

APPENDIX 9.E: OWESG ASSESSMENT

This Appendix relates to Chapter 9 LVIA of the EIA. In response to the EIA Scoping Request, the following table responds to the ten landscape and visual criteria set out in The Highland Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG). Each criteria is considered in respect of the potential effects that would arise as a result of the Development.

Table 9.E.1: Assessment of OWESG Criteria

No	Criterion	Measure	Response
1	Relationship between Settlements/ Key locations and wider landscape respected.	The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development.	The relationship between settlements and the wider landscape will be respected as the Proposed Development will have no significant effects on any of the settlements within the 45 km Study Area. This means that the Proposed Development will not contribute to any sense of settlements becoming encircled by wind farm development.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements/ Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes.	The Proposed Development is located such that there are no settlements within an 8 km radius. While some small settlements occur beyond 8 km, visibility of the Proposed Development will be very limited and across the majority of the villages and towns in the wider Study Area there will be no visibility. The ZTV in Figure 9.11 shows the limited visibility that will occur across settlements in a 20 km radius of the Site.
2	Key Gateway locations and routes are respected	The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes.	Key routes will be respected as the Proposed Development will have no significant effects on any of the routes within the 45 km Study Area. The key routes that are relevant to this assessment include sections of the A9, B9007 and A939, which are located a minimum of approximately 7 km, 8 km and 11 km respectively from the Proposed Development.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute to the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes.	The Proposed Development will not overwhelm or detract from landscape characteristics experienced from these routes owing to a combination of their separation distances from the Proposed Development, the limited geographical extent and typically low levels of visibility that will occur from these routes, and the existing influence from the operational wind farms, most notable the Operational Scheme which is located immediately adjacent to the Proposed Development.
3	Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected	The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting	The Proposed Development will not affect the fabric of any valued natural or cultural landmarks. Most of the cultural landmarks in the Study Area occur in the settled straths and valleys. The ZTV

No	Criterion	Measure	Response
		of valued natural and cultural landmarks	in Figure 9.5a highlights the limited extent and distant nature of visibility within these low-lying areas - these factors ensuring that the Proposed Development will have a limited effect. The exception occurs at Lochindorb where the Proposed Development will have an effect on the setting of this cultural landmark. The effect will not, however, be significant owing to the separation distance, the limited extent of visibility and the baseline influence from the Operational Scheme. The setting of natural landmarks which have potential to be affected include the larger and more dramatic hills of the Cairngorm Mountains. Again, the effect on these hills will be not significant owing to the separation distance, the limited extent of visibility and the baseline influence from the operational wind farms.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.	The Proposed Development does not diminish the prominence of the cultural landmark at Lochindorb or disrupt its relationship to its setting, owing to the contained extent of the proposed turbines, their partial screening by the intervening landform and the existing influence from the operational wind farm in the same sector. The Proposed Development also does not diminish the natural landmarks of the surrounding hills or their relationship with their wider setting, owing to the relatively small number of turbines, their association with the operational turbines, their separation distance from the valued landmark hills and the much wider landscape context which has a stronger influence.
4	The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.	The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.)	The Proposed Development will not have any direct effects on key recreational routes. While the Proposed Development will have indirect effects on views from recreational routes across the Study Area, there are no such routes within an 8 km radius of the Proposed Development and routes beyond this will not be significantly affected.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways.	The Proposed Development does not overwhelm or significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways, owing to a combination of the relatively small number of proposed turbines being added to an existing group, their separation distances from the key recreational routes, and the existing influence from the operational wind

No	Criterion	Measure	Response
			farms, most notably the Operational Scheme, which is immediately adjacent.
5	The amenity of transport routes is respected	The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access)	The Proposed Development will have a limited effect on the amenity of transport routes as there are no routes within a 7 km radius and beyond this, the combination of the separation distance, the limited geographic extent and lower levels of visibility, and the existing influence from operational wind farms will ensure significant effects do not arise.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes	The Proposed Development will not overwhelm road-users or significantly detract from the visual appeal of the A9, B9007 and A939, which are located a minimum of approximately 7 km, 8 km and 11 km respectively from the Proposed Development. The proposed turbines will be contained in an upland area, that is recessed from the lower-lying locations of these routes, and from which the Operational Scheme and other operational wind farms, including Moy, are already visible.
6	The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.	The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include: Turbine height and proportions, density and spacing of turbines within developments, density and spacing of developments, typical relationship of development to the landscape previously instituted mitigation measures, Planning Authority stated aims for development of area.	The pattern of wind farm development across the Study Area is characterised by a band of wind farms following the south-west to north-east alignment of the uplands which sit to the north of the Cairngorm Mountains. The Proposed Development sits within this band of uplands and fits with this existing pattern. At a more local level, the seven proposed turbines form a relatively small extension to the existing 13 operational turbines. While they are slightly taller and with longer blades, the proposed turbines generally follow the same pattern of the operational turbines in terms of layout, density and spacing.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for	The Proposed Development contributes positively to the existing pattern or objectives for development in the area, by forming an extension to an existing group and in so doing, consolidating wind farm development in an area where there is

No	Criterion	Measure	Response
		development in the area.	already an influence from this type of development. Its location in the uplands helps contain wind farm development in this landscape character type and prevents it from spreading into more sensitive and undeveloped landscapes.
7	The need for separation between developments and/or clusters is respected	The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters	The Proposed Development comprises a relatively small number of turbines which will be located immediately adjacent to operational turbines such that they will form part of this existing group. The next closest operational wind farm will be Moy at a minimum of approximately 5 km to the north-west. The Proposed Development will not reduce the separation space as it will be located on the opposite side. In respect of Farr and Glen Kyllachy at a minimum of approximately 12 km to the south-west, the Proposed Development will be the same distance as the operational turbines, and therefore, will also not reduce the separation space.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters	The Proposed Development will maintain appropriate and effective separation from the other operational wind farms in the wider landscape, owing to the relatively small number of additional turbines, their close proximity to the operational turbines and by maintaining the substantial separation distances from the other operational wind farms which already exists.
8	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected	The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance.	The effect of the Proposed Development on receptors' perception of landscape scale and distance will be limited by the limited occurrence of receptors within the close to middle range of the Site. There are very few receptors in the rural area around the Site, other than rural properties and roads, from which visibility will typically be limited. While views of walkers will be affected, the effect on perceptions of landscape scale and distance will be moderated by the presence and influence of the Operational Scheme on the adjacent site.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and/or distance in the receptors' perception.	The combination of the limited occurrence of visual receptors and their concentration in the lower-lying parts of the landscape, means that there are very few visual receptors within the first 5 to 8 km of the Site, in which there would be the greatest likelihood for perceptions of scale to be challenged. Even from the open uplands, the existing influence from the Operational Scheme presents a reference to perceived scale and

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			distance which will notably moderate the additional influence of the Proposed Development.
9	Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected	The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal.	The setting of nearby wind energy developments would not be affected by the Proposed Development. The Operational Scheme is the closest operational wind farm which is located in the same Open Rolling Upland LCT. The seven additional turbines will form a compact extension to the 13 operational turbines and the consolidated nature of the Proposed Development will minimise the effect on the wider landscape setting. Moy Wind Farm is located a minimum of approximately 5 km to the north-west, such that there is sufficient separation to prevent its setting from being affected by the Proposed Development, especially as it is on the opposite side of the Operational Scheme.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines.	The Proposed Development would be appropriately located in a broad area of upland moorland. Through its scale and simplicity, this landscape has the capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development without impinging on the more sensitive valley landscapes to the south, west and north, or the more sensitive high tops further south. The distinct and well-contained location of the Proposed Development ensures that it does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines.
10	Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected	The extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape.	The Proposed Development is located in the same upland area as the Operational Scheme. These hills form part of a broader area of uplands which ensures that the seven proposed turbines occupy only a small area within a much wider landscape and avoids any effect on the distinction between neighbouring landscapes.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained.	The containment of the Proposed Development in this upland area, would associate it with an appropriate location where wind farm development already has an influence and help maintain the integrity and variety of the more sensitive surrounding landscape character areas.