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GLENSHERO WIND FARM

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON THE

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

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NATIONAL PARK

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CONTENTS

1. Assessment of Effects on the Cairngorms National Park	2
1.1 Background	2
- Step 1: Study Area	2
- Step 2 and 3: Baseline and Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs)	2
- Step 4: Mitigation and Residual Effects	3
- Step 5: Risk of the Loss or Damage of SLQs	3
- Table 1: Assessment of effects on SLQs and Cairngorms National Park	4

1. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Technical Appendix (TA) 4.5 that accompanied the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) contains an assessment of residual effects upon the Cairngorms National Park, with reference to the special landscape qualities (SQLs) as described in the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.375, (iBids and Project No. 648), hereafter referred to as the assessment of SLQs. Subsequent to the submission of the TA representations were received in respect of the assessment from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) requiring the presentation of such an assessment in a format consistent with the Interim Cairngorms National Park Guidance - Assessing Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (9/10/2015), hereafter referred to as 'the guidance'. The following assessment is intended to meet this requirement, and, in accordance with the guidance, comprises the following structure:

- Step 1: Study Area - Determination of a study area in which effects on the Special Qualities of the National Park would be considered.
- Step 2: Baseline - Identification of what the relevant SLQs are for the areas liable to views of the proposed development.
- Step 3: Understanding the SLQs – including field reconnaissance.
- Step 4: Assessment of effects on the SLQs and potential mitigation measures.

1.1.2 Whilst the guidance contains a further step (Step 5) which makes reference to determining whether there would be a 'risk' of the loss or damage the SLQs that people experience in the area it has been assumed, for the purpose of the EIA and the determination of the planning application, that only significant effects are relevant (i.e. major/moderate or major effects, as described in the methodology set out in Chapter 4 of the EIAR).

Step 1: Study Area

1.1.3 Figure 4.5a and TA4.5 of the EIAR indicate that the theoretical viewshed of the proposed development within the CNP is relatively limited in geographical extents. In order to take account of potential effects on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the CNP all of the areas likely to be affected by the proposed development (i.e. those with theoretical visibility), have been considered.

Steps 2 and 3: Baseline and Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs)

1.1.4 The SLQs identified in Part 2 of the SNH/CNPA publication and are summarised in TA4.3 of the EIAR, along with details of the assessment viewpoints that were utilised in the assessment of the effect of the proposed development on these special qualities and the CNP overall. The SLQs described relate to a number of different physical and aesthetic and perceptual qualities. The proposed development would not directly or physically affect the CNP and so it is the aesthetic and perceptual qualities that are considered relevant to the assessment of effects. These are generally the focus of Sections 6 and 7 in SNH's assessment of SLQs. The SLQs of relevance to this assessment comprise:

- General qualities, common to much of the CNP;
- Mountains and Plateaux;
- Moorlands;
- Wildlife and Nature;
- Visual and Sensory Qualities; and

- Recreation.

1.1.5 The key characteristics of each of these SLQs are set out in Table 1, below, along with a description of where and to what degree they occur, as well as other SLQs with which they may be associated or grouped. This analysis was verified during field reconnaissance in the summer of 2017 and 2018.

1.1.6 In addition to these listed qualities the Landscape the Landscape Toolkit on the National Park website provides a description of features and characteristics that contribute to the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park and divides the National Park into a series of discreet Landscape Areas (Areas) based on the findings of the 2009 Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment: (Final Report). These sources were utilised in the assessment of the National Park with reference to both the SLQs and constituent landscape Areas.

Step 4: Mitigation and Residual Effects

1.1.7 The design of the proposed development, which incorporates embedded mitigation, is described in Chapters 2 and 4 of the EIAR.

1.1.8 The proposed development would be screened from a considerable portion of the CNP and would therefore have no effect on the special landscape qualities of the majority of the National Park. Table 1, below, contains an assessment of residual effects on the SLQs of the CNP. The assessment also discusses the overall effect of the proposed development on the overall effect on the CNP.

Step 5: Risk of the Loss or Damage of SLQs

1.1.9 On the basis of the assessment in Table 1, below, as well as TA4.5 and Chapter 4 of the EIAR, no significant effects on SLQs are anticipated. Given that not one of the SQLs considered would be significantly affected, the risk of loss or damage to SQLs is considered low.

Table 1: Assessment of effects on SLQs and the Cairngorms National Park

SLQs that are relevant	Landscape Characteristics that underpin the SLQs	Locations Illustrative or Exemplifying SLQs	Group or Association with other SLQs	Effect of the proposed development on SLQs and the CNP
<p>General Qualities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath. - Vastness of space, scale and height; - Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes; - A landscape of layers, from inhabited straths to remote, uninhabited upland; - 'The harmony of complicated curves'; and - Landscapes both cultural and natural. 	<p>Whilst these qualities/characteristics are general to the CNP, the largest scale, elevation and remotest parts of the CNP are associated with, and experienced from, the Central Massif, as well as the interior of the adjoining plateaux and the southern edge of the Monadhliaths mountains.</p> <p>The juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes is most evident from within and adjoining Corriegarth Pass, Glen Truim and Strath Spey from where the transition between the cultural landscapes of the straths/pass contrast with the remote and uninhabited uplands. The scale of the uplands is generally not evident from low lying receptor locations within straths and glens as views are foreshortened by intervening topography.</p>	<p>Within the area liable to views of the proposed development, these general characteristics are also associated with the following SLQs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mountains and plateaux; - Moorland; - Wildlife and nature; and - The visual and sensory qualities. 	<p>The proposed development is located outwith the CNP and would therefore have no direct impact or effect on its fabric, form or its characteristic physical elements.</p> <p>For the proposed development to impact upon the general qualities of the CNP it would need to be seen in the context of the stated characteristics and to be of sufficient prominence to detract from them.</p> <p>Whilst visible from a relatively small number of elevated locations within the CNP the proposed development has been designed to be substantially screened by intervening ridges, and to be broadly consistent with the appearance of the neighbouring Stronelaig Wind Farm development, thereby lessening its potential visibility and prominence.</p> <p>Viewed from the interior of the CNP, the proposed development would generally be seen distantly from open elevated slopes and summits in the context of long-range panoramic views, and adjacent to the existing Stronelaig array. In this context, the prominence and scale of the proposed development would be partially mitigated. Where views of the development are obtained from lower-lying positions closer to the development, increased screening provided by intervening topography would serve to reduce the perceived scale of the proposed development, relative to the CNP interior. Consequently, the proposed development is not considered to pose a significant adverse effect on either the scale or form of the landscape within the CNP.</p> <p>Whilst of debateable relevance to understanding impacts upon the CNP, the proposed development could impact upon the perception of the scale and form of the topography within the CNP if interposed between external receptors and the CNP. However, with few exceptions, the proposed development would not be interposed between external receptors and visible characteristic elements, and so would not interrupt or detract from the form or scale of the landscape in the CNP. Where the proposed turbines would be seen between receptors and the CNP they would be partially obscured and seen in the context of the exiting Stronelaig array (Ref. Viewpoints 2 and 3).</p> <p>With regard to the contrast between settled glens and uninhabited uplands, the majority of glens and straths within the CNP would afford no views of the proposed development. However, views of the development would be provided from locations at the Dun da Lamh hill fort and at the edge of the CNP, at Garvamore/Garva Bridge, from where the proposed development would introduce development to a prominent elevated moorland slope overlooking</p>

				<p>the Corrieyairack Pass, thereby interrupting the characteristic transition between settled valley and uninhabited upland as experienced in views from the edge of the CNP. However, the proposed development would not be located within the CNP and would be seen in views out of CNP, rather than towards the CNP. Consequently, the proposed development cannot be said to significantly affect the contrasting landscapes within the CNP.</p> <p>On the basis of the preceding analysis- no overall significant effects are anticipated on the general SLQ characteristics.</p>
The Mountains and Plateaux	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The unifying presence of the central mountains; - An imposing massif of strong dramatic character; - The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulder-strewn high ground; - The surrounding hills; - The drama of deep corries; - Exceptional glacial landforms; and - Snowscapes. 	Primarily associated with Central Massif and adjoining plateaux.	<p>Associated with the following SLQs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspects of the general qualities of the CNP; - Moorland; - Wildlife and nature; and - The visual and sensory qualities of the CNP. 	<p>The proposed development is located outwith the CNP and would therefore have no direct effect on the topography or characteristic geological features of the landscape in the CNP. Whilst it is possible for development outwith the CNP to detract from the form and pre-eminence of the Cairngorms and Grampian Mountains, the proposed development would be located distantly from key summits in the CNP and would not be interposed between receptors in the CNP and key characteristic elements that comprise this SLQ. Consequently, no significant effects on this SLQ are anticipated.</p>
Moorlands	Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops; and a patchwork of muirburn.	Moorland is a commonplace feature of the elevated uplands in the CNP, whilst farmland. Woodland and forestry are generally confined to lower slopes and the interior of glens and straths.	<p>Associated with the following SLQs and their characteristic features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspects of the general qualities of the CNP; - The Mountains and plateaux; - Moorland; - Wildlife and Nature; and - The Visual and Sensory Qualities of the CNP. 	<p>The proposed development is located outwith the CNP and would therefore have no direct effect on the landcover or characteristic management of the CNP. Consequently, no significant effects on this SLQ are anticipated.</p>
Wildlife and Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominance of natural landforms; - Extensive tracts of natural vegetation; - Wild land; and - Wildness. 	<p>The greatest wildness experienced within the Cairngorms Wild Land Areas (Wild Land Area 151, respectively), which is in the open uplands east of the A9 corridor and at the Central Cairngorms Massif, as indicated in Figure 4.3a of the EIAR. The key characteristics of which comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extensive, open, remote mountain and moorland interior containing few human artefacts or evidence of contemporary land use, and possessing a strong sense of sanctuary and solitude; - Massive, rounded hills and plateaux that appear awe-inspiring due to 	<p>Associated with the following SLQs and their characteristic features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspects of the general qualities of the CNP; - The mountains and plateaux; - Moorland; and - The visual and sensory qualities of the CNP. 	<p>The proposed development is located outwith the CNP and would therefore have no direct effect on the characteristic topography or landcover of this designated area.</p> <p>The proposed development would also have no significant effect on the dominance of the mountains and plateaux of the CNP. To the north of Aberarder Lodge, the proposed development would introduce greater complexity and movement to this still landscape and reduce the sense of seclusion and remoteness, which are a key aspect of the perceived wildness of the landscape at this location. It is important to note, however, that this part of the CNP does not fall within a formally defined Wild Land Area.</p> <p>On the basis of the preceding analysis, no significant effects on this SLQ or its characteristic features are anticipated.</p>

¹ Based on the 2017 the Description of Wild Land Areas (available at <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-11/Consultation-response-Description-of-Wild-Land-Cairngorm-January-2017-15.pdf>)

		<p>their superlative scale, openness and elevation, and which offer extensive, panoramic views;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long, deep, steep-sided glens that cut into the massive hills and plateaux and possess qualities of remoteness whilst also facilitating access; - Corries and gorges carved into the hills and plateaux appear arresting in their vertical form and include features such as cliffs and waterfalls that contribute to perceived naturalness; - Dynamic rivers form key visual and physical features, influence access and contribute to the sense of naturalness. <p>A lesser degree of wildness is evident elsewhere, due to the influence of commercial forestry, settled glens and straths, grid infrastructure and communication corridors.</p> <p>Wind farm developments within the Monadhliaths, form a developed backdrop in views to the west from elevated locations within the CNP, including Wild Land Area (WLA)15. Viewpoints 9, 20 and 22 in the EIAR are located within WLA 15.</p>		
<p>Visual and Sensory Qualities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Layers of receding ridge lines; - Grand panoramas and framed views; - A landscape of many colours; - Dark skies; - Attractive and contrasting textures; and - The dominance of natural sounds. 	<p>The majority of these qualities are experienced at remote elevated locations, away from settled straths and glens and communication corridors where views are contained within glens and straths, and where there is a greater prevalence of artificial noise sources such as road and vehicle noise and increased artificial light sources.</p> <p>The experience of receding ridges is most evident from locations within the plateaux adjoining the Central Massif, but also at the southern extents of the Monadhliaths, and along the western edge of the CNP, from where the ridges are seen to the south-east and east (i.e. towards the interior of the CNP and away from the proposed development.</p>	<p>Associated with the following SLQs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspects of the general qualities of the CNP; - The mountains and plateaux; - Moorland; - Wildlife and nature; and - Recreation. 	<p>The proposed development would be seen outwith and to the west or north-west of the CNP and would be backclothed, partially or wholly obscured by intervening topography, and would generally be seen in close association with the existing Stronelairg turbines which have already diminished the dominance of natural landforms.</p> <p>The proposed development would generally be seen in the context of vast expansive panoramic views. Coupled with the proposed developments partial screening behind intervening topography, and its distance from much of the CNP, it would constitute a localised change in an otherwise largely unchanged view.</p> <p>Whilst the proposed development would add contrasting pale grey forms to views from the CNP it would not affect the colours of the CNP itself or the textures within it.</p> <p>The proposed development would include no visible artificial operational lighting and would therefore have no effect on the darkness of the night skies of the CNP.</p>

		<p>Receding ridgelines are also evident in views to the west, across intervening uplands to distant ranges beyond. Whilst such westerly views form a characteristic of views from elevated locations in the CNP. This SLQ and its characteristics are experienced, in the main, by hill walkers at the southern extents of the Monadhliaths.</p>		<p>The proposed development would be distant from the CNP and unlikely, therefore, to result in intrusive noise that would compromise the soundscape of the park.</p> <p>On the basis of this analysis the proposed development is not anticipated to result in significant effects on this SLQ or its characteristic features.</p>
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A landscape of opportunities; and - Spirituality. 	<p>Recreational access to locations within the viewshed of the proposed development are largely associated with walking (both hill walking and walking along the Corrieyairack Pass between Newtonmore and the Great Glen).</p> <p>Solitude, one of the identified attributes of the CNP, is most evident in the remote uplands of the CNP where it contributes to the sense of wildness. It is less evident in lower lying locations within inhabited straths and glens, which generally form the focus of human activity and dwellings.</p>	<p>This SLQ is associated with and can often be grouped with the following SLQs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspects of the general qualities of the CNP; - The mountains and plateaux; - Moorland; - Wildlife and nature; and - The visual and sensory qualities of the CNP. 	<p>Whilst the proposed development would result in some increased influence of wind farm developments in views from the CNP it would have no direct effect on recreational access/opportunities within the CNP or the general sense of solitude within the CNP. Consequently, no significant effects are anticipated on this SLQ.</p>