

Loch Kemp Storage - EIA Report

Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types

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Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The following Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are found within the study area, and are presented on **Volume 2, Figure 8.3: Landscape Character Types with ZTV** of this EIA Report:

- LCT 220: Rugged Massif – Inverness;
- LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness;
- LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness;
- LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills;
- LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen;
- LCT 226: Wooded Glen: Inverness; and
- LCT227: Farmed Strath – Inverness.

1.1.2 Following a baseline review LCT 226 Wooded Glen: Inverness and LCT 220 Rugged Massif – Inverness have been scoped out of the assessment due to the limited extent of potential visibility, which would be further reduced due to the mature prevailing woodland and vegetation structure within. Therefore, detailed assessment of the remaining five LCTs falling within the study area is provided in **Table 1.2.1** to **Table 1.2.5** below.

1.1.3 The above areas are assessed in the following tables, in accordance with criteria outlined in **Section 8.5 of Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** of the EIA Report.

1.1.4 Assessment of Designated and Protected Landscapes is detailed in **Appendix 8.4: Assessment of Special Landscape Area**.

1.1.5 The lower works of the Proposed Development, including the powerhouse platform and powerhouse building, tailrace and associated tracks to the powerhouse building, are all located within LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen. The majority of the upper works would fall within LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills, although the northeastern corner of the Proposed Development including Dam 3 and associated access tracks would fall within LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness.

1.2 Landscape Character Types

Table 1.2.1: LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>This LCT is dominated by a series of rounded summits between 550 and 850 metres above sea level which collectively form a broad undulating upland plateau. The hills are devoid of clearly defined summits, corries or glens creating a vast almost featureless landscape. In small, localised areas the smoothness of the hills is broken up with areas of scree or rocky outcrops which create localised patterns upon upper slopes. The nature of the groundcover is similar throughout the LCT, with deer grazed heather moorland dominating. The slightly more textured strath floor comprising of pasture and small areas of woodland contrasts with the simple muted tones and shapes of the moorland hill above. Settlements and roads tend to be located in the few remote steep sided straths. The interior of this LCT is uninhabited and inaccessible to vehicles.</p> <p>Powerlines and several large windfarm developments within the LCT form prominent features and are highly visible in the open surroundings. Large scale hydroelectric development with associated large dam, intakes and tracks, also exists within this LCT.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>The key characteristics of the Rolling Uplands – Inverness LCT are noted by NatureScot as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A series of large scale, smooth, rounded hills with summits of similar height forming broad, undulating upland plateaux containing occasional steep-sided straths.</i> • <i>Open heather moorland dominates, the uniform colour and texture accentuating the landform.</i> • <i>Straths floors contain inbye pastures, trees and small patches of woodland.</i> • <i>Conifer forests limited to the lower edges of uplands and strath sides.</i> • <i>Settlement limited to a few isolated farms in remote straths.</i> • <i>A few mainly single track roads, integrated within the landform.</i> • <i>Uninhabited interior, largely inaccessible to vehicles.</i> • <i>Archaeological evidence of settlement and farming from prehistoric times to the 19th century.</i> • <i>Striking colour and textural contrast between strath floors and moorland vegetation above.</i> • <i>Expansive views from the hill tops and plateaux create a strong sense of openness and exposure.</i> • <i>Scale and distance difficult to judge.</i> • <i>Few signs of active management in the interiors create a strong perception of remoteness, although this is affected by a number of large wind farm developments.”</i>
Landscape Value	<p>This LCT covers a large area with varying landscape value. Whilst the interior parts of this landscape have a strong sense of remoteness, this is somewhat reduced within the study area where it is influenced by operational wind and hydro development and associated tracks. Nonetheless, the LCT is generally valued for its expansive views, large scale qualities and the sporting and recreational opportunities it provides. As such, landscape value is considered to be Medium.</p>
Landscape Assessment	
Landscape Receptors	<p>The principal aspects of this landscape which may be indirectly affected by the Proposed Development comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited settlement to a few isolated farmsteads;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few mainly single-track roads integrated with the landform; • Expansive views from the hill tops and plateau create a strong sense of openness and exposure; and • A number of large wind farm developments.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a moderately valued landscape, with some characteristics which are sensitive to the introduction of new development of the type proposed. The open, exposed hill tops and plateau and lack of settlement makes it susceptible to the introduction of new built structures although the presence of a large number of wind farm developments and hydroelectric development means that renewable energy infrastructure is already a key feature of this landscape. Due to the presence of the manmade elements within what is otherwise a 'remote' landscape, sensitivity to development of the type proposed is considered to be Medium.</p>
Potential Effects	<p>Potential indirect effects which may result to this landscape comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appearance of construction activities or new permanent features within the wider landscape could detract in views from open hill tops and the plateau, albeit that the activities and new features would be seen in the context of existing development and settlement outwith this LCT
Magnitude of Change	<p>This LCT may experience limited and relatively distant indirect effects where there is intervisibility with the Proposed Development. The ZTV indicates that there would be theoretical intervisibility with one or more dams from the edge of the plateau and the slopes of summits which sit along the western edge of this LCT, near Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and on the southern slopes of Beinn Mheadhoin and Carn Choire to the north of the study area, the northern slopes of Carn Dubh and on the slopes above Loch nan Eun and Glen Brein.</p> <p>During construction there would be theoretical intervisibility with construction works, including the appearance of cranes and other construction equipment, resulting in a potential increase in movement and activity, although this would appear distant.</p> <p>Magnitude of change therefore is considered to be Low during both construction and operation.</p>
Significance of Effects	<p>There may be some indirect effects resulting from construction activities and new permanent features within the adjacent LCT.</p> <p>Construction works may appear visible in distant views from open hill tops and the edge of the plateau and the increase in movement and activity have the potential to form a slight distraction within the view, and may result in a perceived increase in the influence of development within the adjacent LCT. However, these would be seen at a relative distance outwith this LCT.</p> <p>In the long-term any visibility of the dam and associated inundation area would be experienced as part of the wider landscape context in views across Stratherrick. While they may increase the perception of an actively managed landscape and introduce scale markers into adjacent landscapes which may reduce the sense of a vast, featureless landscape, these effects would generally be entirely outwith the LCT and where there are already views towards adjacent, more actively managed LCTs, and would often be experienced in the context of wind farm development within this part of the LCT. Therefore, it is considered that any indirect landscape effects would be seen at some distance outwith the vast scale of this LCT, and unlikely to have a significant impact on the LCT as a whole.</p> <p>The effect would therefore be Negligible during both construction and operation.</p>

Table 1.2.2: LCT 222: Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>The landscape is characterised by a large scale, open, gently rolling moorland plateau with rocky outcrops. The local high point at Meall Fuar-mhonaidh is a popular key local feature in the landscape. Drainage is dominated by rivers fed by the number of small high-level lochans and burns. Rocky heather moorland dominates the hilltops and upper slopes. Regenerating pine, birch and gorse concentrate along glens with rivers and form sporadic patches on the hillsides. The majority of the landscape does not possess any active land use other than management for estate sporting activities. However, the operational Levisie hydro scheme exists in the central and western part of the LCT with its series of intakes and pipelines and associated tracks and Bhlaraidh Wind Farm is located within the southern part of this LCT above Glen Moriston. To facilitate the regeneration of natural habitats some areas are increasingly being fenced to exclude deer. Within the LCT there is sparse habitation with any settlement located to the edge or in adjacent LCT's.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>The key characteristics of the Rolling Uplands – Inverness LCT are noted by NatureScot as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Open, gently rolling moorland plateaux with distinct edges descending to adjoining straths and glens or rising to merge with Rugged Massif;</i> • <i>Plateau with a patchy texture of small rocky outcrop hills, bogs and lochans in no clear hierarchy or discernible pattern;</i> • <i>Hilltops and upper slopes dominated by rocky heather moorland, except in the northeast where extensive, contrasting conifer forests dominate;</i> • <i>Regenerating trees and scrub in glens with rivers s and sheltered lower hillsides;</i> • <i>Strong contrast in landcover and settlement between the plateau and adjoining straths and glens;</i> • <i>Sparsely inhabited and little evidence of active landuse;</i> • <i>A few historic sites indicating past settlement and land use;</i> • <i>Orientation is difficult due to the lack of hierarchy, pattern and foci in the landform and landcover;</i> • <i>Within the plateau distance and scale are generally difficult to perceive due to the lack of elements of known size;</i> • <i>Distinct edges isolate the plateau from adjacent areas and give the sense of a vast, remote, upland moor;</i> • <i>At the plateau edges, expansive views over inhabited straths and glens create surprise;</i> • <i>Eastern areas have a semi-exposed character with occasional views of distant hills framed by the distinct edges of conifer forests; and</i> • <i>Perception of remoteness on the open plateau, from the rugged patchy texture and absence of obvious human artefacts.”</i>
Landscape Value	<p>A small part of this LCT falls within the regionally designated Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA, although it does not form an integral part of this designation. While it is valued for its scenic and remote upland qualities as well as for its recreational opportunities and cultural heritage associations, some of its more remote and scenic qualities are somewhat reduced by existing wind farm developments, overhead line structures and the presence of commercial forestry. Landscape value is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>

Landscape Assessment	
Landscape Receptors	<p>The principal aspects of this landscape which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, gently rolling moorland plateau with distinct edges of straths and glens to merge with Rugged Massif; • Sparsely inhabited and little evidence of active land use; • Lack of hierarchy, pattern and foci in the landform and land cover; • Distinct edges isolate the plateau from adjacent areas and give the sense of vast remote upland moor; and • Expansive views obtained at plateau edges creating surprise.
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a moderately valued landscape, with some characteristics that make it susceptible to development of the type proposed. The overall feeling of openness and exposure, remoteness resulting from the lack of human artefacts, and lack of hierarchy and pattern in the landform would be sensitive to new development. However, the presence of Bhlaraidh Wind Farm and adjacent Levishie hydro scheme means that there are human influences including renewable energy development present within this landscape. Sensitivity to development of the type proposed is therefore considered to be Medium.</p>
Potential Effects	<p>Potential indirect effects which may result to this landscape comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appearance of new permanent features in an adjacent LCT may reduce the sense of remoteness; • The appearance of construction activities or new permanent features in an adjacent LCT may introduce new foci in the landscape; • The appearance of construction activities and permanent features in an adjacent LCT, when viewed from the plateau, may reduce the sense of vast remote upland moor; and • Construction activities and / or new permanent features may appear distracting within the expansive views afforded from the plateau edge.
Magnitude of Change	<p>This LCT may experience indirect effects where there is intervisibility with the Proposed Development. The ZTV indicates that there would be isolated patches of intervisibility with one or more dams from the eastern slopes of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh and some smaller summits along the eastern edge of this ZTV as well as from Levishie Forest north of Invermoriston.</p> <p>During construction there would be some intervisibility with construction works, including the appearance of cranes and other construction equipment, however this would be experienced from some distance and is unlikely to be experienced as distracting.</p> <p>Magnitude of change is therefore considered to be Low during construction and Negligible during operation.</p>
Significance of Effects	<p>There may be some indirect effects resulting from construction activities and new permanent features within the LCTs on the opposite side of Loch Ness.</p> <p>Construction works within the upper reservoir area may appear visible in distant views from the open hill summit top and the plateau with the increase in movement and activity having the potential to form a slight distraction within the view. This may result in a perceived increase in the influence of development within the opposite LCT. However, these would be seen at a relative distance outwith this LCT.</p> <p>In the long-term any visibility of the dam and associated inundation area would be experienced as part of the wider landscape context in views afforded. While they may</p>

	<p>increase the perception of an actively managed landscape and introduce scale markers into adjacent landscapes which may reduce the sense of a vast, featureless landscape, these effects would generally be entirely outwith the LCT. Therefore, it is considered that any indirect landscape effects would be seen at some distance outwith the vast scale of this LCT, and unlikely to have a significant impact on the LCT as a whole.</p> <p>The effect would therefore be Locally Minor during construction of the scheme, but Negligible overall, and Negligible during operation.</p>
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Table 1.2.3: LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>The majority of the Site including the existing Loch Kemp, the proposed dams and associated inundation area, surge shaft, new fishing lodge and other associated infrastructure including access tracks, borrow pits, and compounds, would all be within LCT 224.</p> <p>This LCT comprises a ridge of low rocky hills which backdrops the eastern side of the Great Glen stretching from Loch Tarff in the southwest to the edges of Drumossie Muir to the northeast. The majority of the Site falls within this LCT and displays many of the key characteristics detailed below.</p> <p>The complex underlying geology gives rise to a landscape typified by low rocky hills with an irregular landform of steep sided slopes, rocky ridges and peaks between 250 and 500 metres above sea level.</p> <p>The landcover comprises an intricate pattern of forests on the mid and lower slopes interspersed with small blocks of broadleaf woodland close to loch sides. Steeper land with less grazing pressure has areas of rough and improved pasture and inland lochs. Much of the land is managed for estate sporting activities. Upper slopes and summits consist of open heather moorland with rough hill pastures amongst craggy outcrops.</p> <p>Small settlements are located along route junctions with single farmsteads and crofts in more isolated sheltered low-lying locations. These settlements are connected by a network of narrow roads which cut through woodlands. The farmed landscapes include stone dykes and hedgerows delineating field boundaries.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>The key characteristics of the Farmed and Wooded Foothills LCT are noted by NatureScot as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Low rocky hills with a complex and irregular landform of steep sided slopes, rocky ridges and peaks, with some small corries, short glens and lochs.</i> • <i>Open summits with heather moorland, crags and rough pasture, contrasting with mid and lower slopes of forests and woodlands interspersed with rough and improved pasture.</i> • <i>A diverse mix of woodland, agricultural land use and open moorland creating a balanced but complex range of open and enclosed spaces.</i> • <i>Small farms, crofts and farming settlements scattered on the mid to lower slopes, with a network of narrow roads, stone dykes and hedgerows field boundaries.</i> • <i>Many archaeological relics from prehistoric to 18th-19th Century periods.</i> • <i>Contrast between the panoramic views of the open, exposed upper slopes and summits, and the sheltered and enclosed lower, slopes with conifer forests and woodlands.</i> • <i>A sense of care and prosperity in settled and farmed parts due to active agricultural land management.”</i>

Landscape Value	The majority of this LCT falls within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA and is valued as a backdrop to the Great Glen. It is valued for its scenic qualities, recreational opportunities, and cultural heritage associations, but is not rare in the wider context. Landscape value is therefore considered to be Medium-High .
Landscape Assessment	
Landscape Receptors	The principal aspects of this landscape which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mix of woodland, agricultural land use and open moorland creating a diverse pattern with a mix of open and enclosed spaces • Contrast between the open panoramic views of the exposed upper slopes and summits and the sheltered and enclosed lower slopes created by coniferous plantation forests and woodland.
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a moderately valued landscape, with some capacity to accommodate new development in part due to its forested nature, and undulating topography, although open summits may be more susceptible to change. Sensitivity to the type of development proposed is therefore considered to be Medium .
Potential Effects	Potential direct and indirect effects which may result to this landscape comprise: Felling of forestry and limited areas of woodland as part of construction works and loss of trees due to inundation, may affect the diverse pattern of open and enclosed spaces. Construction activities or new permanent features. The Proposed Development may detract in open panoramic views from exposed upper slopes.
Magnitude of Change	The upper works, including permanent features such as the dams, inundation area, permanent tracks, surge shaft, the relocated estate fishing lodge, and temporary features such as borrow pits, site compounds and temporary tracks would be within this LCT. The ZTV indicates that visibility of the dams would largely be limited to the area immediately surrounding the Proposed Development and would generally be limited by the enclosed landform and areas of forestry and woodland in the vicinity of the Proposed Development site, with isolated areas of intervisibility outside of this from elevated areas including Suidhe summit and Beinn a' Bhacaidh. During construction there would be a focus of construction activities within this LCT at the upper reservoir area, including site compounds, borrow pits, and works to construct the dam structures. Works to construct and upgrade access tracks to and construction traffic would also feature within the LCT. All these works would add increased activity and movement, however, this would generally be very localised to the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, although temporary cranes may be visible above forestry from surrounding areas. Magnitude of change therefore is considered to be locally Medium within the Proposed Development site and Low overall during construction and locally Low and Negligible overall during operation.
Significance of Effects	There would be some direct and indirect effects within this LCT, resulting from the introduction of dams, inundation area and tracks as well as other permanent and temporary infrastructure. The presence of construction activities within this LCT would be noticeable within the area immediately surrounding the Proposed Development, although effects would generally be very localised. In the long term, permanent features such as the dams and inundation area would locally change the pattern of open and enclosed spaces and change the experience of the complex landform,

	<p>although these effects would largely be experienced within the vicinity of the Proposed Development site. While the dams and inundation area would appear in views from some open, elevated areas within other parts of this LCT, they would appear distant, and are unlikely to detract in views from open areas. However, it would not be out of place with the current landscape pattern where small lakes and lochans are common. In general, the Proposed Development would only be perceived from exposed upper slopes.</p> <p>The effect would be locally Moderate Adverse (significant) within close proximity of the Proposed Development site and Minor Adverse (not significant) overall during construction and locally Minor Adverse (not significant) and Negligible overall during operation.</p>
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Table 1.2.4: LCT 225: Broad Steep Sided Glen

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>This LCT encompasses the Great Glen and Loch Ness, which combine to form the district's largest individual landscape feature. The steep sides are interrupted on the western side by the openings of two east-west orientated glens, which provide the only significant areas of flat land near the shoreline. The steep sides are cut by burns and small rivers, often with waterfalls and sometimes creating small alluvial fans on the shore of the Loch. The Loch itself drains to the northeast via the River Ness and Caledonian Canal to the Beaully Firth.</p> <p>Conifer forests dominate large areas of the lower glen slopes interspersed with small open areas of heather moorland, rough grassland and craggy outcrops. Semi-natural woodlands frequently line the Loch edges.</p> <p>Due to the prevailing topography agricultural land use is restricted to intersections of side glens where the terrain becomes flatter and in some areas of gentler higher slopes.</p> <p>Likewise, settlements are located at glen side intersections or local areas of gentler slopes. Most settlements have a concentrated core, and some are associated with a wider pattern of farmsteads and crofts.</p> <p>The western side has a greater proportion of human artefacts, notably the A82 and an assortment of tourist related services and commuter housing. The associated street furniture elements conflicts with the underlying rural character. The eastern side is less built with large areas undeveloped.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>The key characteristics of the Broad Steep-Sided Glen LCT are noted by NatureScot as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"A clearly defined, broad, linear, steep sided, v-shaped glen and deep loch cutting through mountains and hills, with limited areas of flatter ground.</i> • <i>Large-scale conifer forests with small areas of open moorland covering most of the glen sides, particularly the lower slopes.</i> • <i>Small patches of broad leaved woodlands, mostly in side glens and close to the shore.</i> • <i>Agricultural land on less steep slopes, glen intersections and alluvial plains.</i> • <i>A few settlements, with a well-defined core, located at glen intersections and on gentler slopes, separated by long stretches of relatively uninhabited land.</i> • <i>Contrast between the busy trunk road and larger settlements on the west side and the quiet minor road on east side which has fewer settlements separated by large undeveloped areas.</i> • <i>Strong evidence of past settlement in the number and diversity of archaeological and historic sites from prehistoric times to the 20th Century.</i> • <i>Contrast between the visual and seasonal diversity of broadleaf woodland and bright, open pockets of farmland and the forested and moorland surroundings.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contrast between the smaller scale landscapes of settled, lower slopes and the large scale moorland and forested backdrop.</i> • <i>A simple linear and enclosed visual composition of bands of land, water and sky, with long skylines of even height, and the glen and loch as unifying features.</i> • <i>Visual focus directed along the linear route of the glen or across the water to the opposite shore and up to the skyline."</i>
Landscape Value	<p>This LCT falls within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA and forms a key contribution to the designation. It is valued for its scenic qualities and dramatic topography, popularity for recreation and tourism and associations with Loch Ness and its famous monster.</p> <p>The landscape value is therefore considered to be High.</p>
Landscape Assessment	
Landscape Receptors	<p>The principal aspects of this landscape which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrast between the busy trunk road and larger settlements on the west side and the quieter minor road and fewer smaller settlements on the east side • Contrast between the smaller enclosed scale of lower slope landscapes and the large scale open moorland and forested backdrop to the upper slopes and summits • Simple linear composition of land, water and sky with long skylines of even height and the glen and loch as unifying features • Visual focus directed either across the water to the opposite shoreline or along the linear route of the glen
Landscape Sensitivity	<p>This is a highly valued landscape. While the simple, linear composition and long skylines are sensitive to the introduction of detracting features, the often wooded character of the glen slopes as well as the overall vast scale of the landscape also offers some potential to accommodate new development. While the western side of the glen is more developed and busier, focussed on the A82 trunk road and popular, intermittent settlements along it, the eastern side of the glen is more unified and less populated, and a number of similar developments to the type proposed already exist, within this LCT. For example, Foyers Pumped Storage Scheme lower works are located approximately 8 km to the northeast of the Proposed Development, the 100MW Glendoe Hydro scheme tailrace is located approximately 8 km to the southwest of the Proposed Development and other smaller scale hydro developments are also in the area.</p> <p>Landscape sensitivity to change of the type proposed is considered to be Medium.</p>
Potential Effects	<p>Potential direct and indirect effects which may result to this landscape comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction activities, new tracks and the new permanent lower works features on the eastern side of the glen could diminish the contrast between the more busy character on the west side and the quieter, more unified and less populated steep wooded landscape pattern on the east side • Construction activities or new permanent features may add visual clutter and detract from the simple linear composition of land, water and sky • New permanent features along the loch shore may become a new focal feature in views across the water to the opposite shoreline
Magnitude of Change	<p>The lower works including the tailrace, powerhouse platform and building and tracks would be situated within this LCT, introducing new built features along the loch shore. The ZTV indicates the focus of theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building to be on the western shoreline of Loch Ness, as well as the steeply rising slopes above Loch Ness, however, visibility from the west, across the loch would be limited by woodland and forestry along the shore and lower slopes. The</p>

	<p>Proposed Development would therefore mainly be experienced from the loch and from a small number of more open areas across the loch.</p> <p>During construction there would be an increase in movement and activity on the shoreline and loch, including the transportation of equipment across the loch, and views of cranes and other construction equipment on the loch shore. However, these would be removed upon completion.</p> <p>Magnitude of change therefore is considered to be Low overall during construction and locally Medium in the immediate context of the Proposed Development and locally Low and Negligible overall during operation.</p>
Significance of Effects	<p>There would be some direct and indirect effects within this LCT, resulting from the introduction of the powerhouse platform and building and tracks along the eastern shore of Loch Ness.</p> <p>During construction the increase in movement and activity on the eastern shoreline would temporarily reduce the quiet, more unified character of the eastern side of the glen.</p> <p>In the long-term, the powerhouse building on the loch shore may become a focal feature in some views from the loch where they would be perceived in close proximity and locally reduce the current more unified landscape pattern on the eastern side of the loch. However, the scale of the built form would not appear at odds with existing similar development that exists in the vicinity and in the context of the vast scale of the overall landscape. It is therefore considered that this would not significantly alter the overall landscape character in the long term.</p> <p>The effect would be locally Moderate Adverse (significant) within the immediate context of the Proposed Development site during construction and Minor Adverse (not significant) overall, and locally Minor Adverse (not significant) and Negligible overall during operation.</p>

Table 1.2.5: LCT 227: Farmed Strath - Inverness

Landscape Baseline	
Description	<p>A small sector of the northeastern part of the Site is within a very small section of this LCT, principally the proposed access, a section of access track and one of the proposed dams. The temporary compound (during the construction phase) is also located within this LCT.</p> <p>The straths run southwest to northeast and open to the farmed and wooded slopes and plains around Inverness. The landscape is characterised by a flat or gently undulating floor edged by the steep rocky slopes of the surrounding uplands. The strath associated with the Site is Strathglass which extends into a higher well-defined glen further enclosed by the presence of extensive forestry. There is a sharp contrast in land use and vegetation between the strath floor and the side slopes further emphasised between the diverse mix of arable and pastoral fields and the side slopes cloaked in an alternating mix of broadleaf woodland and coniferous forest.</p> <p>Strathglass has a few concentrated settlements, focused around cross roads and lining the main road which runs along the edge of the strath floor where areas are better drained due to the steepness of the strath sides.</p> <p>The upper reservoir of the Foyers Pumped Storage scheme is located within the LCT at Loch Mhor, with the historic main dam and intake tower visible forming a memorable feature within the wider area.</p>
Key Characteristics	<p>The key characteristics of the Farmed Strath - Inverness LCT are noted by NatureScot as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Linear to sinuous channels cut through uplands, with a central meandering river located in a flat or gently undulating strath floor, edged by the steep, rocky, side slopes</i> • <i>Pronounced and dynamic river meanders of Strathglass, emphasised by riparian trees, oxbow lakes and curved wetland features.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Small scale broadleaf woodlands and small blocks of conifer forest within Strathnairn/Stratherrick strath floor which do not override openness of the strath.</i> • <i>A few small settlements located on the strath floor or sides and infrequent small farms, crofts, estate buildings or groups of houses.</i> • <i>Roads which generally relate well to landform, with a limited number of river crossing points.</i> • <i>Many archaeological sites in Strathnairn dating from a range of periods.</i> • <i>Contrast between the open, inhabited and agricultural landscape of the straths, the side slopes cloaked in alternating broadleaf woodlands, conifer forests and heather moorland, and the setting of adjacent rugged, remote uplands.</i> • <i>Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland.</i> • <i>An overall sense of linear enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes.”</i>
Landscape Value	This is a moderately valued landscape, which is somewhat valued for its recreational opportunities, which are mainly associated with its rivers and lochs, as well as its scenic qualities and cultural heritage associations. The landscape value is considered to be Medium .
Landscape Assessment	
Landscape Receptors	<p>The principal aspects of this landscape which may be affected by the Proposed Development comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse mosaic of land pattern and use between open agricultural strath landscape, side slopes with alternating broadleaf woodland, conifer forests and heather moorland and the rugged remote uplands; and • Linear enclosure which directs long distance views along the strath and uninterrupted views of the hill slopes either side of the strath. • Linear enclosure which directs long distance views along the strath and uninterrupted views of the hill slopes either side of the strath
Landscape Sensitivity	This is a valued landscape, where the sense of enclosure which directs views along the strath, together with the open, agricultural strath landscape characterised by small-scale settlement and farmsteads, which contrasts with the surrounding rugged remote uplands make it somewhat sensitive to the introduction of new development. However, sensitivity is somewhat reduced by the fact that views afforded from this LCT often feature development such as wind farms which are present in the wider landscape context, as well as the relatively high degree of tree cover within this LCT. Sensitivity to the type of development proposed is therefore considered to be Medium .
Potential Effects	<p>Potential direct and indirect effects which may result to this landscape comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction activities or new permanent features within the open, agricultural strath landscape may appear out of scale with and interfere with the current land use pattern of small farmsteads and settlements which contrast with the rugged remote uplands; and • New permanent features may distract in views along the strath which allow for uninterrupted views of the hill slopes.
Magnitude of Change	<p>There would be some direct effects within this LCT limited to the western boundary with LCT 224: <i>Farmed and Wooded Foothills</i>, where a small part of the Proposed Development, including one dam and a section of access track would be located.</p> <p>The ZTV also indicates that there would be theoretical visibility of the dams mainly to the northeast. One dam would form a new permanent feature within this landscape and would likely</p>

	<p>be perceived from the open strath floor and side slopes, although this would be limited by the presence of broadleaf woodland and blocks of conifer forestry on the side slopes.</p> <p>During construction there would be intervisibility with construction works particularly relating to the construction of one of the dams, which would result in an increase in activity and movement within part of this LCT. Construction traffic would also be utilising the B862.</p> <p>Magnitude of change therefore is considered to be locally Low-Medium during construction and Low overall, and Low overall during operation.</p>
Significance of Effects	<p>There would be some limited direct and indirect effects resulting from construction activities and new permanent features along the western boundary of this LCT.</p> <p>During construction, works associated with the construction of Dam 3 and the subsequent increase in activity and movement within this part of the LCT as well as construction traffic along the B862 may appear distracting in views along the strath. Although they would be experienced in the context of existing traffic along the B862, they have the potential to temporarily disrupt the relatively small-scale, intimate landscape character within this LCT.</p> <p>In the long-term the new dam would form a new feature in the landscape where perceived in views along the strath and would be perceptible within a localised area, sitting at the transition between the open strath and forested slopes. However, in the long-term the use of additional landscape mitigation earthworks, mitigation seeding and planting on the eastern face of the dam would help assimilate the structure into the surrounding landscape. When experienced from lower elevations on the strath floor it would be seen partially screened by bands of woodland/forestry on the strath floor/lower slopes and not appear very noticeable in the landscape, while when experienced from slightly higher elevations it may appear out of scale with the generally small-scale, agricultural land use and settlement pattern.</p> <p>The effect would be very locally Minor - Moderate Adverse (not significant) during construction and Minor Adverse (not significant) overall, and Negligible (not significant) during operation.</p>