

Loch Kemp Storage - EIA Report

*Appendix 8.5: Appraisal of the Highland Council's Criteria
for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals*

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Appendix 8.5: Appraisal of The Highland Council's Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Proposals

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 *The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG)*¹ details The Highland Council (THC) policy and guidance on measures to be considered for the design and assessment of onshore wind farms. In relation to landscape and visual amenity it identifies ten criteria to be used by THC as a framework and focus for assessing proposals. This Appendix provides analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria, as requested at Scoping. While these criteria are specific to wind energy development, they have been interpreted to relate to the Proposed Development.

1.1.2 The ten criteria are outlined in **Table 1.1.1**:

Table 1.1.1: OWESG Criteria for the Consideration of Onshore Wind Farm Proposals

Criterion	Threshold <i>"Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:"</i>
<p>Criterion 1. "Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development."</i></p>	<p><i>"Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 2. "Key Gateway locations and routes are respected."</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes."</i></p>	<p><i>"Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes."</i></p>
<p>Criterion 3. "Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected"</p> <p><i>"The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks."</i></p>	<p><i>"The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting."</i></p>

¹ The Highland Council. (2017). Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance. November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017).

<p>Criterion 4. “The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.”</p> <p>“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.)”</p>	<p>“Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways.”</p>
<p>Criterion 5. “The amenity of transport routes is respected.”</p> <p>“The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access).”</p>	<p>“Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes.”</p>
<p>Criterion 6. “The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.”</p> <p>“The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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” 	<p>“The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area.”</p>
<p>Criterion 7. “The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected.”</p> <p>“The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters.”</p>	<p>“The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and / or clusters”</p>
<p>Criterion 8. “The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected.”</p> <p>“The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors’ existing perception of landscape scale and distance.”</p>	<p>“The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and / or distance in the receptors’ perception”</p>
<p>Criterion 9. “Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected.”</p> <p>“The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal.”</p>	<p>“Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines.”</p>
<p>Criterion 10. “Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected.”</p> <p>“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.”</p>	<p>“Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained.”</p>

1.1.3 An analysis of the Proposed Development in relation to these criteria is presented in **Section 1.3** of this Appendix.

Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

1.1.4 Section 5.2 of the OWESG also includes the Loch Ness Landscape Sensitivity study which identifies Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways as well as Landscape Character Area sensitivities and guidance. These aspects are considered in **Section 1.2** of this Appendix and feed into the analysis of the criteria.

1.2 Appraisal of Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Views, Key Routes and Gateways

- 1.2.1 Key Views and Routes in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study are detailed in Table 5.2.1 and Table 5.2.2 of the OWESG. **Tables 1.2.1** and **1.2.2** below identify those key views and routes of potential relevance to the Proposed Development and potential for effects.

Table 1.2.1: Appraisal of Key Views included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key View (as noted in the OWESG: p39-41)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
Loch Ness West <i>"End-to-end views over Loch Ness looking southwest"</i>	Although there would be some theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from parts of Loch End, Aldourie Castle Designed Landscape, Dores Beach and An Torr, in reality it is highly unlikely that the Proposed Development would be visible from these locations due to distance (over 20 km), the oblique angle of views and screening by woodland.	No
Loch Ness East <i>"End-to-end Views over Loch Ness looking Northeast"</i>	The zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) indicates some theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from the shore of Fort Augustus including Fort Augustus Abbey and the Caledonian Canal. However, the powerhouse building is likely to appear barely perceptible due to the distance and oblique nature of views. This is illustrated in Volume 3b, Figure V5b-7: Fort Augustus Shore (marked up photograph from canal towpath in Fort Augustus).	Yes, but not significant.
Urquhart Castle from Loch <i>"Water-level views looking up at Castle"</i>	There would be some limited theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from Loch Ness near Urquhart Castle, as illustrated by the ZTV, although there would be no visibility from the castle itself. However, views would be distant and oblique, and the Proposed Development is likely to be barely perceptible. The powerhouse building would be seen in a different part of the view to Urquhart Castle and would be unlikely to affect the focus or value of the castle in the view.	Yes, but not significant.
Urquhart Castle Land Based <i>"Generally elevated views looking towards the castle from above"</i>	The ZTV illustrates that there would be no views of the Proposed Development from the A82 above Urquhart Castle or across Urquhart Bay.	No
Loch Ness from Urquhart Castle <i>"Views primarily towards the Northeast and Urquhart Bay"</i>	The ZTV shows that there would be no views of the Proposed Development from Urquhart Castle or visitor centre.	No
Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh	The lower works would be largely obscured from view, screened by the localised topography. There would be some visibility of the upper works from the summit of Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, viewed in a south-south easterly direction.	Yes, but not significant.

Key View (as noted in the OWESG: p39-41)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
<i>"Principal views are NE and SW up and down the Great Glen"</i>	The Proposed Development viewed by receptors at the summit of Meall Fuar-Mhonaidh is assessed as Outdoor Location O1 in Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables and is illustrated in Volume 3a and 3b, VL6 – Meall Fuar-mhonaidh . Visual effects from this location are assessed as being locally Minor-Moderate (not significant), during construction, and Negligible (not significant) in the longer term.	
Loch Tarff 'Local Hero' location View west-north-west from <i>"passing place east of Loch Tarff"</i>	The ZTV shows that there would be no views of the Proposed Development from this location or in this view.	No

Table 1.2.2: Appraisal of Key Routes included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Key Route (as noted in the OWESG: p42-43)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
A82 T	Visual effects for receptors on the A82 are assessed in Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables . Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be Locally Minor Adverse (not significant) during construction and Negligible (not significant) during operation.	Yes, but short-term and not significant.
B862 Stratherrick	Visual effects for receptors on the B862 are assessed in Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables . Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be locally Minor-Moderate Adverse (not significant) and otherwise Negligible during construction, and Negligible (not significant) overall during operation, considering the experience along the whole route.	Yes, but short-term and localised effects and not significant.
B852 South Loch Ness shore	The ZTV indicates some theoretical visibility of the dams from the southern end of the B852 but due to screening they are unlikely to be perceptible and this route was scoped out of further detailed assessment).	No
Minor Road – Bunloit	The ZTV indicates some theoretical visibility of the dams from sections of this road. However, this would be mostly screened by woodland and roadside vegetation. The upper reservoir may potentially be perceptible in glimpsed views from a small number of more open sections, however, it would be seen in distant and oblique views.	Yes, but not significant
Great Glen Way	Visual effects for receptors on the Great Glen Way are assessed in Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables . Visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development would be locally Minor-Moderate Adverse , (not significant)	Yes, but not significant

	elsewhere Negligible (not significant), during construction, and locally Minor Adverse (not significant), elsewhere Negligible (not significant) during operation.	
Great Glen Canoe Trail	Visual effects for receptors on Loch Ness are assessed in Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables (R8). While there would be some locally Moderate Adverse (significant) effects and elsewhere Negligible (not significant), effects during construction, within Loch Ness, this would be a very localised change, and in the long-term it is considered that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest. Visual effects during the operation of the scheme are assessed as locally Minor Adverse (not significant), and otherwise Negligible (not significant).	Yes, but not significant in the long-term.
Caledonian Canal and lochs / open water	Visual effects for receptors on Loch Ness are assessed in Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables (R8). While there would be some localised Moderate Adverse (significant) effects and elsewhere Negligible (not significant), effects during construction, in the long-term effects are anticipated to be locally Minor Adverse (not significant) and elsewhere Negligible (not significant), during operation. It is considered that the powerhouse building would become a feature of architectural and recreational interest, once construction is complete.	Yes, but not significant in the long-term.

Table 1.2.3: Appraisal of Gateways included in the Loch Ness Sensitivity Study

Gateway (as noted in the OWESG: p45-68)	Appraisal	Potential Effects
<i>“Abriachan – marks approximate transition of the higher ground of the Aird to the Great Glen when travelling southeast”</i> (OWESG: p53)	The ZTV illustrates no theoretical visibility at Abriachan or the route travelling southeast into the Great Glen.	No
<i>“Moniack Mhor – locally significant gateway area where views open out towards Beaully strath”</i> (OWESG: p53 and 64)	There would be no view of the Proposed Development from this location.	No
<i>“Loch Dochfour – marking transition between lochside landscapes and LCA7, Rolling Farmland and Woodland”</i> (OWESG: p66)	There would be some theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from the shores of Loch Dochfour, but due to distance and screening the Proposed Development would not be perceptible from this location.	No
<i>“Invermoriston – marking transition from LCA2 Wooded</i>	The ZTV illustrates some theoretical visibility from the vicinity of Invermoriston, namely from the glen slopes to the south, and from the shore of Loch Ness, but there would	No

<i>Glen, to Broad Wooded Glen</i> (OWESG: p66)	be no visibility of the Proposed Development from the settlement itself or near the transition from LCA2 Wooded Glen to Broad Wooded Glen.	
<i>“Fort Augustus – arrival at Loch Ness from south”</i> (OWESG: p66)	The ZTV indicates some theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from the shore of Fort Augustus including Fort Augustus Abbey and the Caledonian canal. However, the powerhouse building is likely to appear barely perceptible due to the distance and oblique nature of views. This is illustrated in Volume 3b, Figure V5b-7: Fort Augustus Shore (marked up photograph from canal towpath in Fort Augustus).	Yes, but not significant.
<i>“Dores – arrival at Loch Ness from Inverness hinterland”</i> (OWESG: p66)	The ZTV illustrates some limited theoretical visibility of the powerhouse building from Dores and from the B862 between Dores and Inverness. However, due to distance and screening the Proposed Development would not be perceptible from here.	No

Landscape Character Guidance

- 1.2.2 The OWESG splits the wider Loch Ness area into 20 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Within the study area for the Proposed Development the LCAs are broadly consistent with the NatureScot LCTs which have been considered for the landscape assessment. Five of the LCAs cover the five LCTs included in the assessment and two further LCAs fall within areas scoped out of the landscape assessment. The lower works of the Proposed Development would be located within OWESG LCAs LN19: Area directly around Loch Ness, Broad Steep-Sided Glen, and the upper works would be mainly located within LN16: Farmed and Wooded Foothills, Loch Tarff to Duntelchaig, with a small part located within LN15: Farmed Straths, Stratherrick and Strath Nairn. These are assessed in the LVIA as LCT 225: Broad Steep-Sided Glen, LCT 224: Farmed and Wooded Foothills, and LCT 227: Farmed Strath – Inverness.
- 1.2.3 The assessment has concluded that for LCT 225 there would be **Minor Adverse** effects overall during construction and locally **Moderate Adverse** effects in the immediate context of the lower works on the shore of Loch Ness, which would reduce to locally **Minor Adverse** and **Negligible** overall during operation. For LCT 224 the effect would be locally **Moderate Adverse** within close proximity of the Proposed Development site and **Minor Adverse** overall during construction and locally **Minor Adverse** and **Negligible** overall during operation. For LCT 227 the effect would be very locally **Minor-Moderate Adverse** during construction and **Minor Adverse** overall, and **Negligible** overall during operation. As such, while there would be some short-term significant effects during construction within the immediate context of the Proposed Development, in the long-term there would be no significant effects on surrounding landscape character.

1.3 Analysis of Criteria

Criterion 1. Relationship between Settlements / Key locations and wider landscape are respected.

- 1.3.1 The Proposed Development would not be visible from the majority of the main settlements within the study area, as described in **Appendix 8.2: Visual Assessments Tables** and summarised in **Section 8.10 of Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** of the EIA Report, although there would be some short-term localised significant effects on residential properties on the shore of Loch

Ness, adjacent to Invermoriston, and short-term localised significant effects on individual properties located within the immediate surroundings of the upper works.

1.3.2 There would be no effect or very minimal effects from most 'key' locations highlighted in the OWESG (Key Views, Routes and Gateways detailed in **Table 1.2.1** and **Table 1.2.2**). Visual effects would be experienced by receptors in a few 'key' OWESG locations, but these would not be significant and many would be localised and minimal.

1.3.3 It is therefore concluded the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development, since it would not be *"visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements / Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes"*.

Criterion 2. Key Gateway locations and routes are respected

1.3.4 The majority of Key Gateway locations and routes would not be affected by the Proposed Development.

1.3.5 As detailed in **Table 1.2.2** there would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, including Loch Ness, A82, B862 Stratherrick and the Great Glen Way but these effects would usually be short-term and localised, and there would be no significant effects on these key routes in the long-term.

1.3.6 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development, because it would not *"overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes"*.

Criterion 3. Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected

1.3.7 Valued natural landmarks referred to under this criterion are considered to comprise geological features such as the Great Glen, key landmarks within the landscape such as Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, Loch Ness and other features which comprise the Special Qualities of designated landscapes. Valued cultural landmarks are considered to comprise important and popular cultural sites such as Urquhart Castle, and other designated cultural heritage sites.

1.3.8 It is considered that the Proposed Development would not diminish the prominence or disrupt the setting to any natural or cultural heritage landmarks. Key landmarks within the Great Glen (such as Urquhart Castle viewed from Loch Ness or land based viewpoints, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh viewed from the Great Glen, and the Great Glen viewed from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh) would not be affected, as detailed in **Table 1.2.1**. There would be no significant effects to the setting of any cultural heritage sites (see **Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage**).

1.3.9 It is therefore concluded that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development since it *"does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting"*.

Criterion 4. The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected

1.3.10 While there would be some short-term localised significant effects on Loch Ness in the short term, these would reduce to non-significant levels in the long-term and there would be no effect or very minimal effects on key recreational routes. The Proposed Development would not lead to any significant effects on any of the other recreational Key Routes identified in the OWESG.

- 1.3.11 It is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded, because the Proposed Development would “*not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways*”. This is also considered the case for other hill summits and recreational routes assessed in the LVIA, particularly given the baseline context of existing wind development, whereby wind turbines are an accepted part of the visual landscape from key routes and ways, and the addition of the Proposed Development would not significantly change the experience from these routes and locations.

Criterion 5. The amenity of transport routes is respected

- 1.3.12 As detailed in **Table 1.2.2** there would be some degree of visual effect on a small number of the Key Routes, including Loch Ness, A82, B862 Stratherrick and the Great Glen Way but these effects would usually be short-term and localised, and there would be no significant effects in the long-term as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 1.3.13 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded since the Proposed Development would not “*overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes.*”

Criterion 6. The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected

- 1.3.14 It is not considered that the Proposed Development would have any effect on the existing pattern of Wind Energy Development, and therefore the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded.

Criterion 7. The need for separation between developments and / or clusters is respected

- 1.3.15 The setting of the Proposed Development is relatively contained by the surrounding landform and forestry, and due to the distance to other hydro development e.g. Foyers Pumped Storage it is unlikely to be seen close to other developments within the area, and is not anticipated to lead to any change in the way existing development clusters are perceived. The Cumulative LVIA has concluded that there would be no significant cumulative effects as a result of the Proposed Development when considered together with other hydro developments and wind farms within the study area. For further details refer to **Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Section 8.11**.
- 1.3.16 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

Criterion 8. The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected

- 1.3.17 While the lower works including the powerhouse building and associated infrastructure on the loch shore may become a focal feature in some views from the loch where they would be perceived in close proximity, the scale of the built form would not appear at odds with similar development that exists in the vicinity in the context of the vast scale of the overall landscape.
- 1.3.18 Visibility of the upper works would generally be contained by surrounding landform and forestry. Where Dam 3 would be perceived from the farmed strath floor of Stratherrick to the northeast, it might appear out of scale with the generally small scale landscape pattern, but would often be screened or filtered by trees, and dressed with soil and vegetation to reduce the longer term visibility of the structure when viewed from the east.

- 1.3.19 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development because the apparent landscape scale and distance perceived by receptors is likely to be maintained.

Criterion 9. Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected

- 1.3.20 The Proposed Development would be relatively contained by surrounding landform and forestry which limits the extent of visibility. It would not encroach on any wind energy developments and overall it is considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded.

Criterion 10. Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected

- 1.3.21 The Proposed Development is anticipated to lead to some temporary localised significant effects on landscape character during construction (described in **Appendix 8.3: Assessment of Landscape Character Types** and summarised in **Section 8.9 of Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**), largely limited to the immediate context of the Proposed Development within LCT 224 and 225.

- 1.3.22 Other than within the directly affected confines of the immediate development site, the landscape character would not be fundamentally changed. Surrounding LCTs would not be significantly affected and the integrity of the LCTs is therefore not anticipated to be affected within the study area.

- 1.3.23 It is therefore considered that the threshold for this criterion would not be exceeded by the Proposed Development.

1.4 Summary and Conclusions

- 1.4.1 The analysis of the THC criteria for the consideration of onshore wind farm proposals has taken account of the anticipated landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development detailed in **Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** of the EIA Report, and in particular, the effects on the Key Views, Key Routes and Key Gateways identified in the OWESG. This has concluded that there would be no significant effect on any of the Key Views, Routes and Gateways, and that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would not lead to the threshold for any of the ten THC criteria being exceeded.