Appendix 6.4: Wild Land Assessment

Creachan Wind Farm

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 4: Appendices

Appendix 6.4: Wild Land Assessment

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Delivering a better world

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1. Introduction

Seven Wild Land Areas (WLA) have been identified within the initial 45 km Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) study area. The majority of these are greater than 20 km from the Proposed Development and as such will not be subject to significant effects. This Appendix provides an assessment of potential effects of the Proposed Development on the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA and has been prepared in response to post-scoping advice from NatureScot on 8th January 2025 and The Highland Council on 16th January 2025.

WLAs have not been identified on scenic grounds and are not a statutory designation but are identified as being of national importance by NatureScot. WLAs are described by NatureScot (NatureScot, 2023) as:

“the most extensive areas in Scotland where wildness is best expressed”.

National Policy Framework 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, 2023) notes that development proposals in areas identified as wild land may be supported in certain circumstances and should be accompanied by a wild land assessment (as produced within this appendix), to demonstrate the minimisation of significant effects on the qualities of the WLA. The circumstances include that the proposal:

- “*will support meeting renewable energy targets; or,*
- *is for small scale development directly linked to a rural business or croft, or is required to support a fragile community in a rural area*”.

A series of figures have been produced to support the LVIA (**Volume 2 - Chapter 6**). Those of most relevance to the Wild Land Assessment include:

- Figure 6.3a Landscape Designations and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV);
- Figure 6.3b Detailed Study Area Landscape Designations and ZTV;
- Figure 6.6a and 6.6b Blade Tip ZTV with Viewpoints;
- Figure 6.7a and 6.7b Hub height ZTV and Viewpoints;
- Figure 6.8 Battery Energy Storage Scheme (BESS) ZTV;
- Figure 6.9 Aviation Lighting ZTV;
- Figure 6.10 Aviation Lighting Intensity ZTV;
- Figure 6.12 Cumulative Schemes included in LVIA;
- Figure 6.13 to 6.15 Cumulative ZTVs; and
- Figure 6.16 to 6.18 Cumulative Aviation Lighting ZTVs.

In addition, visualisations prepared to NatureScot (NS) guidance are provided in **Volume 3**.

2. Methodology

This Wild Land Assessment is based on the approach set out in Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas - Technical guidance, published by NatureScot (NatureScot, 2023). This guidance sets out five steps to the assessment process which has been followed. The scope of the Wild Land Assessment, including the study area and 'Key Attributes and Qualities' of WLA with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development, has been agreed with NatureScot and The Highland Council.

Further guidance and sources of information used in the preparation of this Wild Land Assessment are identified as follows:

- Descriptions of Wild Land Area – Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis (29) Wild Land Area (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2017);
- Wildness in Scotland's Countryside, Policy Statement No. 02/03 (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2003);
- Assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of onshore wind energy developments (NatureScot, 2021);
- Siting and designing wind farms in the landscape (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2014);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA) (Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, 2013); and
- Ordnance Survey maps and Digital Terrain Models (DTM).

It is important to note that the LVIA (**Chapter 6**) includes an assessment of potential visual effects from four locations within the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA – 'Carn Chuinneag' (Viewpoint 1), 'Beinn a' Chaisteil' (Viewpoint 6), 'Ben Wyvis' (Viewpoint 9) and 'Approach to Carn Ban' (Viewpoint 11). The LVIA also assesses potential effects on the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie Special Landscape Area (SLA), Ben Wyvis SLA and published Landscape Character Types (LCTs) that fall within the same geographic area as the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA.

The NatureScot technical guidance (NatureScot, 2023) states:

"The method described employs the general approach and principles set out within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA). The assessment of effects of a proposal on a WLA is an exercise distinct from landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) that can draw on but should not duplicate its information."

Thus, while information from the LVIA has been referred to in the preparation of this Wild Land Assessment readers should note that the findings of both assessments are not directly comparable as each follows a distinct methodology.

The Wild Land Assessment follows the summary structure recommended in the NatureScot technical guidance (NatureScot, 2023):

- Step 1: Define the study area and scope of assessment;

- Step 2: Verify the WLA baseline using the WLA descriptions prepared by Scottish Natural Heritage and any relevant changes since;
- Step 3: Assess sensitivity by identifying which wild land qualities of the WLA, including the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to those qualities, are most sensitive to the type and scale of change proposed. NatureScot technical guidance notes (2023) "*Sensitivity is a combination of the nationally important value attached to WLAs and susceptibility to the type of change proposed. Susceptibility should take into account any evidence of past or current use and how they enhance or detract from the qualities*.";
- Step 4: Assess the potential magnitude of effects by considering how the size or scale of change, extent and duration may impact upon individual attributes and qualities and/or combinations of attributes and qualities, drawing out which physical attributes and perceptual responses will be affected and how; and
- Step 5: Judgement of the significance of effects.

3. The Proposed Development

3.1 Overview

The Proposed Development is located in a large scale upland landscape, approximately 13 km north-west of Alness and partially within the fringe of the WLA and includes:

- Up to 13 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 180m and 200m;
- Aviation lighting located on the nacelle of five of the wind turbines;
- Anemometer mast up to a height of 125m;
- Control building and electrical substation;
- A battery energy storage system (BESS); and
- Primary access along the Existing Forestry Access Track, with additional access tracks connecting to the above infrastructure elements.

A more detailed description of the Proposed Development is provided in **Chapter 4: Project Description**.

3.2 Design development

Considerable changes have been made to the design of the Proposed Development throughout the EIA process in order to limit significant effects on the qualities of the WLA. This has included the following:

- Reduction in the number of proposed turbines from 23 down to 13 (the scoping layout included 13 turbines within the WLA which has been reduced to eight turbines);
- Reduction of the maximum tip height from 220m to 180m and 200m;
- Positioning the proposed turbines to avoid more elevated parts of the Development Site, reducing land take within the WLA and making use of landform to provide screening from the

west, while also taking account of a range of technical and other environmental constraints within the Development Site;

- Micro-siting of turbines to reduce stacking and/or notable gaps within the layout, including from key viewpoints in the WLA; and
- Considered approach to aviation lighting strategy, reducing the number of turbines requiring visible lights to five and reaching agreement to omit for mid tower lights, use of low intensity settings in periods of good visibility, and use of directional units to limit apparent intensity from lower elevations.

The above design development has slightly reduced the extent of visibility within the WLA but substantially in terms of a reduction in prominence and reducing the horizontal extent from important locations within the WLA such as Ben Wyvis.

4. Scope of Assessment

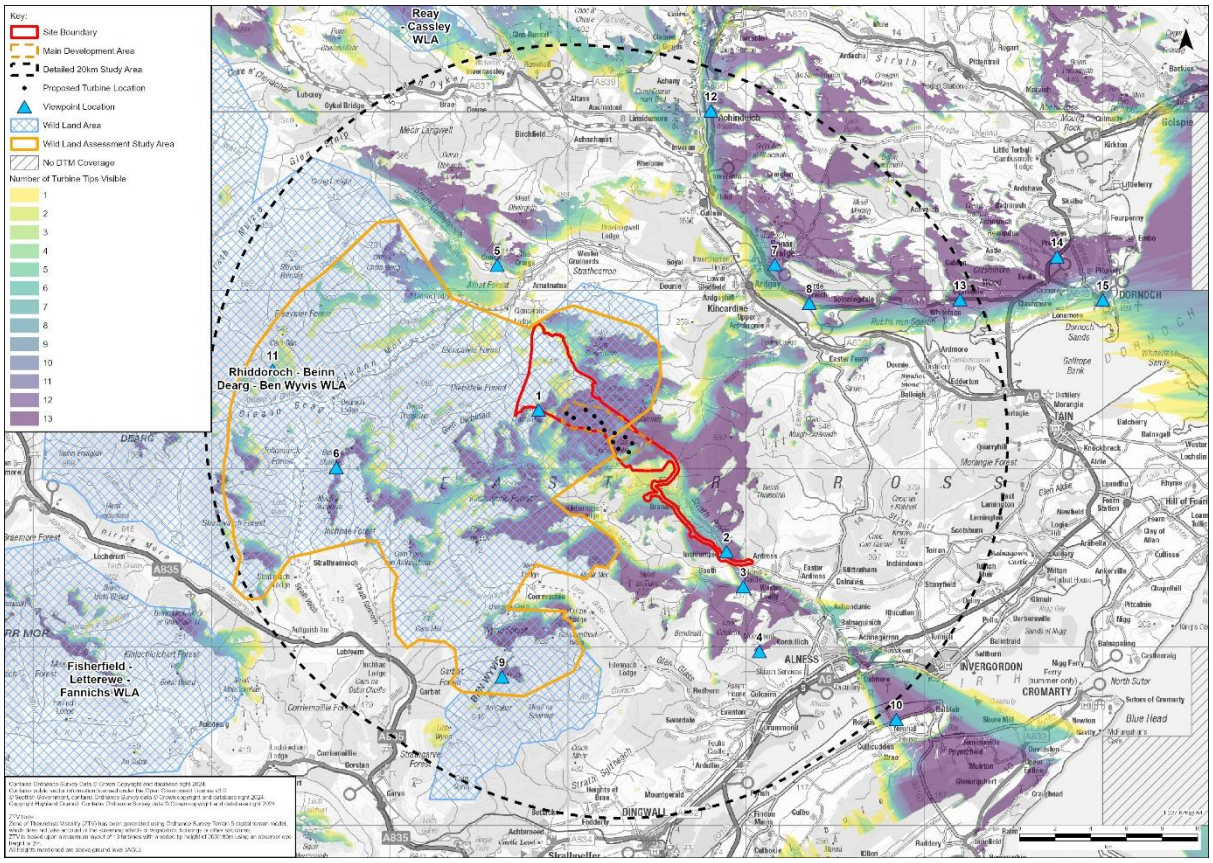
The Rhiddoroch – Beinn Dearg – Ben Wyvis WLA covers an extensive area of uplands, with high mountains towards the north and rounded hills and plateau further south. The hills and mountains are divided by a series of deep and steep sided glens, often with a strong sense of enclosure. Land use is primarily deer stalking and rough grazing, although also includes power generation and forestry. Tracks and occasional estate buildings tend to be focused along the base of glens and can locally influence the impression of remoteness and isolation while also providing access points for recreation. The core areas towards the interior and western parts of the WLA tend to exhibit the strongest wild land attributes, particularly where there is a perceived connection and continuation with other nearby WLAs. The fringes of the WLA tend to be at least locally influenced by infrastructure and development, including A roads and associated traffic at lower elevations and wind farm developments within adjacent uplands.

4.1 Study Area

Part of the Proposed Development is located within the eastern edge of the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA which covers an extensive area of north-west Ross-shire and south Sutherland, from Ben Wyvis in the south-east towards to Ullapool and Ledmore in the north-west. NatureScot guidance (NatureScot, 2023) states that *"the study area should reflect the extent of likely significant effects on the WLA(s), rather than necessarily seeking to cover the entire WLA"*.

The study area for the Wild Land Assessment is shown in orange solid line on **Plate 1**. The Main Development Area (MDA) is also shown.

Plate 1: Study area for the Wild Land Assessment



The study area comprises the majority of the eastern part of the WLA and includes various high points such as the summits of Ben Wyvis and Beinn a' Chaisteil. The extent of the study area has been established through evaluation of ZTV modelling (**Figures 6.3, 6.7 and 6.8**) and other mapping, site survey and professional judgement. Whilst there may be other areas of theoretical visibility within the WLA beyond the identified study area, it is considered that the limited and distant nature of these areas will contribute little to the understanding or assessment of potential effects arising from the Proposed Development on the WLA. The extent of the study area has been agreed in consultation with NatureScot and discussed with The Highland Council.

4.2 Key Attributes and Qualities

NatureScot technical guidance (NatureScot, 2023) states “The assessment should consider effects on the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to the WLA qualities identified in the WLA descriptions”. This assessment focuses on the relevant physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to the WLA qualities identified in the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis (29) WLA description.

In order to ensure a targeted and proportionate approach to the assessment, an initial appraisal was undertaken to determine which of the defined key attributes and perceptual qualities of the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA will potentially be influenced by the Proposed Development. **Table 1** provides a summary of the findings along with a reason for inclusion or justification for scoping out the attribute or perceptual response from further assessment.

Table 1 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA attributes and perceptual responses

Key attributes and qualities of the wild land area	Rationale for inclusion or exclusion from further assessment
"*A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas*".	**Scoped into the assessment.** This 'Key Attribute and Quality' is largely focused on physical attributes, such as the expansive area, massive scale and the challenging nature of the terrain and difficulty of access. The key identified perceptual qualities are largely related to these physical attributes, e.g. sense of risk and exposure related to the challenging terrain, and sense of awe relating to the more rugged angular hills. These physical and perceptual attributes are unlikely to be influenced by the Proposed Development. However, there is potential for the Proposed Development to influence other identified perceptual attributes such as the sense of sanctuary or solitude and naturalness through introduction of wind turbines and other structures and tracks.
"*Long and deep penetrating glens with steep, arresting side slopes that limit views, some containing access routes and clearly influenced by estate management*".	**Scoped out of the assessment.** This 'Key Attribute and Quality' is focused on the more isolated glens towards the interior of the WLA. The siting and design of the Proposed Development is such that there will be little or no potential visibility from the bases or lower slopes of the majority of the glens within the WLA (as indicated by **Figure 6.3**).
"*A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas*".	**Scoped into the assessment.** This 'Key Attribute and Quality' relates primarily to the extent of the interior area of the WLA and the visual connection to neighbouring hill areas, including to the other WLAs to the west and north. The location of the Proposed Development on the eastern edge of the WLA will limit any influence on views towards or perceived connection to the other WLAs to the north and west. The description also highlights the contrast of the interior with the extensive areas of development seen around the outside edges of the WLA, particularly to the south and east. The Proposed Development will be located on the eastern edge of the WLA and may locally add to the perception of human elements at the fringe of and outside the WLA.
"*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude*".	**Scoped into the assessment.** This 'Key Attribute and Quality' is not dissimilar to others, although relates more to physical and perceptual attributes at a local level, e.g. irregular landform, peat hags and bogs adding to the challenging terrain and both the sense of risk and naturalness. The description highlights this attribute doesn't possess the focal qualities of other key characteristics but contributes to perceptual aspects at a local level. There is potential for the Proposed Development to influence local level physical and perceptual attributes within the site and immediate context.

4.3 Cumulative Effects

In addition to potential effects resulting from the Proposed Development on the existing baseline, it is also important to consider potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in conjunction with other consented and proposed wind farms.

As outlined in the LVIA methodology (**Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology**), the assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects is based on the following three cumulative baseline scenarios:

- Scenario 1: The cumulative effects of the Proposed Development introduced into a baseline which includes wind farms which have been consented and/or under construction (Garvary, Kirkan, Lochluichart Extension II, Meall Buidhe, Strath Oykel and Strathrory) in addition to existing operational schemes (Beinn nan Oighrean, Beinn Tharsuinn, Corriemoillie, Coire Na Cloiche, Lochluichart, Lochluichart Extension, Novar and Novar II);
- Scenario 2: The cumulative effects of the Proposed Development introduced into a baseline which includes wind farms at the application stage (Abhainn Dubh, Acheilidh, Balblair, Carn Fearna), in addition to consented/ under construction and existing operational schemes; and
- Scenario 3: The cumulative effects of the Proposed Development introduced into a baseline which includes pre-application stage Ceislein Wind Farm (also being developed by RWE) in addition to those at application stage, consented/ under construction or existing and operational.

Appendix 6.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology, at 'Section 7.1 Cumulative Baseline', also explains the rationale behind the cumulative schemes scoped into the assessment.

Other than Ceislein Wind Farm identified under Scenario 3, wind farms at the scoping or pre-application stage are not considered in the cumulative assessment due to the indicative nature of these schemes and the lack of certainty they will progress to the application stage. Details of the cumulative schemes included in the assessment are provided in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual** and their locations shown on **Figure 6.12**.

5. Verify the WLA baseline

Table 2 provides a summary of the published baseline description of those attributes and qualities of the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA included in the assessment. The detailed published description should be referred to within the Descriptions of Wild Land Area for Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis (29) WLA (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2017).

Table 2 Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA summary of key attributes and qualities

'Key Attribute and Quality'	Summary of Published Description
"*A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas*".	▪ Stunning variety of mountains, comprising both massive scale and rounded landforms, as well as rockier peaks and ridges. ▪ Sense of risk and exposure due to height and openness of hills and associated physically challenging climbs. ▪ Sense of sanctuary, solitude and remoteness, notably in the interior, due to lengthy and often difficult access, and away from more popular Munros and Corbetts. ▪ Panoramic views in all directions from the plateaux tops and hill summits.

'Key Attribute and Quality'	Summary of Published Description
	▪ The rounded hill and plateaux tops are mostly covered by a short mat of vegetation and/or exposed rock which emphasises the underlying shape of the landform. ▪ Few worn paths (except on Ben Wyvis) as evidence of human activity and thus a greater sense of solitude. ▪ Lack of intervisibility between the hill and plateau tops and the adjacent glens or low-lying areas, resulting in screening of human interventions typically on low-lying areas and increasing sense of remoteness. ▪ Eye drawn from one top to the other, so there is less appreciation of the vertical dimension of the landform and a stronger emphasis of the horizontal, albeit elevated, aspect. ▪ Typically, difficult to orientate or estimate scale due to simplicity of vast, open horizon. ▪ Some rugged, angular and rocky hills that are more variable individually but remain as part of the large-scale landscape. ▪ Chaotic landscape pattern of crags, cliffs, corries, lochans and waterfalls within the hills which contributes to perception of naturalness.
"*A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas*".	▪ Very large interior of the WLA with distant, open views, influencing its perceived extent as well as the sense of remoteness. This is influenced by views extending into neighbouring hill areas to the west and north, where intervening human elements just outside the WLA cannot be seen. ▪ From the WLA margins, extensive areas of human elements and contemporary land use can be seen around the outside edge of the WLA, except to the north and west. These elements indicate the edge of the area, but their effects on wild land qualities are limited where they appear concentrated within neighbouring low-lying strath floors. ▪ Elements that extend up onto elevated slopes or tops, including wind farms, masts, conifer plantations and fences are more prominent and can appear to encroach more directly on the WLA.
"*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude*".	▪ Extensive areas of rocky hills, cnocan and peatland across parts of this WLA. They are awe-inspiring in their openness and simplicity at a broad level, as well as their perceived 'emptiness', sanctuary and solitude within the interior. ▪ Variable landform at a local level also contains rivers and waterfalls and harbours some native woodland, which contribute to the sense of naturalness. ▪ Irregular landform and difficult terrain at a local level also means these areas are physically challenging to access. ▪ Sense of remoteness and risk is amplified by the consistent land cover which makes it more difficult to navigate and perceive distance due to lack of human scale indicators.

5.1 Verification of the WLA Key Attributes and Qualities

The SNH 'Descriptions of Wild Land Areas – Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis (29) Wild Land Area' was published in 2017, informed by site assessment carried out in May and June 2014.

Verification of the baseline of the WLA and its 'Key Attributes and Qualities' was undertaken through field work observation between June 2024 and February 2025. Since the site assessment and

publication of the WLA description, the landscape within and on the edge of the WLA is considered to be broadly similar. Key changes that have occurred within the study area and surroundings include the construction of hydro-electric development, including dams and intakes, powerhouse and associated tracks within the WLA, to the west and south-west of Wyvis Lodge and towards Garabat Forest; and the construction of two wind farms (Coire Na Cloiche and Corriemoillie) located to the east and south of the WLA. Plate 1, provides a view of Coire na Cloiche Wind Farm from Carn Chuinneag (refer to Viewpoint 1 (Figure 6.6)), and

Plate 2 provides a view of Corriemoillie Wind Farm (seen adjacent to Lochluichart and Lochluichart Extension wind farms) from Ben Wyvis (refer to Viewpoint 9 **(Figure 6.6)**).

Plate 1 View from Carn Chuinneag within the WLA looking south-east towards Coire na Cloiche Wind Farm and Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm



Plate 2 View from Ben Wyvis within the WLA looking east towards Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Lochluichart Extension wind farms



The survey undertaken as part of the wild land assessment and the LVIA also identified a range of other infrastructure and development within the WLA that locally influence the physical attributes and perceptual qualities of the study area, including:

- Hydro-electric development (Loch Vaich dam and reservoir and series of smaller dams, intakes and access along Strath Rannoch and Gleann Beag);
- Other estate access tracks, generally along bases of glens but also extend into the uplands (Plate 3), including within the site boundary;
- A number of isolated buildings and dwellings along the base of the glens (Deanish Lodge and agricultural shed/animal handling area in Gleann Mor and Diebidale in Glen Calvie (Plate 4)) and a small cluster of buildings along Alladale River valley; and
- Occasional geometric blocks of forestry and woodland, deer fencing, and more robust fencing and animal enclosures associated with Alladale Wilderness Reserve, some of which extend into more elevated areas.

Plate 3 View west from development Site towards Glencalvie and Diebidale Forest



Plate 4 Dwelling and outbuildings at Diebidale, Glencalvie



Table 3 provides an overview of findings of baseline review relating specifically to the wild land assessment study area and the relationship with the defined 'Key Attributes and Qualities of the wider WLA.

Table 3 Verification of baseline of study area

'Key Attribute and Quality'	Observations on baseline of the study area
"*A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas*".	Many of the identified physical and perceptual characteristics of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' are present within the study area. There is a greater consistency of topography within the study area, with large scale open and rounded hills divided by steep sided glens, but fewer rocky peaks and ridges which are more typical in central and western parts of the WLA. Tracks and hydro infrastructure are present along many of the glens within the study area, facilitating access and locally reducing the sense of physical challenge, solitude and remoteness and naturalness. Tracks and deer fencing, and more robust animal enclosure fencing associated with Alladale Wildlife Reserve, and geometric forestry and woodland planting also occasionally extend into more upland areas, locally influencing perceptual qualities and sense of scale. The wind farms constructed since the publication of the WLA descriptions (Coire na Cloiche Wind Farm and Corriemoillie) add to the presence and visibility of wind farms in the context of the WLA, with a localised influence on perceptual qualities.
"*A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas*".	Many of the identified physical and perceptual characteristics of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' are present within the study area. Much of the more remote and expansive interior of the WLA is outside and to the west of the study area. The sense of scale and perception that the WLA extends over an expansive area and stretches into neighbouring areas to the west and north-west is present. Existing development along the straths and within the hills along the edge and outside of the WLA has an influence on some of the identified perceptual qualities. This influence is strongest in the east and south and towards the margins of the study area, and particularly from outward facing slopes and from hill summits (as indicated in baseline panoramas for visual assessment viewpoints 1 and 9 – see **Volume 3, Figures VP1.2** and **VP9.2**). The additional wind farms constructed since the NS survey was carried out (2017) (Coire na Cloiche and Corriemoillie), locally increase the presence of wind farm development in the uplands to the east and south of the WLA. As highlighted above, human elements, including hydro-electric development, buildings, tracks and fencing also extend into the WLA, locally influencing perceptual qualities relating to remoteness and naturalness. These elements tend to be focused along the glens, but also extend locally onto higher ground, including within the site.
"*Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude*".	The part of the WLA in the study area exhibits many of the physical and perceptual characteristics of this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. There is a lower concentration of rocky outcrops and cnocan landform within much of the study area than is present further west around and north of Beinn Dearg. As highlighted above, a range of development within parts of the study area and within the immediate surroundings locally influence perceptual qualities, including the sense of 'emptiness', remoteness, sanctuary and solitude, particularly along lower lying areas. Where present within the uplands they also aid navigation and can have a local influence on the perception of scale.

'Key Attribute and Quality'	Observations on baseline of the study area
	The additional wind farms located outside and in the context of the WLA increase the visibility of structures from parts of the WLA adding to the local influence on perceptual qualities.

6. Assessment of Effects

This section provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of the 'Key Attributes and Qualities' identified in **Table 2** and an assessment of the magnitude and significance of effects on each resulting from construction and operation of the Proposed Development. For the purposes of this assessment all of the defined 'Key Attributes and Qualities' are considered to be of a very high value. The detailed methodology contained within **Appendix 6.1** is adopted to determine sensitivity, magnitude of effect and significance of effect.

6.1 Sensitivity of the defined WLA qualities

'Key Attribute and Quality'	Landscape susceptibility	Landscape sensitivity
"*A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas*".	The 'massive' hills and plateau are of a scale and extent that could accommodate the type of development proposed, reducing the susceptibility. The peaks and ridges may offer opportunity to contain development which would reduce the influence across the wider landscape. It is also noted that there is a lack of intervisibility between the hill and plateau top and the adjacent enclosed glens and low-lying areas, which also reduces potential influence across the wider landscape. The panoramic views, simplicity of the landform and locally strong sense of remoteness, sanctuary and solitude, increases the susceptibility for development particularly within the central parts of the WLA and away from the popular peaks. On balance, the susceptibility to change is considered to be high.	Taking account of the factors which contribute to the very high value with those that indicate a high susceptibility, the sensitivity of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is considered to be **high**.
"A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas".	The existing human influence on the outer edges of the WLA somewhat decreases the susceptibility to the type of development proposed. The interior of the WLA is typically more susceptible to change due to increase in strength of perceptual attributes. Whereas areas towards the fringes or where there is a localised influence of development or activity are typically less susceptible. The local sense of remoteness and open nature of views, particularly from more elevated areas, increase the susceptibility to the type of development proposed. On balance, the susceptibility is considered to be high.	Taking account of the factors which contribute to the very high value with those that indicate a high susceptibility, the sensitivity of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is considered to be **high**.
"Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that	The openness and simplicity of the landscape, sense of naturalness, remoteness and	Taking account of the factors which

'Key Attribute and Quality'	Landscape susceptibility	Landscape sensitivity
appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude".	perceived emptiness increases the susceptibility to the type of development proposed. The local context and influence of existing development in parts of the study area, locally reduces the strength of perceptual qualities and the susceptibility. On balance, the susceptibility is considered to be high.	contribute to the very high value with those that indicate a high susceptibility, the sensitivity of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is considered to be **high**.

6.2 Magnitude and significance of the effects

6.2.1 "A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas"

As set out above, sensitivity of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is considered to be high.

Construction (and Decommissioning)

The Proposed Development will be partially located within the outer fringe of the WLA and as such potential change will be both direct and indirect. During construction, plant and activity will be located in a part of the mountainous and rounded hill landscape, resulting in direct change within a very small area in the eastern part of the WLA. Direct change will result from temporary alteration to vegetation and earthworks required to facilitate construction and will be limited to a very localised part of the WLA, with very little influence on the physical characteristics which define this 'Key Attribute and Quality' and the associated sense of scale, risk and exposure.

The construction activity may have a local influence on perceptual attributes, such as the sense of sanctuary, solitude, remoteness and naturalness within a small part of the WLA due to the introduction of movement into the landscape. The published description notes that these qualities are strongest within the interior of the WLA, from which the majority of construction activity will be screened and distant, such that it will result in little or no change. The screening provided by intervening landform surrounding the MDA will also limit influence on the panoramic views and the simplicity of the open horizon from the majority of the study area and wider WLA.

Much of the part of the WLA where the construction activity will be more perceptible, within and in close proximity to the MDA, is already influenced by movement from existing nearby wind turbine development (Coire na Cloiche, Beinn Tharsuinn, Beinn nan Oighrean, Novar and Novar II wind farms) and occasional forestry operations, reducing the impression of change. Nonetheless there is likely to be a degree of alteration to the local sense of sanctuary, solitude, remoteness and naturalness within part of the MDA and adjacent east and south facing slopes (between Carn Chuinneag, Sron na Saobhaidhe and Meall Bhenneit) on the eastern fringe of the WLA.

Overall, both direct and indirect change arising from construction of the Proposed Development will be limited and localised, temporary in nature and of a short duration with little or no influence on the physical or perceptual characteristics of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' within the majority of the study

area. While there may be a greater level of change within the MDA and immediate surroundings, the vast majority of the WLA, including the more sensitive interior and the lower lying glens, will be unaffected. The magnitude of effect from construction will be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude of effect, the significance of effect of construction of the Proposed Development on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Operation

At operation, the Proposed Development will be located in part of the mountainous and rounded hill landscape on the fringe of the WLA. There will be eight turbines and associated tracks and a BESS located within the WLA resulting in direct change. A further five wind turbines, sections of tracks and the control building and substation will be located immediately outside the WLA. Direct change will be limited to the footprint of those elements of the Proposed Development located within the WLA and as such will be localised. There will be no change to the physical characteristics and features that contribute to this 'Key Attribute and Quality', including the variety of landform and resulting sense risk and exposure, across the majority of the WLA.

Potential indirect change on perceptual qualities will also be relatively limited, as indicated by the ZTVs (**Figures 6.3, 6.7 and 6.8**), with little or no impression of change from the majority of the study area and wider WLA, and particularly from lower-lying slopes and glens. Indirect change relating to the BESS, control building and substation will be limited to a very small part of the fringe of the WLA. The operational turbines will be perceptible in panoramic views from more elevated areas, particularly within the eastern part of the WLA. The turbines will occupy a small proportion of such wide-ranging views and will often be experienced in the context of existing wind farms located to the east of the WLA, which will lessen the impression of change. There is potential for a greater impression of change on perceptual aspects including the sense of remoteness, sanctuary and solitude from parts of the eastern fringes of the WLA, concentrated on the MDA and adjacent slopes and higher ground to the north (within approximately 5 km) and south-west (within approximately 8 km). Much of these areas are at least partially influence by existing development or contemporary land use within and outside the WLA which slightly reduces the impression of change.

Overall, change to physical characteristics and the majority of perceptual qualities will be relatively limited and localised, with the majority of the WLA unaffected due to screening provided by landform immediately to the west of the MDA. There will be localised partial alteration of perceptual attributes within the MDA and from more elevated parts of the surrounding area, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of effect. Change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality'.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude of effect, the significance of effect of the Proposed Development within the MDA and area up to approximately 5 km to the north-east and 8 km in the south-west will be a localised increased sense of change and medium magnitude of effect, resulting in a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) effect during operation. Overall, for this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA the effect will be **minor adverse** (not significant) at operation.

6.2.2 "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas"

As set out above, sensitivity of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is considered to be high.

Construction (and Decommissioning)

During construction, plant and activity will introduce movement and activity into a very small area on the fringe of the WLA. Direct change will therefore be limited to a very localised part of the WLA, with very little influence on the physical characteristics which contribute to this 'Key Attribute and Quality'.

Construction activity will be largely screened from the interior of the WLA where perceptual qualities are stronger and will result in only a very limited and localised influence . From the limited areas of higher ground within the interior from which construction may be perceived, it will be a small and distant element, often experienced in the context of existing nearby wind farm development, and will not influence views to or the perceived connection with neighbouring hills and WLAs to the north and west.

Potential indirect change will therefore largely occur towards the eastern margin of the WLA where there is already an existing influence from development and contemporary land use, including wind farms and other power infrastructure, and therefore reduced strength in perceptual qualities. Change will be predominantly limited to part of the MDA and adjacent east and south facing slopes, between Carn Chuinneag, Sron na Saobhaidhe and Meall Bhenneit. Perceptual qualities, including the sense of remoteness, within this small area is already partially influenced by tracks and fencing within the WLA and nearby forestry and wind farms.

Overall, the construction activity will have little or no influence on the interior of the WLA or on the views to neighbouring hill areas and perceived extent of the WLA, which are considered to be important aspect of this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. The construction activity will add further human influence and movement to a small part of the edge of the WLA, comprising part of the MDA and immediate context. The impression of change to this area will be slightly reduced by the context and influence of existing nearby development and will be both temporary in nature and of a short duration. Magnitude of effect from construction will be **very low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the very low magnitude of effect, the significance of effect of construction of the Proposed Development on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA will be **negligible adverse** (not significant).

Operation

At operation, the Proposed Development will add a further wind farm to the east of the WLA, adding to the existing context and locally increasing the influence of development on part of the fringe of the WLA. As indicated by the ZTVs (**Figures 6.3, 6.7 and 6.8**) potential change will be relatively limited, particularly from the interior of the WLA where perceptual qualities are strongest. Potential indirect change within the interior away from the eastern fringe will be predominantly limited to higher ground, with no influence on lower slopes or low-lying glens. Wind farms are an existing feature of views from

the elevated areas of the WLA, particularly to the east and south. The location of the Proposed Development at the eastern fringe of the WLA ensures that there will be no influence on views to, and the perceived connection with, neighbouring hills and WLAs to the north and west.

Direct and indirect change will be focused on the eastern fringe of the WLA, largely within areas already at least partially influenced by existing development both within and outside of the WLA. While the Proposed Development will locally increase the influence of development on the fringe of the WLA it will not alter the impression of the physical or perceptual characteristics experienced within the interior area which define this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. On balance, the magnitude of effect will be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude of effect, the significance of effect of the Proposed Development on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA will be **minor adverse** (not significant) at operation.

6.2.3 "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude"

As set out above, the sensitivity of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is considered to be high.

Construction (and Decommissioning)

During construction, plant and activity will add movement and activity into the landscape on the eastern edge of the WLA, locally reducing the sense of remoteness and naturalness, albeit in an area already partially influenced by the presence of an estate track and nearby forestry and wind farms. Construction will include temporary vegetation clearance and earthworks operations, locally altering the simplicity of the landscape but not the openness. This change will be experienced in the context of existing wind farm development and forestry in close proximity to this part of the WLA, which lessens the perception of change.

Construction activity will occur within a very small area and will be screened from the majority of the WLA. There will therefore be very little or no change to the identified physical and perceptual characteristics within the majority of the WLA, including the rocky hills, cnocan and peatlands, the openness and simplicity of the landscape, the perceived emptiness sanctuary and solitude of the interior, the sense of remoteness, risk and the challenge of access, and the difficulty to navigate or perceive distance.

Overall, potential change will be limited and localised, with little or no influence on the physical and perceptual characteristics of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' across the majority of the WLA. Where greater change will occur, within part of the MDA and immediate context, this will be experience within the context of existing influence of nearby development and will be both temporary in nature and of a short duration. Magnitude of effect from construction will be **very low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the very low magnitude of effect, the significance of effect of construction of the Proposed Development on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA will be **negligible adverse** (not significant).

Operation

During the operational phase, the Proposed Development will introduce new features into the landscape, locally altering physical characteristics, including the simplicity of the landform. This change will be limited to parts of the MDA and as such will result in no alteration to the physical characteristics of the majority of the WLA, including the openness or simplicity experienced at the broad level and features and variation experienced at a more local level. There will also be no change to the nature of the landform or terrain and therefore physical challenge across the majority of the WLA. While proposed access tracks may locally facilitate easier access in parts of the MDA, existing tracks to the north and west of the MDA already reduce the physical challenge of access to this part of the WLA.

The physical and visual separation provided by landform immediately to the west of the MDA also limits indirect change to perceptual attributes within the interior of the WLA, including the perceived naturalness, emptiness, sanctuary and solitude. There is an existing context of wind farms and/or other development visible to the east and south from higher elevations and although the Proposed Development will add to this context it will have only a limited influence on the sense of remoteness and risk, challenges of navigation or ability to perceive distance associated with the consistency of the land cover within the interior of the WLA. From lower elevations in the study area these physical and perceptual characteristics are often locally influenced by the presence of tracks, hydro-electric development, fencing and other human scale indicators.

Overall, the Proposed Development will result in only limited and/or localised change to the physical and perceptual characteristics related to this ‘Key Attribute and Quality’, across the majority of the WLA. While there will be a local increased sense of change to the simplicity of the landscape and the challenge of access and associated sense of risk, this will be limited to the fringes of the WLA where the attributes and qualities are already partially influenced by existing development within and adjacent to the WLA. On balance, the magnitude of effect will be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude of effect, the significance of effect of the Proposed Development on this ‘Key Attribute and Quality’ of the WLA will be **minor adverse** (not significant), at operation.

6.3 Effects during the hours of darkness

The published description of the WLA and associated ‘Key Attributes and Qualities’ makes no reference to dark skies or perceptual attributes specific to hours of darkness. While the overall sense of scale of the landform may remain, the majority of other physical characteristics and many of the perceptual qualities relevant to each of the ‘Key Attributes and Qualities’ are less evident in hours of darkness. Conversely, certain perceptual qualities such as the sense of remoteness, sanctuary and solitude will remain evident and may be increased in hours of darkness where there is no influence of existing light sources. These qualities are not specific to any one of the identified ‘Key Attributes and Qualities’ and as such the following paragraphs provides a combined assessment, focused on relevant qualities found within the WLA study area.

The landscape of the WLA study area covers an extensive area of uplands with limited existing light sources. As with daytime, the sense of remoteness, sanctuary and solitude is greatest within the interior of the WLA and particularly along the glens and lower slopes, where no existing light sources are present. There may be a slight reduction in the strength of these qualities from more elevated parts of the interior, and a greater reduction towards the fringes of the WLA where there is greater influence from existing light sources. Overall, although many of the physical and perceptual aspects are less evident in hours of darkness the sensitivity to change will remain **high**, as with daytime.

As indicated by the ZTV (**Figures 6.9 and 6.10**), the limited aviation lighting (five visible lights) included as part of the Proposed Development will be screened from the majority of the WLA, including from the lower slopes and glens within the interior where existing light sources are generally not present and therefore perceptual qualities are stronger and more sensitive. All proposed turbines and the proposed met mast will require infra-red lights in accordance with MoD lighting policy; however, these will be invisible to the human eye.

Potential change from the proposed aviation lighting will be focused on more elevated locations towards the fringes of the WLA, from which existing light sources, including from wind farms (Corriemoillie and Lochluichart), communications mast, traffic on the road network and settlement (along the Cromarty Firth, Black Isle and Dornoch Firth), are likely to be apparent. However, the Proposed Development will result in a localised increase in the influence of lighting at night in parts of the WLA, including within the MDA and immediate context and to the west of Kildermorie, with a partial alteration of perceptual qualities of remoteness and solitude.

Overall, change to perceptual qualities in hours of darkness will be limited and localised as a result of screening by intervening landform, with little or no change on the majority of the WLA and particularly the more sensitive interior area in the west. There will be localised increased change and partial alteration of perceptual attributes within small parts of the east of the WLA, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of effect. Change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of effect in hours of darkness.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude, the significance of effect of the for a localised area towards the eastern fringe of the WLA will be a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) effect. Overall, the significance of effect of the Proposed Development on the WLA in hours of darkness will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

6.4 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

This section provides an assessment of the potential cumulative effects on the defined ‘Key Attributes and Qualities’ of the WLA resulting from the Proposed Development in addition to other existing and proposed wind farms. The assessment is undertaken and presented based on three cumulative baseline scenarios described as follows.

Scenario 1 (consented and operational schemes)

This scenario includes six additional wind farm developments located outside but perceptible from the WLA. Strath Oykel, Meall Buidhe and Garvary will be located to the north and northeast of the WLA,

adding to the influence of wind farms from higher ground within the north of the WLA and often experienced in the context of existing more distant wind farms. Strathrory will be located to the east and will be largely screened from the WLA, adding slightly to presence of wind farms from localised higher slopes around Ben Wyvis. Kirkan and Lochluichart Extension II will add to the existing cluster of Corriemoillie, Lochluichart and Lochluichart Extension to the south and west of the WLA, creating a more extensive and more notable feature within the landscape. The addition of these two schemes will also locally increase the extent of the WLA from where wind farms are apparent, most notably along Strath Vaich.

Overall, the consented and operational schemes add to the existing context of wind farms to the east, north and south of the eastern part of the WLA, locally increasing the extent of the WLA influenced by wind farm development and combining to form a series of features within the adjacent and wider landscapes.

Scenario 2 (application, consented and operational schemes)

This scenario includes four additional wind farms which are currently in the application stage, one of which (Carn Fearna) will be partially located within the WLA and the remaining three will be outside but perceptible from parts of the WLA.

Balblair and Acheilidh will be located to the north-east of the WLA, adjacent to the consented Garvary adding further distant features and locally increasing the extent of influence, albeit to a relatively small degree. Abhainn Dubh will be located to the south-east and Carn Fearna partially within the southern fringe of the WLA. Both schemes will add to the influence of wind farms on the southern part of the WLA and combining with the existing and consented schemes may appear to partially surround this part of the WLA.

Scenario 3 (Ceislein (pre-application) and application, consented and operational schemes)

This scenario includes Ceislein Wind Farm (currently being developed by the Applicant) which will be located to the south-east of the WLA in a similar area to the existing Novar and Novar II schemes and will add to the context of wind farm development to the east and locally increase their influence on small parts of the WLA.

6.4.1 “A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas”

Scenario 1 (consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the consented schemes will locally increase the influence of wind farms on certain perceptual aspects of this ‘Key Attribute and Quality’, including the sense of remoteness sanctuary and solitude experienced in parts of the WLA. The increased influence extends to parts of the interior and to lower elevations such as along Strath Vaich. Physical characteristics and associated sense of risk and exposure, scale and naturalness are likely to remain largely as existing.

The Proposed Development will be partially located within the fringe of the WLA although will result in only localised direct change, with little influence on physical attributes. As indicated by the cumulative ZTV (**Figure 6.13**), the Proposed Development will be screened from much of the WLA, reducing the

extent of potential cumulative effects. However, there will be a local increase in the extent of the WLA from which wind farms could be perceived, including small areas immediately to the north of the Proposed Development and along Abhainn na Glasa. The level of influence the Proposed Development will have on these areas varies and change is often experienced in the context of other elements such as tracks or buildings within the WLA and nearby wind farms.

Overall, change to physical characteristics and additional change to the majority of perceptual qualities will be relatively limited and localised, with no additional influence on the majority of the WLA due to screening provided by landform. There will be localised additional change and partial alteration of perceptual attributes within the MDA and immediate surroundings (approximately 5 km) and extending to approximately 10 km along Abhainn na Glasa, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of cumulative effect. Cumulative change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality'.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude, there will be a localised increased sense of additional change towards the eastern fringe of the WLA, resulting in a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) cumulative effect. Overall, the significance of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 1 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 2 (application, consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the application stage schemes will further increase the influence of wind farms on certain perceptual aspects of this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. Carn Fearna will also result in localised physical change to a small part of the southern fringe of the WLA.

The Proposed Development will result in a marginal increase in direct change on a limited and localised part of the WLA. The physical and visual separation to Carn Fearna will reduce the perception of direct cumulative change. As highlighted already, the Proposed Development will be screened from the majority of the WLA, limiting the potential for indirect cumulative change. However, as indicated by the ZTV (**Figure 6.14**) there will be a local increase in the extent of the WLA from which wind farms could be perceived, largely similar to that described in scenario 1.

Overall, change to physical characteristics and additional change to the majority of perceptual qualities will be relatively limited and localised, with no additional influence on the majority of the WLA due to screening provided by landform. However, there will be localised additional change and partial alteration of perceptual attributes within the MDA and immediate surroundings (approximately 5 km) and extending to approximately 10 km along Abhainn na Glasa, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of cumulative effect. Cumulative change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality'.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude, there will be a localised increased sense of additional change towards the eastern fringe of the WLA, resulting in a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) cumulative effect. Overall, the significance of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 2 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 3 (Ceislein (pre-application) and application, consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the pre-application stage Ceislein Wind Farm to the application stage, consented and existing operational wind farms will add to the context of wind farm development to the east, close to the existing Novar and Novar II and result in a local increase in the extent of influence relative to scenario 2.

The Proposed Development will result in localised additional physical change to a small part of the fringe of the WLA, with little influence on the overall physical characteristics which contribute to this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. The Proposed Development will add to the influence of wind farms on localised parts of the WLA, generally towards the fringe rather than the interior where perceptual attributes are stronger. As indicated by the ZTV (**Figure 6.15**) there will be a local increase in the extent of the WLA from which wind farms could be perceived, similar to but slightly less than for scenario 2 due to the localised influence from Ceislein.

Cumulative change in this scenario will be largely similar to scenario 2, with a **locally medium** magnitude and a **moderate adverse** (significant) cumulative effect towards the eastern fringe of the WLA, and an **overall low** magnitude of change and **minor adverse** (not significant) cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' when considering WLA study area as a whole.

6.4.2 "A very large interior with a strong sense of remoteness and sanctuary that seems even more extensive where appearing to continue into neighbouring wild land areas"

Scenario 1 (consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the consented schemes will locally increase the perception of wind farms from parts of the WLA, including within the interior where they may locally influence perceptual aspects, such as the sense of remoteness. The schemes may also have a localised influence on views towards neighbouring hill areas to the north, although with no influence to the west or on the overall perceived extent of the WLA. The consented schemes will add to the human elements and development seen around the outside edge to the east and south of the WLA.

Proposed Development will add a further wind farm to the east of the WLA, adding to the context of wind farms in scenario 1 and locally increasing the influence of development on part of the fringe of the WLA. Potential additional indirect change within the interior will be predominantly limited to higher ground already influenced by the cumulative schemes, with no additional change on lower slopes or low-lying glens. The location of the Proposed Development at the eastern fringe of the WLA ensures that there will be no additional influence on views and the perceived connection to neighbouring hills and WLAs to the north and west.

Overall, while the Proposed Development will locally increase the influence of development towards the fringe of the WLA it will result in very little or no additional change to the impression of the physical or perceptual characteristics experienced within the interior area which define this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. The magnitude of cumulative effects is considered to be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude, the significance of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 1 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 2 (application, consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the application stage schemes will further increase the perception of wind farms from parts of the WLA, including within the interior where they may locally influence perceptual aspects, such as the sense of remoteness. The location of the schemes to the south and east means they will not have little influence on views towards neighbouring hill areas to the north and west and on the overall perceived extent of the WLA. The schemes in this scenario will add to the human elements and development seen around the outside edge to the east and south of the WLA.

As with scenario 1, the Proposed Development will add a further wind farm to the east of the WLA, adding to the context of wind farms and locally increasing the influence of development on part of the fringe of the WLA. However, it will result in limited additional change within the interior to the west and particularly on lower slopes and low-lying glens due to screening by intervening landform. The Proposed Development will also have no additional influence on views and the perceived connection to neighbouring hills and WLAs to the north and west.

Overall, while the Proposed Development will locally increase the influence of development towards the fringe of the WLA it will result in very little or no additional change to the impression of the physical or perceptual characteristics experienced within the interior area which define this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. The magnitude of cumulative effects is considered to be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude, the significance of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 2 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 3 (Ceislein (pre-application) and application, consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the pre-application stage Ceislein Wind Farm to the application stage, consented and existing operational wind farms will add to the context of wind farm development to the east. However, will have very little additional influence on the interior area and no influence on the perceived extent of the WLA or perceived connection with neighbouring areas to the north and west.

It is considered that the baseline for cumulative scenario 3 in the context of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is largely the same as for scenario 2 and as such the significance of cumulative effects will be the same as described, **minor adverse** (not significant).

6.4.3 "Rocky hills, cnocan and peatland slopes that appear simple and awe-inspiring at a broad scale, but harbour intricate features at a local level, as well as a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude"

Scenario 1 (consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the consented schemes will locally increase the perception of wind farms from parts of the WLA, and may locally influence the sense of emptiness, sanctuary and solitude in parts of the interior. There will be no alteration to the physical characteristics or the associated sense of naturalness, risk or physical challenge and little influence on the ability to navigate or perceive distance.

The Proposed Development will result in no alteration to the physical characteristics of the majority of the WLA, including the openness or simplicity experienced at the broad level and features and variation experienced at a more local level. Landform immediately to the west of the MDA also limits potential for additional indirect change to perceptual attributes within the interior of the WLA, including in relation to the perceived naturalness, emptiness, sanctuary and solitude. Where indirect change will occur, the Proposed Development will generally be experienced in the context of other wind farms or development and will have only a limited influence on the sense of remoteness and risk, challenge of navigation or ability to perceive distance.

Overall, the Proposed Development will result in only limited and/or localised change to the physical and perceptual characteristics related to this 'Key Attribute and Quality', across the majority of the WLA. While there will be a local increased sense of change to perceptual attributes and the simplicity of the landscape and the challenge of access and associated sense of risk, this will largely be limited to the fringes of the WLA where the attributes and qualities are already partially influenced by existing development within and adjacent to the WLA. The magnitude of cumulative effect will be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude of effect, the significance of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 1 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 2 (application, consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the application stage schemes will further increase the perception of wind farms from parts of the WLA, and may locally add to the influence on the sense of emptiness, sanctuary and solitude in parts of the interior. There will be little or no additional alteration to the remaining physical or perceptual characteristics related to this 'Key Attribute and Quality'.

The Proposed Development will result in a marginal increase in direct change on a limited and localised part of the WLA. The physical and visual separation to Carn Fearna will reduce the perception of direct cumulative change. As with scenario 1, the Proposed Development will be largely screened from and result in limited additional change on perceptual attributes of the interior of the WLA, found in the west of the study area.

Overall, the Proposed Development will result in limited and/or localised change to the physical and perceptual characteristics of this 'Key Attribute and Quality'. While there will be a local increased sense of change to physical and perceptual characteristics, this will largely be limited to the fringes of the WLA

where the attributes and qualities are already partially influenced by existing development. The magnitude of cumulative effect will be **low**.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the low magnitude of effect, the significance of cumulative effect on this 'Key Attribute and Quality' of the WLA resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 2 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 3 (Ceislein (pre-application) and application, consented and operational schemes)

The addition of the pre-application stage Ceislein Wind Farm to the cumulative baseline will add to the context of wind farm development to the east. However, will have very little additional influence on the interior area or on the physical or perceptual characteristics related to this 'Key Attribute and Quality'.

It is considered that the baseline for cumulative scenario 3 in the context of this 'Key Attribute and Quality' is largely the same as for scenario 2 and as such the significance of cumulative effects will be the same as described, **minor adverse** (not significant).

6.4.4 Cumulative effects during the hours of darkness

Scenario 1 (consented and operational schemes)

In this scenario, aviation lighting on Kirkan, Strath Oykel, Garvary and Strathrory will add further light sources within the context of the WLA once built, extending the influence on perceptual attributes including towards the interior and locally to lower slopes and glens.

The limited aviation lighting (five lights) included as part of the Proposed Development will be screened from the majority of the WLA, including from the lower slopes and glens towards the interior where existing light sources are generally not present and therefore perceptual qualities are stronger. As indicated on the ZTV (**Figure 6.16**) potential change from the proposed aviation lighting will generally be focused on more elevated locations towards the fringes of the WLA. Many of these areas are at least partially influenced by existing light sources, including from wind farms (Corriemoillie and Lochluichart), communications mast, traffic on the road network and settlement (along the Cromarty Firth, Black Isle and Dornoch Firth). However, the Proposed Development will result in a localised increase in the influence of lighting at night in parts of the WLA, including within the MDA and immediate context and to the west of Kildermorie, with a partial alteration of perceptual qualities of remoteness and solitude.

Overall, cumulative change to perceptual qualities in hours of darkness will be limited and localised as a result of screening by intervening landform, with little or no change on the majority of the WLA and particularly the interior area in the west. There will be localised additional change and partial alteration of perceptual attributes within small part of the east of the WLA, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of cumulative effect. Cumulative change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of cumulative effect in hours of darkness.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude, there will be a localised increased sense of additional change towards the eastern fringe of the WLA, resulting in a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) cumulative effect. Overall, the significance of cumulative effect on the WLA in hours of darkness resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 1 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 2 (application, consented and operational schemes)

In scenario 2, aviation lighting on Acheilidh, Balblair and Carn Fearna will add further light sources within the context of the WLA, extending the influence on perceptual attributes, including towards the interior and locally to lower slopes and glens. The distance to Acheilidh, Balblair will somewhat limit their influence.

As already highlighted, topography adjacent to the MDA will limit the extent of potential change from the Proposed Development in hours of darkness, particularly within the interior to the west where there is less influence of existing light sources. There is potential for greater change towards the eastern fringes, although perceptual qualities in these areas are often already partially influenced by existing light sources, and the Proposed Development would introduce a limited number of lights (five lights). There will be localised additional change and partial alteration of perceptual attributes within small parts of the east of the WLA, including within the MDA and immediate context and to the west of Kildermorie, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of cumulative effect. Cumulative change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of cumulative effect in hours of darkness.

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude, there will be a localised increased sense of additional change towards the eastern fringe of the WLA, resulting in a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) cumulative effect. Overall, the significance of cumulative effect on the WLA in hours of darkness resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 2 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

Scenario 3 (Ceislein (pre-application) and application, consented and operational schemes)

In this scenario, aviation lighting on Ceislein will add further light sources to the east of the WLA, locally extending the influence of aviation lighting on parts of the eastern fringe of the WLA.

As with scenario 2, the extent of potential change from the Proposed Development in hours of darkness will be limited from the majority of the WLA, particularly within the interior to the west where there is less influence of existing light sources. There is potential for greater change towards the eastern fringes, although perceptual qualities in these areas are often already partially influenced by existing light sources. The extent of additional change will be somewhat reduced relative to scenario 2 as a result of the influence of Ceislein on the baseline. However, there will be localised additional change and partial alteration of perceptual attributes within small parts of the east of the WLA, including within the MDA and immediate context and to the west of Kildermorie, resulting in a **locally medium** magnitude of cumulative effect. Cumulative change on the remaining parts of the WLA within the study area will be lower, resulting in an **overall low** magnitude of cumulative effect in hours of darkness

Taking account of the high sensitivity and the overall low magnitude, there will be a localised increased sense of additional change towards the eastern fringe of the WLA, resulting in a **locally moderate adverse** (significant) cumulative effect. Overall, the significance of cumulative effect on the WLA in hours of darkness resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development to scenario 3 will be **minor adverse** (not significant).

6.5 Summary of Effects on WLA

Considerable changes have been made to the design of the Proposed Development in order to minimise potential significant effects on the qualities of the WLA, with a focus on reducing the potential extent of indirect change, particularly within the more sensitive interior area to the west.

Initial appraisal informed by desk-based research and targeted site survey identified little or no potential for the Proposed Development to influence one of the defined 'Key Attributes and Qualities', relating to the long and deep penetrating glens towards the interior of the WLA. Similarly, it was considered that there will be very little or no change to the western half of the WLA and parts of the southern and northern fringes in the east. The scope of the wild land assessment, including the study area extent and the 'Key Attributes and Qualities' to be included were agreed in consultation with NatureScot.

The Proposed Development will be partially located within the eastern fridge of the WLA and therefore with potential for both direct and indirect change. The assessment identified that direct change will be limited to a very small part of the WLA and will have little influence on the physical characteristics which contribute to the character and qualities of the WLA. Indirect change will occur over a wider area, but still limited and localised in the context of the WLA and generally focused towards the eastern fringe and away from the more remote interior.

The detailed assessment has identified that construction of the Proposed Development will result in a **minor adverse** (not significant) effect on aspects of one of the 'Key Attributes and Qualities' and **negligible adverse** (not significant) effects on the remaining two. At operation and for each of the cumulative scenarios and including in hours of darkness, the Proposed Development will result in **minor adverse** (not significant) effects on each of the identified 'Key Attributes and Qualities'. However, the assessment identified **locally moderate adverse** (significant effects) on small parts of the WLA in relation to aspects of one of the defined 'Key Attributes and Qualities' ("*A range of awe-inspiring massive, high rounded hills and plateaux, as well as steep rocky peaks and ridges, offering elevated panoramas*"), at operation, cumulatively and in hours of darkness.

Overall, considering the limited nature of potential change on the majority of the study area and limited potential for change much of the wider extent of the WLA, the overall significance of effect of the Proposed Development on the Rhiddoroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis WLA will be **negligible adverse** (not significant) during construction (and decommissioning) and **minor adverse** (not significant) at operation.

7. References

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