11.34 South of Dava, the view opens up to the strath of the Araboard Burn, characterised as a relatively flat area with some small local hills and lochs. There are few trees and various hill ranges can be seen in the distance. Further south, the view narrows slightly between the slopes of Cairn Ruigh Chorrach and Carn na Glaisneach before opening up to the next glen. The road has a winding character and the direction of view changes frequently, but the main focus of the hills is towards the south-east.

Sensitivity

9.11.35 The value of the views from the A939 is medium-high. The section north of Blar Creag a' Bheithe to Dava is covered by the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA. The route is also part of a National Tourist Route, and this raises the value.

9.11.36 The susceptibility of road-users to the Proposed Development will be medium-low. The Proposed Development will be located beyond approximately 12 km from the A939 and seen at an oblique angle to the direction of travel. It will be seen adjacent to the Operational Scheme which already has an influence on the views of road-users from the same extent of the A939. Other wind farm developments are also visible from the section of the A939 in the vicinity of Aitnoch, namely Paul's Hill and Berry Burn both in the range of 12 to 15 km. Operational wind farm developments will moderate the susceptibility of road-users as the Proposed Development will not appear as a new feature to road-users.

9.11.37 The combination of the value of the views and the susceptibility of road-users leads to an overall sensitivity of **medium**.

Magnitude of change

9.11.38 For north-bound road-users, the Proposed Development will be visible for the approximate 1.4 km section of the A939 between Drumguish and Dava. The Proposed Development will be visible to the west and so perpendicular to the direction of travel. This stretch of the A939 sits on the margins of a patch of visibility that extends further east and as such the extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible will be limited by intervening landform, especially around Dava where the very small number of distant blade tips will be indiscernible. The magnitude of change that will occur across this section will be **negligible**.

9.11.39 Visibility resumes north of the junction with the minor road to the B9007 although by this point, the Proposed Development will be located in the opposite direction to the direction of travel and will, therefore, no longer form a readily visible feature in the views of road-users. In those sections where visibility of the Proposed Development does arise, it will be seen in conjunction with the Operational Scheme and this will moderate the magnitude of change, which will be **low**.

9.11.40 For south-bound road-users leaving Ferness, views will be largely contained by existing forestry plantations, beyond which views will open up towards the south, with the Proposed Development visible to the south-west. These views are represented by Viewpoint 13 which shows that the Proposed Development will be set along the prominent ridgeline. The magnitude of change from this section of the A939 will be **low**, owing to the separation distance of more than 12 km which will ensure the proposed turbines will appear as small-scale features, as well as the existing influence form the Operational Scheme and the relatively small number of proposed turbines being added to the group. This effect will continue for approximately 2 km until the forestry block to the west of the road screens views. Beyond this the road passes out of the zone of visibility until Dava.

9.11.41 The distance between the A939 and the Proposed Development means that much of the plant and processes associated with the construction phase will also be too distant to influence the visual effect. The tall cranes used in the erection of the emerging turbines will be visible owing to their location on the ridgeline, although the magnitude of change they will give rise to will be no

greater than the magnitude of change associated with the turbines during the operational phase.

Significance of the effect

9.11.42 The effect of the Proposed Development on north-bound and south-bound road-users on the A939 will be **not significant** during the construction and operational phases. This assessment relates to the limited extent of the road from which actual visibility will be gained, the distance between the road and the Proposed Development, the oblique angle at which the Proposed Development will lie in relation to the direction of both north and south-bound travel and the existing influence from the Operational Scheme in the same location. The nature of the effect will be adverse.

Summary of Effects on Views

9.11.43 The effects of the Proposed Development on viewpoints and principal visual receptors that were assessed in detail as having the potential to undergo a significant effect are summarised in Table 9.9 below. The other principal visual receptors have been assessed as not having potential to undergo significant effects.

Table 9.9 – Summary of Effects on Views and Principal Visual Receptors

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during construction	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
1. Balvraid Lodge	Medium-high	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
2. Carn Glas-choire	Medium-high	Medium-low	Significant	Medium-low	Significant
3. Ptarmigan Lodge	Medium-high	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
4. Creagan a' Chaise, Hills of Cromdale	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
5. Minor Road north of Drynachan	Medium	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
6. B9007 near Lochindorb	Medium-high	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
7. Geal Charn Mor, Monadhliath	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
8. A9 (T) north of Tomatin	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during construction	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
Junction					
9. Meall a' Bhuachaille	Medium-high	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
10. A9 (T) River Findhorn Bridge	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
11. Blackfold, near Dochgarroch	Medium / Medium-low	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
12. Gorton Hill	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
13. A939 at milestone	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
14. Shore Road Lochindorb 1	Medium-high	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
15. Shore Road Lochindorb 2	Medium-high	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
16. Creag Ealraich	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
17. Dava Way	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
A9(T)	Medium	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound - low	Not significant	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound - low	Not significant
B9007	Medium	Northbound – medium-low / low Southbound – medium-low / low / negligible	Not significant	Northbound – medium-low / low Southbound – medium-low / low / negligible	Not significant
A939	Medium	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound -	Not significant	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound -	Not significant

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during construction	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
		low		low	

9.12 Assessment of In-Conjunction Cumulative Effects

9.12.1 All operational and under construction wind farms have been included as part of the baseline situation in the main assessment. This means that their influence on the main assessment has been taken into account in relation to the landscape and visual receptors assessed in detail in the assessment of effects on landscape character and assessment of effects on visual amenity. The outstanding consideration for the cumulative assessment is, therefore, the additional effect of the Proposed Development in conjunction with the consented and application stage wind farms, as well as the operational and under construction wind farms. This assessment is separated out into the two following cumulative scenarios.

- Cumulative Scenario 1: assesses the effects of adding the Proposed Development to a cumulative situation comprising all operational, under construction and consented wind farms.
- Cumulative Scenario 2: assesses the effects of adding the Proposed Development to a cumulative situation comprising all operational, under construction, consented and application stage wind farms.

9.12.2 A preliminary assessment in order to identify those cumulative developments of relevance to the detailed assessment is presented in Section 9.5 of this chapter, with the relevance of each of the cumulative wind farms set out in Table 9.4.

9.12.3 A preliminary assessment in order to identify those landscape and visual receptors of relevance to the detailed assessment is presented in Tables 9.10 and 9.11 of this section. This sets out which of the landscape and visual receptors have the potential to undergo significant cumulative effects as a result of the Proposed Development in conjunction with operational, consented and application stage wind farms and, therefore, which require a more detailed assessment.

Methodology for the cumulative assessment

9.12.4 The methodology used in the assessment of cumulative effects differs in some respects from that used in the rest of the assessment. The full methodology for the cumulative assessment is described in **Appendix 9.A**.

9.12.5 It is important to remember that the objective of the cumulative assessment is different from the assessment of effects of the Proposed Development as carried out previously in this chapter; here, the intention is to establish whether or not the addition of the Proposed Development, in combination with other relevant existing and proposed wind farms, may lead to wind farm developments becoming a prevailing characteristic of the landscape character

or view as a result, albeit that they may become one of a number of prevailing characteristics.

9.12.6 It should be noted that, even if the Proposed Development itself is assessed to have a significant effect, it does not necessarily follow that the cumulative effect will also be significant.

Wind Farm sites included in the cumulative assessment

9.12.7 The preliminary assessment presented in Section 9.5 sets out which of the cumulative sites will be relevant to the cumulative assessment. Cumulative sites that lie within a 40 km radius of the Proposed Development have been listed in Table 9.4 and their locations shown in **Figure 9.12**.

9.12.8 Cumulative ZTVs that show the visibility of the cumulative site or a group of sites, along with visibility of the Proposed Development have been run for all of the operational, under construction, consented and application stage wind farms that are considered relevant in the cumulative assessment, as shown in **Figures 9.13 to 9.21**. These show the extent to which each wind farm is theoretically visible in conjunction with theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. The cumulative ZTVs are referred to in the following detailed assessments.

9.12.9 The cumulative sites are shown in the cumulative wirelines for each of the representative viewpoints in **Figures 9.24** to **9.40**. In these wirelines, the Proposed Development turbines are shown in red; operational and under-construction wind farms are shown in blue; consented wind farms are shown in purple, and application wind farms are shown in orange.

9.12.10 In some instances, wind farms show up in the wirelines although they are beyond their own study area radius. Where this occurs, the wind farm is not included in the written assessment as it lies outwith its own study area radius and is, therefore, considered to lie beyond the radius within which it may contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

Assessment of cumulative effects on landscape character

9.12.11 The assessment of cumulative effects on landscape character covers the same receptor groups as the assessment of effects on landscape character carried out previously in this chapter. The three groups considered are:

- Landscape character types;
- Designated landscapes; and
- Wild Land Areas.

9.12.12 The cumulative assessment for all of these groups of receptors is described in the following section of this chapter. The detailed methodology for the assessment of cumulative effects on landscape character is described in **Appendix 9.A**.

9.12.13 The first stage in the cumulative assessment of the landscape character types and designated areas is a filtering process to ascertain which of them have the potential to undergo significant cumulative effects as a result of the wind farm. This process is carried out through a desk study and site survey

which examines the visibility of the wind farm in conjunction with other wind farm sites from the landscape character types, designated areas and WLAs around the Study Area, using the ZTV and wirelines. Table 9.10 below shows this process.

9.12.14 This filtering process indicated that there is the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise in respect of the Open Rolling Uplands LCT and those coinciding parts of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA.

Table 9.10 Potential for Significant Cumulative Effects on Landscape Receptors

Landscape Receptor	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effects	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effects
Open Rolling Uplands LCT	**Significant** in parts out to 5 km east and south-east Not significant for remainder	Yes – the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.19** shows intervisibility with consented Cairn Duhie Wind Farm across parts of this LCT, with potential to give rise to a significant cumulative effect.	Yes – the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.23** shows intervisibility with application stage Lethen Wind Farm across parts of this LCT, with potential to give rise to a significant cumulative effect.
Rolling Uplands LCT	**Significant** in parts out to 2 km west Not significant for remainder	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.19** and **9.20** show very limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development and consented Cairn Duhie and Aberarder wind farms, across this LCT.	No – the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.23** shows very limited intervisibility between the Proposed Development and application stage Lethen Wind Farm, across this LCT.
Upland Areas LCT	Not significant	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.19** and **9.20** show that the visibility of the consented wind farms and the Proposed Development will be limited from this LCT, largely owing to the screening effect of the ridgeline along the north of this LCT.	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.21** to **9.23** show that the influence of the application stage wind farms and the Proposed Development will be limited from this LCT, largely owing to the screening effect of the ridgeline along the north of this LCT.
Narrow Wooded Valley LCT	Not significant	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.19** and **9.20** show that the influence of the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this LCT, largely owing to their notable separation distances, the enclosed valley landform of the LCT and the extent of woodland cover.	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.21** to **9.23** show that the influence of the application stage wind farms and the Development will be especially limited from this LCT, largely owing to their notable separation distances, the enclosed valley landform of the LCT and the extent of woodland cover.

Landscape Receptor	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effects	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effects
Upland Valleys LCT	Not significant	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.19** and **9.20** show that the influence of the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this LCT, largely owing to their notable separation distances and the enclosed valley landform of the LCT.	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.21** to **9.23** show that the influence of the application stage wind farms and the Development will be especially limited from this LCT, largely owing to their notable separation distances and the enclosed valley landform of the LCT.
Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA	**Significant** in parts out to 5 km east and south-east and 2 km west Not significant for remainder	Yes – the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.19** shows intervisibility with consented Cairn Duhie Wind Farm across parts of this LCT, with potential to give rise to a significant cumulative effect.	Yes – the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.23** shows intervisibility with application stage Lethen Wind Farm across parts of this LCT, with potential to give rise to a significant cumulative effect.
Cairngorms National Park	Not significant	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.19** and **9.20** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from the CNP, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited visibility of the consented wind farms, but also moderated by the existing influence of the Operational Scheme.	No – the cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.23** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and application stage Lethen Wind Farm will be limited from the CNP, largely owing to their limited visibility, especially from within the close-range part of the CNP but also moderated by the existing influence of the Operational Scheme.
Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area	Not significant	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23** show that the influence of the Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this NSA, largely owing to the notable separation distances, the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme and the limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible.	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23** show that the influence of the application stage and consented wind farms and the Development will be especially limited from this NSA, largely owing to the notable separation distances, the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme and the limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible.
Cairngorms	Not	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23**	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23**

Landscape Receptor	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effects	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effects
WLA	significant	show that the influence of the Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this WLA, largely owing to the notable separation distances, the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme and the limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible.	show that the influence of the application stage and consented wind farms and the Development will be especially limited from this WLA, largely owing to the notable separation distances, the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme and the limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible.
Monadhliath WLA	Not significant	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and the consented wind farms will be limited from this WLA, largely owing to the notable separation distances, the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme and the limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible.	No – the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and application stage wind farms will be especially limited from this WLA, largely owing to the notable separation distances, the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme and the limited extent to which the Proposed Development will be visible.

9.12.15 The limited potential for the landscape receptors to undergo significant cumulative effects, is due largely to one or a combination of the following reasons;

- limited visibility and influence of the Proposed Development as shown on ZTVs and wirelines, and as assessed in the main assessment;
- limited visibility and influence of other consented and application stage wind farm developments as shown on cumulative ZTVs and wirelines;
- the distance of the Proposed Development and other consented and application stage wind farm sites from the receptors, and the resultant limited influence that they will have;
- the existing influence from the Operational Scheme and the integration of the seven additional turbines with this existing development.

9.12.16 The cumulative assessment of effects on the Open Rolling Uplands LCT and those coinciding parts of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA with potential to be significantly affected are presented below.

Open Rolling Uplands LCT

Scenario 1

9.12.17 The theoretical intervisibility between the Proposed Development and all relevant operational and consented wind farms is shown in the cumulative

ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.20**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 1 cumulative context comprises all operational and consented wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.18 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the Open Rolling Uplands LCT, this has been assessed as **medium**.

9.12.19 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **medium-low**. In Scenario 1, the cumulative context will comprise the Operational Scheme, located in this LCT adjacent to the western boundary, and consented Cairn Duhie Wind Farm, also located in this LCT adjacent to the north-east boundary, with a separation distance of approximately 12 km between the closest turbines of these two wind farms. The other operational wind farms that will have an influence include Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy located in the neighbouring Rolling Uplands LCT at a minimum of approximately 5 km, 13 km and 14 km respectively from the closest LCT boundary.

9.12.20 The cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.19** shows that intervisibility between the Proposed Development and Cairn Duhie will occur fairly extensively across those parts of the LCT that lie between both wind farms. Cairn Duhie will comprise 20 turbines at 110 m and will occur in the north-east of the LCT. The effect of the seven proposed turbines to this cumulative situation will be moderated by the fact that they will be added to as an extension to an existing group of 13 turbines, and so will be adding to an existing influence rather than creating a new separate influence. This means that the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme will collectively be contained within a relatively compact part of the LCT and will prevent spread into different landscape types, which would otherwise give rise to a greater cumulative magnitude of change.

9.12.21 The medium sensitivity combined with the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a **not significant** cumulative effect.

Scenario 2

9.12.22 The theoretical intervisibility between the Proposed Development and all relevant operational, consented and application stage wind farms is shown in the cumulative ZTVs in **Figures 9.13** to **9.23**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 2 cumulative context comprises all operational, consented and application stage wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.23 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the Open Rolling Uplands LCT, this has been assessed as **medium**.

9.12.24 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **medium-low**. In Scenario 2, the cumulative context will comprise the Operational Scheme, located in this LCT adjacent to the western boundary, consented Cairn Duhie Wind Farm, located in this LCT adjacent to the north-east boundary, and application stage Lethen Wind Farm, also located in this LCT. Lethen Wind Farm is set a minimum of approximately 4 km to the east of the Operational Scheme and approximately 5.5 km south-west of consented Cairn Duhie. The other operational wind farms that will have an influence include Moy, Farr and Glen Kyllachy located in the neighbouring Rolling Uplands LCT at a minimum of

approximately 5 km, 13 km and 14 km respectively from the closest LCT boundary.

9.12.25 The cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.19** shows that intervisibility between the Proposed Development and Cairn Duhie will occur fairly extensively across those parts of the LCT that lie between both wind farms. Cairn Duhie will comprise 20 turbines at a 110 m tip height and will occur in the north-east of the LCT. The cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.23** shows that intervisibility between the Proposed Development and Lethen Wind Farm will occur fairly extensively across the LCT. Lethen Wind Farm will comprise 17 turbines at a 185 m tip height and will occur in the centre of the LCT.

9.12.26 The effect of the seven proposed turbines to this cumulative situation will be moderated by the fact that they will be added to as an extension to an existing group of 13 turbines, and so will be adding to an existing influence rather than creating a new separate influence. There will already be a notable influence from Lethen Wind Farm set within the centre of the LCT between the Operational Scheme and consented Cairn Duhie Wind Farm. While the Proposed Development will draw the extent of the Operational Scheme closer towards Lethen Wind Farm, this increase will be incremental and be moderated by the integration of these proposed turbines with the existing turbines of the Operational Scheme.

9.12.27 The medium sensitivity combined with the medium-low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a **not significant** cumulative effect.

Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA

9.12.28 Those parts of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA with potential to undergo significant cumulative effects coincide with those parts assessed in respect of the Open Rolling Uplands LCT. The cumulative assessment of this LCT, presented above, therefore, also applies to the SLA and the conclusion is that the cumulative effect on the SLA arising as a result of the Proposed Development will be **not significant**.

Assessment of cumulative effects on views

9.12.29 The assessment of cumulative effects on views is considered using the same two categories of effects on views as described previously in this chapter:

- Assessment of effects on representative viewpoints; and
- Assessment of effects on principal visual receptors.

9.12.30 The detailed methodology for the assessment of cumulative effects on views is described in **Appendix 9.A**.

9.12.31 The first stage in the cumulative assessment of the representative viewpoints and principal visual receptors is a preliminary assessment to ascertain which of them have the potential to undergo significant cumulative effects as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development. This process is carried out through a study which examines the visibility of the Proposed Development in conjunction with other wind farm sites from the viewpoints and principal visual receptors, using the cumulative ZTVs and wirelines. Table 9.11 below shows this process.

9.12.32 This filtering process has indicated that five of the representative viewpoints and none of the principal visual receptors have potential to undergo significant cumulative effects as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development.

Table 9.11: Potential for Significant Cumulative Effects on Visual Receptors

Viewpoint	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effect	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effect
1 Balvraid Lodge	Not significant	No – the wireline in **Figure 9.24d** shows that the influence of the Proposed Development and the consented Aberarder Wind Farm will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the very limited extent to which both these wind farms will be visible.	No - no application stage wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.
2 Carn Glas-choire	Not significant	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.25b** and **9.25d** show that the influence of the consented wind farms would be limited from this viewpoint, and that the main influences would be from the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme, the effects of which are covered in the main assessment.	Yes – **Figure 9.25c** shows that application stage Lethen Wind Farm will make a notable contribution to the cumulative baseline, into which the addition of the Proposed Development could give rise to a notable cumulative effect.
3 Ptarmigan Lodge	Not significant	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.26c** and **9.26d** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.26c** and **9.26d** show that the influence of the application stage and consented wind farms and the Proposed Development will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.
4 Creagan a' Chaise, Hills of Cromdale	Not significant	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.27c** and **9.27d** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.27c** and **9.27d** show that the influence of the application stage and consented wind farms and the Proposed Development will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the

Viewpoint	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effect	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effect
		distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.	notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.
5 Minor Road north of Drynachan	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	No - no application stage or consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.
6 B9007 near Lochindorb	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	Yes – **Figure 9.29c** shows that application stage Lethen Wind Farm will make a notable contribution to the cumulative baseline, into which the addition of the Proposed Development could give rise to a notable cumulative effect.
7 Geal Charn Mor, Monadhliath	Not significant	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.30b** and **9.30c** show that the influence of the Proposed Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.30b** and **9.30c** show that the influence of the application stage and consented wind farms and the Proposed Development will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.
8 A9 (T) north of Tomatin Junction	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	No - no application stage or consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.
9 Meall a' Bhuachaille	Not significant	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.32c** and **9.32d** show that the influence of the Development and the consented wind farms will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.	No – the wirelines in **Figures 9.32c** and **9.32d** show that the influence of the application stage and consented wind farms and the Proposed Development will be especially limited from this viewpoint, largely owing to the notable separation distances and limited extent and levels of visibility.
10 A9 (T) River Findhorn Bridge	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	No - no application stage or consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effect	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effect
11 Blackfold, near Dochgarroch	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	No - no application stage or consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.
12 Gorton Hill	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	Yes – **Figure 9.35c** shows that application stage Lethen Wind Farm will make a notable contribution to the cumulative baseline, into which the addition of the Proposed Development could give rise to a notable cumulative effect.
13 A939 at milestone	Not significant	No – although **Figure 9.36c** shows that consented Cairn Duhie Wind Farm will have a notable influence on this viewpoint, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the main assessment, will limit the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise.	No – although **Figure 9.36d** shows that application stage Lethen Wind Farm will have a notable influence on this viewpoint, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the main assessment, will limit the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise.
14 Shore Road Lochindorb 1	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	Yes – **Figure 9.37b** shows that application stage Lethen Wind Farm will have a notable influence and in conjunction with the influence of the Proposed Development this could give rise to a notable cumulative effect.
15 Shore Road Lochindorb 2	Not significant	No - no consented wind farms will be visible from this viewpoint.	Yes – **Figure 9.38b** shows that application stage Lethen Wind Farm will have a notable influence and in conjunction with the influence of the Proposed Development this could give rise to a notable cumulative effect.
16 Creag Ealraich	Not significant	No – **Figure 9.39d** shows that the influence from consented Cairn Duhie and Paul's Hill II wind farms will be very limited and in conjunction with the very limited influence of the Proposed Development,	No – **Figures 9.39c** and **9.39d** show although there is a notable influence from application stage Lethen Wind Farm, the very limited influence of the Proposed Development, means that

Viewpoint	Main assessment	Potential for Scenario 1 significant cumulative effect	Potential for Scenario 2 significant cumulative effect
		the cumulative effect will be very limited.	the cumulative effect will be very limited.
17 Dava Way	Not significant	No – while **Figure 9.40d** shows consented Cairn Duhie visible at a minimum of 4.3 km to the north, this will be screened by intervening forestry.	No – **Figure 9.40c** shows that although there is a notable influence from application stage Lethen Wind Farm, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, means that the cumulative effect will be limited.
A9(T)	Not significant	No - visibility of the consented wind farms would be limited from this route.	No - visibility of the application stage wind farms would be limited from this route.
B9007	Not significant	No – although consented Cairn Duhie will have a notable influence on this route, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the main assessment, will limit the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise.	No – although application stage Lethen will have a notable influence on this route, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the main assessment, will limit the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise.
A939	Not significant	No – although consented Cairn Duhie will have a notable influence on this route, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the main assessment, will limit the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise.	No – although application stage Lethen will have a notable influence on this route, the limited influence of the Proposed Development, as assessed in the main assessment, will limit the potential for a significant cumulative effect to arise.

9.12.33 The limited potential for the viewpoints and principal visual receptors to undergo significant cumulative effects, is due largely to one or a combination of the following reasons;

- limited visibility and influence of the Proposed Development as shown on ZTVs and wirelines, and as assessed in the main assessment;
- limited visibility and influence of other consented and application stage wind farm developments as shown on cumulative ZTVs and wirelines;
- the distance of the Proposed Development and other consented and application stage wind farm sites from the receptors, and the resultant limited influence that they will have; and
- the existing influence from the Operational Scheme and the integration of the seven additional turbines with this existing development.

9.12.34 The cumulative assessment of effects on those five viewpoints with potential to be significantly affected are presented below.

Viewpoint 2: Carn Glas-choire

Scenario 2

9.12.35 The cumulative effect of all operational, consented and application stage wind farms are shown in the cumulative wirelines in **Figures 9.25b, 9.25c and 9.25d**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 2 cumulative context comprises all these wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.36 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the view and the viewers at this viewpoint, this has been assessed as **medium-high**.

9.12.37 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **low**. In Scenario 2, wind farm development will be readily evident in the sector of the view from the south-west through the north to the north-east. While the majority of these developments will be located at distances of over 15 km from the viewpoint, there are five in the north-west to north sector which lie within closer proximity, and which have a more notable influence on the view. These include operational Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms at 14.3 and 13.6 km respectively, operational Moy Wind Farm at 11.8 km, the Operational Scheme at 5.8 km and application stage Lethen Wind Farm at 5.9 km. Although set at a lower elevation than the Proposed Development, the 185 m tall turbines at Lethen Wind Farm will present a scale comparison that will make the 149.9 m tall, proposed turbines appear comparatively smaller.

9.12.38 The presence of these wind farms means that there is a baseline influence across this upland area which will ensure that the addition of the Proposed Development will not give rise to a new or unfamiliar feature. The Proposed Development will be associated with the Operational Scheme owing to their close proximity, with the Proposed Development located to the immediate fore and right of the Operational Scheme turbines. Despite the slightly larger scale of the proposed turbines relative to the operational ones, the cumulative magnitude of change will be moderated by the small number of turbines being added and their consolidation with an operational wind farm. While the Proposed Development will give rise to a slight increase in the horizontal extent of this wind farm to the right, there will still be a substantial separation distance with Lethen Wind Farm further to the right and, furthermore, they will not extend the influence of wind farm development into new sectors of the view or into a new landscape type.

9.12.39 The medium-high sensitivity combined with the low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a **not significant** cumulative effect.

Viewpoint 6: B9007 near Lochindorb

Scenario 2

9.12.40 The cumulative effect of all operational and application stage wind farms is shown in the cumulative wirelines in **Figures 9.29b** and **9.29c**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 2 cumulative

context comprises both these wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.41 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the view and the viewers at this viewpoint, this has been assessed as **medium-high.**

9.12.42 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **low**. In Scenario 2, the cumulative context will comprise the Operational Scheme located 8.0 km to the south-west of the viewpoint and application stage Lethen Wind Farm located 0.91 km to the south and south-west. The extremely close proximity of Lethen Wind Farm to the B9007 combined with the large size of the turbines at 185 m to tip, creates a cumulative situation in which this development will have a notable influence on the viewpoint. Lethen Wind Farm will, in turn, moderate the influence of the Proposed Development by presenting a comparison that will present the Proposed Development as a more distant and smaller scale development.

9.12.43 Furthermore, the Proposed Development will form an extension to the Operational Scheme and so will be adding seven turbines onto a ridgeline where 13 Operational Scheme turbines already exist. This means that the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme will collectively be contained within a relatively compact part of the view and will prevent spread into new sectors or different landscape types.

9.12.44 The medium-high sensitivity combined with the low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a **not significant** cumulative effect.

Viewpoint 12: Gorton Hill

Scenario 2

9.12.45 The cumulative effect of all operational and application stage wind farms is shown in the cumulative wirelines in **Figures 9.35c** and **9.35d**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 2 cumulative context comprises all these wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.46 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the view and the viewers at this viewpoint, this has been assessed as **medium-high**.

9.12.47 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **low**. In Scenario 2, wind farm development will be readily evident in the sector of the view to the north-west of the viewpoint, with the Operational Scheme visible at a minimum of 15.2 km and application stage Lethen Wind Farm visible at 9.0 km. While wind farm development also occurs to the north-east, with operational Berry Burn at a minimum of 14.6 km, application stage Berry Burn II at 16.9 km and application stage Clash Gour at 13.1 km, the limited extent to which these wind farms are theoretically visible, combined with the screening effect of intervening forestry will mean their influence on the cumulative context will be limited.

9.12.48 The presence of the Operational Scheme and application stage Lethen Wind Farm, means that there is already a notable influence from wind farm

development across the uplands to the north-west, albeit with the Operational Scheme set on the more distant ridgeline and Lethen Wind Farm set below the closer range ridgeline. The addition of the Proposed Development will make a limited change to the baseline view as it will be seen as an extension to the Operational Scheme, set at a similar range and occupying similar horizontal extents, albeit with a very small increase on the left. While the proposed turbines will be slightly larger than the Operational Scheme turbines, from this range of approximately 15 km, the difference will not be readily apparent, and the two developments will appear relatively well integrated.

9.12.49 The magnitude of change will be further moderated by the presence of the Lethen Wind Farm turbines, which are larger in size and owing to their closer proximity will appear much larger in scale also. Lethen Wind Farm will form more of a focus from this viewpoint, with the Proposed Development and Operational Scheme forming more of a background feature.

9.12.50 The medium-high sensitivity combined with the low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a not significant cumulative effect.

Viewpoint 14: Shore Road, Lochindorb 1

Scenario 2

9.12.51 The cumulative effect of all operational and application stage wind farms is shown in the cumulative wireline in **Figure 9.37c**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 2 cumulative context comprises all these wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.52 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the view and the viewers at this viewpoint, this has been assessed as **medium-high**.

9.12.53 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **low**. In Scenario 2, wind farm development will be readily evident in the sector of the view to the west of the viewpoint, with the Operational Scheme visible at a minimum of 11.6 km and application stage Lethen Wind Farm visible at 4.7 km. No other operational, consented or application stage wind farms are, or will be, visible from this viewpoint.

9.12.54 The presence of the Operational Scheme and application stage Lethen Wind Farm, means that there is already a notable influence from wind farm development in the close to middle range landscape to the west, albeit with the Operational Scheme set on the more distant ridgeline and Lethen Wind Farm set partly behind the closer range ridgeline. The addition of the Proposed Development will make a limited change to the baseline view as it will be seen as an extension to the Operational Scheme, set at a similar range and occupying similar horizontal extents, albeit with a small increase on the left. While the proposed turbines will be slightly larger than the Operational Scheme turbines, from this range of approximately 11 km, the difference will not be readily apparent, and the two developments will appear relatively well integrated.

9.12.55 The magnitude of change will be further moderated by the presence of the Lethen Wind Farm turbines, which are larger in size and owing to their closer proximity will appear much larger in scale also. The Proposed Development and Operational Scheme will be seen in the same sector and set to the rear of Lethen Wind Farm, set within a smaller part of the wider horizontal extents of the application stage wind farm. Lethen Wind Farm will form more of a focus from this viewpoint, with the Proposed Development and Operational Scheme forming more of a background feature.

9.12.56 The medium-high sensitivity combined with the low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a **not significant** cumulative effect.

Viewpoint 15: Shore Road, Lochindorb 2

Scenario 2

9.12.57 The cumulative effect of all operational and application stage wind farms is shown in the cumulative wireline in **Figure 9.38c**. For the purposes of the assessment, it is assumed that the Scenario 2 cumulative context comprises all these wind farms and it is to this context that the Proposed Development is being added.

9.12.58 The assessment of sensitivity is carried over from the main assessment and for the view and the viewers at this viewpoint, this has been assessed as **medium-high**.

9.12.59 The cumulative magnitude of change will be **low**. In Scenario 2, wind farm development will be readily evident in the sector of the view to the west of the viewpoint, with the Operational Scheme visible at a minimum of 11.2 km and application stage Lethen Wind Farm visible at 4.4 km. No other operational, consented or application stage wind farms are, or will be, visible from this viewpoint.

9.12.60 The presence of the Operational Scheme and application stage Lethen Wind Farm, means that there is already a notable influence from wind farm development in the close to middle range landscape to the west, albeit with the Operational Scheme set on the more distant ridgeline and Lethen Wind Farm set partly behind the closer range ridgeline. The addition of the Proposed Development will make a limited change to the baseline view as it will be seen as an extension to the Operational Scheme, set at a similar range and occupying similar horizontal extents, albeit with a small increase on the left. While the proposed turbines will be slightly larger than the Operational Scheme turbines, from this range of approximately 11 km, the difference will not be readily apparent, and the two developments will appear relatively well integrated.

9.12.61 The magnitude of change will be further moderated by the presence of the Lethen Wind Farm turbines, which are larger in size and owing to their closer proximity will appear much larger in scale also. The Proposed Development and Operational Scheme will be seen in the same sector and set to the rear of Lethen Wind Farm, set within a smaller part of the wider horizontal extents of the application stage wind farm. Lethen Wind Farm will form more of a focus from this viewpoint, with the Proposed Development and Operational Scheme forming more of a background feature.

9.12.62 The medium-high sensitivity combined with the low cumulative magnitude of change will give rise to a **not significant** cumulative effect.

Summary of Cumulative Effects

9.12.63 The cumulative effects of the Proposed Development on viewpoints and principal visual receptors that were assessed in detail as having the potential to undergo a significant cumulative effect are summarised in Table 9.12 below. The other landscape and visual receptors have been assessed as not having potential to undergo significant cumulative effects.

Table 9.12 – Summary of Cumulative Effects on Landscape and Visual Receptors

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Scenario 1 Magnitude of Change	Scenario 1 Cumulative Significance	Scenario 2 Magnitude of change	Scenario 2 Cumulative Significance
Open Rolling Uplands	Medium	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA	Medium	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
2. Carn Glas-choire	Medium-high	N/A	N/A	Low	Not significant
6. B9007 near Lochindorb	Medium-high	N/A	N/A	Low	Not significant
12. Gorton Hill	Medium-high	N/A	N/A	Low	Not significant
14. Shore Road Lochindorb 1	Medium-high	N/A	N/A	Low	Not significant
15. Shore Road Lochindorb 2	Medium-high	N/A	N/A	Low	Not significant

9.13 Assessment of In-Combination Cumulative Effects The in-combination cumulative effects relate to the effect of the Proposed Development in combination with all other wind farm developments which have an influence on the cumulative situation as experienced in respect of the landscape and visual receptors being assessed.

9.13.2 In considering the broad pattern of wind farm development across the 45 km Study Area, Figure 9.12 illustrates an especially distinct pattern in which the existing and proposed wind farms form a north-east to south-west band across the Study Area. This pattern relates directly to the under-lying landform, which comprises a band of upland hills which have been found to be of a suitable height and depth to accommodate wind farm developments. These hills sit to the south-east of the Moray Firth and the Great Glen and to the north-west of

the Spey Valley and Cairngorm Mountains. The Operational Scheme sits centrally within this band of wind farms and the Proposed Development is closely attached to the Operational Scheme, such that it appears well integrated with this broad pattern of development.

9.13.3 In respect of landscape receptors, the addition of the Proposed Development will be contained within the *Open Rolling Uplands* LCT, as is the Operational Scheme, such that it will not spread the presence of wind farm development into a new LCT. The seven proposed turbines will wrap around the eastern and southern edge of the 13 Operational Scheme turbines, to form a well consolidated group that will appear as a single development.

9.13.4 The combined 20 turbines will all be contained within the relatively low upland area on the western margin of the LCU. The combined effect of the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme will not alter the relationship between the landscape and the wind farm developments, although there will be a significant in-combination cumulative effect on local landscape character within the first 5 km. In considering the combined effect of the Proposed Development and the Operational Wind Farms, the landscape has capacity to accommodate the combined developments.

9.13.5 In respect of visual receptors, few occur within the first 5 to 10 km. The relatively compact layout of the combined Proposed Development and Operational Scheme, means that from visual receptors beyond 10 km, the in-combination influence will rapidly dissipate as the wind turbines will be seen to occupy only a small proportion of the much wider and more strongly influencing landscape context. Of the local viewpoints, only three will be significantly affected by in-combination cumulative effects; namely Viewpoint 2: Carn Glas-Choire, Viewpoint 5: Minor Road north of Drynachan and Viewpoint 6: B9007 near Lochindorb. From these viewpoints, the effect of the Proposed Development in-combination with the Operational Scheme will have a significant effect. The other viewpoints will not be significantly affected, largely owing to the limited extent to which the wind farms will be visible, especially from the lower-lying receptors, and the dissipation of influence with distance as described above.

9.13.6 While the Operational Scheme defines the baseline character of the local landscape and local views, the overall effect cannot be described as a landscape with wind farms as the Operational Scheme occurs as a well-defined and contained wind farm within a broader upland landscape setting. The in-combination effect of the Proposed Development and the Operational Scheme will not alter the overall effect which will remain as a wind farm set within a broader upland landscape setting. While, collectively, the 20 turbines will appear as a small to medium sized wind farm, their consolidation within one well-defined area of the Open Rolling Upland LCT will prevent the effect of a wind farm landscape arising, in which wind turbines extend across a range of landscapes with influence across a much wider area. The Cumulative ZTV in **Figure 9.13**, shows how the visual influence of the combined developments is largely contained within the first 6 to 10 km of the Study Area.

9.13.7 Consideration of the relationship between the combined developments and the landscape, the suitability of the landscape to accommodate wind farm

development in terms of its scale, depth and shape, and the extent to which the combined developments will redefine landscape character and views, has formed an assessment of the in-combination cumulative effects. The conclusion is that these effects will be significant within the local area around the Proposed Development and Operational Scheme, as would be expected, but not significant across all remaining areas.

9.14 Summary of Assessment of Effects

9.14.1 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.

9.14.2 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.

9.14.3 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.

9.14.4 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.

9.14.5 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.

9.14.6 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.

9.14.7 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.

9.14.8 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.

9.14.9 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.

9.14.10 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.

9.14.11 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. 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.

9.14.12 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 affected.

Table 9.14 – Summary Table

Landscape / visual receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during construction	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
Heather Moorland	Medium	Low	Not significant	N/A	N/A
Open Rolling Uplands LCT	Medium	Medium-high Medium-low / Low / No change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east Not significant / No effect for remainder	Medium-high Medium-low / Low / No change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east Not significant / No effect for remainder
Rolling Uplands LCT	Medium	Medium Medium-low / Low / Negligible	Significant in parts out to 2 km west Not significant for remainder	Medium Medium-low / Low / Negligible	Significant in parts out to 2 km west Not significant for remainder
Upland Areas LCT	Medium-high	Medium-low / Low	Not significant	Medium-low / Low	Not significant
Narrow Wooded Valley LCT	Medium	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant
Upland Valley LCT	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant

Landscape / visual receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during construction	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava SLA	Medium	Medium Medium-low / low / no change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east and 2 km west Not significant for remainder	Medium Medium-low / low / no change	Significant in parts out to 5 km east and south-east and 2 km west Not significant for remainder
Cairngorms National Park	Medium-high	Medium-low / low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Medium-low / low / negligible / no change	Not significant
Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area	High	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant
Cairngorms WLA	Medium-high	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant	Low / negligible / no change	Not significant
1. Balvraid Lodge	Medium-high	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
2. Carn Glas-choire	Medium-high	Medium-low	Significant	Medium-low	Significant
3. Ptarmigan Lodge	Medium-high	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
4. Creagan a' Chaise, Hills of Cromdale	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
5. Minor Road north of Drynachan	Medium	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
6. B9007 near Lochindorb	Medium-high	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
7. Geal Charn Mor, Monadhliath	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
8. A9 (T) north of Tomatin Junction	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant

Landscape / visual receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change during construction	Significance during construction	Magnitude of change during operation	Significance during operation
9. Meall a' Bhuachaille	Medium-high	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
10. A9 (T) River Findhorn Bridge	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
11. Blackfold, near Dochgarroch	Medium / Medium-low	Negligible	Not significant	Negligible	Not significant
12. Gorton Hill	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
13. A939 at milestone	Medium	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
14. Shore Road Lochindorb 1	Medium-high	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
15. Shore Road Lochindorb 2	Medium-high	Medium-low	Not significant	Medium-low	Not significant
16. Creag Ealraich	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
17. Dava Way	Medium-high	Low	Not significant	Low	Not significant
A9(T)	Medium	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound - low	Not significant	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound - low	Not significant
B9007	Medium	Northbound – medium-low / low Southbound – medium-low / low / negligible	Not significant	Northbound – medium-low / low Southbound – medium-low / low / negligible	Not significant
A939	Medium	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound - low	Not significant	Northbound – low / negligible Southbound - low	Not significant

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