

Appendix 4 Viewpoints

Introduction

1. An updated viewpoint assessment has been carried out from a selection of representative viewpoint locations to inform the assessment of the likely magnitude and significance of landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the proposed Development.
2. 29 viewpoints were identified. Viewpoints 1-23 were agreed with The Highland Council (THC) and NatureScot during scoping for the EIA Report. For the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) update, it was noted that comments had been made in representations relating to viewpoints not being in the most open and close locations in relation to representing views for local communities. Viewpoints 8 and 11 were moved slightly closer to the Site within Barrock and Lochend to address those comments, and further viewpoints were added at Mey, East Mey, Upper Gills, Canisbay, Rattar and West Dunnet (Viewpoints 24-29). In response to other comments, Viewpoint 10 was also moved so that it represents the views available from the A99.
3. The locations of the selected viewpoints are shown on Figure 7.2. Details for each viewpoint are provided below. Panoramic photographs, wireline diagrams and photomontages (in most cases) are provided to illustrate the existing view at each viewpoint location and the likely extent of the proposed Development within the view (see Viewpoints 2-26). Viewpoints 1 and 27 to 29 are illustrated by wirelines only.
4. This viewpoint assessment considers the nature of the predicted view and informs the judgements of scale of change provide in Table 1 in the updated LVIA. The wider extent of the change and its duration are not captured in the viewpoint analysis (as a single location cannot capture these factors for an entire route or area). As duration and extent are necessary considerations in determining magnitude of change, magnitude and level of effect judgements are provided for visual receptors considered in the main assessment report and not for representative viewpoints. Viewpoints 4 (Dunnet Head) and 6 (Duncansby Head) are also considered as specific viewpoints within the main LVIA.
5. The method of assessment used for the viewpoint analysis, which is described in Appendix 1: LVIA Methodology, accords with current best-practice guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment¹. Observations are made of the baseline characteristics at each of the representative viewpoints with site observations, computer modelling and professional judgement then applied to determine the scale of change attributable to the proposed Development (Large, Medium, Small and Negligible). Where relevant, consideration is also given to cumulative effects and the effects of any proposed lighting.
6. The viewpoint analysis takes into account the screening effect of intervening landform, vegetation and built form and the potential for changes to those baseline features. It assumes excellent clear weather conditions; although the influence of different seasons, weather, sunlight and visibility conditions have been considered, where relevant.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition (GLVIA3)

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
1 – North Hoy and West Mainland NSA	The view looks along the line of the cliffs and across the sea to the mainland. Some existing and consented windfarms are and will be visible along the distant skyline, with the most prominent being Loch End, Taigh Na Muir Dunnet, Stroupster and Slickly.	The proposed Development would be seen in front and to the right of the turbines at Slickly, extending across towards those at Lochend. The turbines would appear larger and closer than the existing and consented windfarms, but would be a distant feature, typically only visible in clear weather conditions.	Melvich and Kirkton windfarms would be seen along the mainland coast further to the right of Baillie windfarm. Cairnmore Hill would be seen close to Baillie. Tormsdale may be visible in the far distance with the group of windfarms at Bad a Cheo and Causeymire. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more the windfarms in planning.
2 – Burwick, South Ronaldsay	The view looks from the beach across the sea to the mainland. Some existing and consented windfarms are and will be visible along the distant skyline, with the most prominent being the upper parts of turbines at Slickly. Hoy Windfarm will be seen above the skyline to the right of the nearby small scale turbines looking northwest.	The proposed Development would be seen to the right of the turbines at Slickly, with lower parts of the towers screened by landform and forestry. The turbines would appear larger and closer than the existing and consented windfarms, but would be a distant feature, typically only visible in clearer weather conditions.	Cairnmore Hill would be seen to the right of the group of windfarms including Limekiln and Baillie. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.
3a – Gills Bay Ferry	The viewpoint is located on the route of the Gills Bay to St Margaret’s Hope ferry. On the day that photography was taken, due to sea conditions, the ferry passed to the west of the island of Stroma, part of which is visible on the left of the view. A wireline only (Volume 3b: Figure 7.16-NS-03) of the view from a position within 5 km of the proposed Development on a course headed to the east of the island of Stroma is also provided. Castle of Mey is discernible to the right of centre and in the centre of the view the land rises from St John’s Point in the direction of the Site to Mey Hill. In the left of the view Stroupster, Slickly and Lochend windfarms are visible along the skyline as is the Taigh na Muir Dunnet turbine.	The proposed Development would be seen in front of and to the left of the turbines at Lochend, with lower parts of the towers screened by landform. The turbines would appear larger and closer than the existing and consented windfarms. The combination of the proposed Development with Lochend would create a second more prominent group of turbines with a similar extent to those seen at Lochend and Slickly.	Distant blade tips of Tormsdale may be visible, but are unlikely to be noticeable. The turbines at Cairnmore Hill would be seen in the distance as hubs and blades along to skyline to the left of Duncansby Head. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
4 – Dunnet Head	The viewing area at Dunnet Head allows 360 degree views; across the Pentland Firth to the island of Hoy and the Orkney Islands, east towards the island of Stroma and Duncansby Head and west along the Caithness coast to Strathy Point. Views inland extend south to the lone mountains of Morvern, Scaraben and Maiden Pap. Views in the direction of the Site look over nearby open moorland to rocky cliffs with settled coastal farmland beyond with occasional areas of forestry and moorland in the distance. There are several groups of wind turbines with Taigh na Muir Dunnet, Slickly, Stroupster Windfarm and Lochend Windfarm being seen as a more nearby group with more distant groups seen along the skyline to the right. Turbines at Hoy will be seen straddling the island skyline to the north.	The proposed Development would be seen behind Taigh na Muir Dunnet and Lochend and in front of Slickly and Stroupster, as part of this more prominent group of turbines. The turbines would appear larger than the rest of those in the group and would slightly extent the group to the left, but not markedly so.	With the exception of Cairnmore Hill, proposals in planning would be seen to extend existing and consented distant windfarm groups. Cairnmore Hill would be seen in front of the turbines at Baillie and would be noticeably closer than the existing and consented windfarms seen in that direction. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.
5 – Castle of Mey entrance	The viewpoint location is a point where visitors enter and exit the castle and there is a view south through a gap in woodland. It is representative of views from this part of the GDL to which visitors have access. The woodland in the left and right of the view extends approximately 200 m to the south enclosing an area of grassland in which three regularly spaced tree clumps are positioned. No existing or consented windfarms are visible.	The hubs and blades of turbines would be seen over the horizon formed by the field and hedgerows and through the nearby trees, particularly in winter. Proposed mitigation agreed with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) post-application is to plant a second hedge to reinforce the existing hedge and to manage this to a height of 4 (moved from orIGINAm (anticipated after 10 years of growth) which would largely screen the proposed Development.	No other windfarms would be visible.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
6 – Duncansby Head	Views from Duncansby Head viewing area are focused on the view north towards the Orkney Islands. The view west towards the site includes moors and cliffs to the left, settled coastal farmland in the centre and the coastline and sea to the right with the cliffs at Dunnet Head forming a noticeable feature in that direction, towards the Site. The upper parts of some of the turbines at Slickly and Stroupster can be seen to either side of Warth Hill, and the blades of Lochend and a communications mast are also visible looking in the Direction of the Site. Hoy Windfarm will be visible descending the island slopes to the northwest.	The proposed Development would be seen beyond the skyline of moorland and forestry seen behind the settled farmland. They would appear notably larger than any existing or consented windfarms seen from this location.	Cairnmore Hill would be visible on the skyline in the distance to the right of the proposed Development. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.
7 – A836 west of Thurso	The viewpoint is located on the A836 approximately 2.3 km to the west of Thurso on the route of the NC500. Thurso is visible in the right of the view at the head of Thurso Bay. To the left of centre cliffs on the far side of Dunnet Bay are visible and Dunnet Head is a notable feature in the view. Lochend, Stroupster and Slickly windfarms are seen along the skyline beyond farmland seen between Thurso and the cliffs.	The proposed Development would be seen in front of the existing and consented windfarms seen looking east along the road. The turbines would appear larger and closer than the existing and consented windfarms, but the cliffs and Dunnet Head would remain the most notable features of the view.	The turbines at Cairnmore Hill would be seen in a nearby group looking across the road to the southwest. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.
8 - Barrock (moved slightly from EIA Report)	The relocated viewpoint at the eastern edge of the settlement looks out across an open field towards moorland and forestry. The views south, west and northwest are curtailed by nearby homes, vegetation and rising ground. Existing turbines at Lochend and Stroupster are seen looking towards the Site, and these will be joined by Slickly windfarm located between the two existing groups. Some of the turbines at Hoy will be visible on the island skyline to the north.	The proposed Development would be seen to the left of Lochend Windfarm and in front of Slickly and Stroupster. The turbines would be markedly closer and would increase the proximity and extent of turbines seen looking to the east and southeast.	No windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
9 – Brabster	Views from this local road near some rural properties are open and expansive. Views towards the site look across semi-improved grassland to nearby forestry beyond. To the other side of the road, semi-improved grassland and nearby forestry descend gently towards moorland, more distant forestry (most of which will be felled as Slickly is constructed) and open views of Slickly and Stroupster windfarms in the middle ground and extending across a wide arc of the view. Morvern, Scaraben and Maiden Pap can be seen looking southwest along the road past the overhead lines on wooden poles.	The proposed Development would be seen set within the nearby forestry to the west, with both landform and the forestry partly screening the turbine bases.	Tormsdale windfarm would be seen in the distance as part of a group with Bad a Cheo and Causeymire windfarms. Cairnmore Hill may be seen to the right of and closer than Baillie, but would be a distant feature and is likely to be screened by forestry retained within the Site. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
10 – Warth Hill (moved slightly from EIA Report)	This viewpoint is located on the A99 on the south facing slopes of Warth Hill where views open up for southbound travellers after passing around the hill. Cliffs and the sea beyond can be seen looking southeast, with expansive views of farm buildings, forestry blocks and windfarms to the south and west. Stroupster and Slickly windfarms form a prominent group of turbines seen in the direction of travel, whilst other windfarms are more distant and less noticeable.	The proposed Development would be seen in front of Lochend windfarm to the west, set among forestry blocks. The turbines would appear to be of a slightly smaller scale and/or greater distance than Slickly and Stroupster windfarms, and would markedly increase the extent of wind turbines across the open view.	Windfarms in planning would be seen to marginally extend existing and consented distant windfarm groups. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.
11 - Lochend (moved slightly from EIA Report)	This view from a local road within the dispersed settlement of Lochend looks out over farmland towards forestry and Lochend Windfarm nearby to the east and northeast. Stroupster and Slickly windfarms are also visible to the southeast. To the south and southwest undulating farmland and nearby homes and vegetation limit outward views, but there will be some distant visibility of Golticlay Windfarm on the skyline. Baillie and Dounreay Tri windfarms are seen along the distant skyline beyond Loch Heilen looking west.	The proposed Development would be seen behind Lochend Windfarm. The turbines would appear of a similar scale to the existing development given the effects of perspective and would slightly extend the existing group to the right and left.	Cairnmore Hill Windfarm would be seen between Baillie and Dounreay Tri on the skyline beyond Loch Heilen. It would be closer and more prominent than the other windfarms seen to the west. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged if added to a baseline including one or more of the windfarms in planning.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
12 – Bower	From this minor road near Bower, views in the direction of the Site look across gently rolling pasture interspersed with woodland blocks, farms and rural properties. Field boundaries are predominantly trimmed hedges with post and wire fences and drystone walls. Beyond the nearby ridgeline, hills forestry and moorland can be seen along with Lochend, Stroupster and Slickly windfarms.	The proposed Development would be seen in front and to the right of Lochend. The turbines would be noticeably larger and together the two windfarms would form a group of similar scale and extent to Stroupster and Slickly windfarms.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.
13 - Lyth	From this local road, views in the direction of the Site are characterised by gently rolling pasture divided by trimmed hedges and post and wire fences. There are small copses of conifer plantation and trees associated with scattered dwellings and farms. There is a noticeable change in land cover looking towards the Site where moorland and forestry plantation are visible extending to become more dominant in the right of the view where Slickly and Stroupster windfarms are located. Lochend Windfarm is seen as a tight group to the north.	The proposed Development would be seen along the skyline to the right of Lochend Windfarm, set within moorland and forestry. It would appear separate from and closer than Lochend and separate from and more distant than Slickly and Stroupster windfarms.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.
14 – Keiss	From this local road in Keiss, views to the east and south look towards houses in the village and out to sea. Looking inland towards the Site, houses and farms can be seen along the nearby skyline with the blades of Slickly and Stroupster windfarms seen beyond.	The blades of some of the turbines within the proposed Development would be seen beyond those of Slickly, extending the arc of view occupied by turbine blades slightly to the right. It would appear markedly smaller in the view than the nearer windfarms.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
15 – Ben Dorrery	This hill summit offers expansive views over lower lying areas. The view northeast towards the Site looks out over moorland in the foreground with a few dwellings and farmsteads, towards a more settled and farmed landscape with areas of forestry, and beyond that to the coast, Dunnet Head and the Orkney Islands. A large group of windfarms can be seen set among moorland and forestry to the southeast. Slickly, Stroupster and Lochend windfarms are seen along the skyline to the northeast.	The proposed Development would be seen beyond Lochend Windfarm, forming a separate group of similar scale and appearance to that of Slickly and Stroupster.	Cairnmore Hill Windfarm would be seen as a widely spaced group to the north, on the mainland skyline to the left of the islands. It would be the closest and most prominently visible windfarm seen to the north and northeast. Tormsdale would be seen in front of the existing large cluster of windfarms seen set within the lower lying moorland and forestry to the east and southeast. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
16 – A9 Georgemas Junction	The view towards the site from this location looks out over gently rolling farmland with areas of young tree planting. Electricity lines on wooden poles and nearby farms and houses are also visible nearby. Vegetation largely screens the blade tips of Slickly and Stroupster windfarms.	The proposed Development would in theory be visible as up to 4 distant blade tips, however these would in practice be screened by woodland on the horizon and, as it matures, the young woodland in the foreground.	Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
17 – Watten	The view from Watten towards the Site looks out over the roadside hedge. Visibility from this location is very dependent on the roadside hedge cutting as the hedge grows to limit views when not recently cut. When the hedge is low cut, Loch Watten can be seen beyond the hedge, set in front of gently rising farmland, farms, dwellings and woodland which form the skyline. Some blades of Slickly Windfarm will be visible just above this skyline, with Stroupster screened by woodland.	The proposed Development would in theory be visible as up to 7 distant blade tips, however some would in practice be screened by houses on the horizon and the others would be seen between the houses.	Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
18 – Noss Head	The view from near the castle at Noss Head looks north along the coast towards Duncansby Head and inland northeast towards the Site. Stroupster and Slickly windfarms are seen along the moorland skyline seen beyond the coastal farmland to the right of the nearby castle. The hubs and blades of Lochend Windfarm are visible above forestry.	The proposed Development would be seen beyond Slickly windfarm, extending that group to the left to join with Lochend Windfarm. The proposed Development would appear to be of a similar scale and position to Stroupster Windfarm and part of a larger group of turbines.	The blade tips of Cairnmore Hill Windfarm would be seen in the distance on the skyline to the left of the castle ruins. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
19 – A9 near Rangag	The view towards the site from this location looks from the A9 over areas of nearby grassland to a skyline formed by hills and forestry at varied distances. A line of pylons passes close to the viewpoint and continues along the roadside into the distance. Nearby windfarms are seen set within moorland to the north and northwest. Slickly, Stroupster and Lochend windfarms are indicated to be visible in theory, but in practice are screened by vegetation.	The proposed Development would be seen as blade tips in the distance above forestry seen looking across the A9 and through the nearby fence.	Tormsdale Windfarm would be seen nearby to the left of the Causeymire and Bad a Cheo windfarms. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
20 - Badlipster	Views north towards the Site from this local road extend into the distance, where Orkney can be seen beyond the gently undulating farmland interspersed with woodland and settlement and distant windfarms along to the skyline including Hoy, Lochend, Slickly and Stroupster. Views to the east and south look out over moorland to nearby windfarms and some areas of forestry.	The proposed Development would be seen adjacent to, and would appear larger than, Lochend Windfarm. Together the two windfarms would form a similar group to that seen at Slickly and Stroupster.	Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
21 – Thrumster	This viewpoint is located on the A99 at Thrumster. Looking north towards the Site, the view takes in Loch Hempriggs seen to the left of the road and a mix of farms, moorland and woodland set within gently undulating topography. In the distance, Warth Hill and the Orkney islands can be seen forming part of the skyline. Lochend Windfarm is seen set in front of the islands; Slickly and Stroupster windfarms can be seen on the moorland skyline beyond nearby houses and Loch Hempriggs. Two nearby smaller scale wind turbines can also be seen beyond Loch Hempriggs and more nearby windfarms are seen beyond the nearby skyline to the northwest.	The proposed Development would be seen separated from Lochend Windfarm and would appear to extend the group formed by Slickly and Stroupster. The turbines would appear slightly more distant but similar in scale to that group.	Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
22 – A836 East of Castletown	The viewpoint is located in a lay-by on the A836 in the southern part of Dunnet Head SLA and at the south end of the beach at Dunnet Bay. In the left of the view the grass covered dunes that back the beach are visible. In the right of the view farm buildings at Thurdistoft and to the left of those residential properties are visible. Lochend Windfarm is noticeable in the centre of the view. The blades of Slickly Windfarm will be seen in the distance beyond the skyline.	The proposed Development would be seen among the turbines at Lochend and extending that windfarm along the skyline. The turbines would appear larger than the existing turbines, and as the bases of neither can be seen are likely to be perceived as being closer.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.
23 – Far North railway line	The wireline illustrates the view from the railway line approximately 5 km northeast of Altnabreac Station. The view towards the Site looks along/behind the route of travel (not a view typically available to rail travellers). Distant windfarms would be visible along the skyline, with the closest and most visible being the group including Causeymire, which would be likely to be visible to northbound travellers.	The proposed Development would be theoretically visible, but unlikely to be seen by train travellers at this location.	Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
24 - Upper Gills (new)	The view to the east, south and west looks out over nearby farmland pasture dotted with homes set among groups of trees within the open fields. Forestry forms the skyline looking southwest. Overhead lines on wooden poles are noticeable within the open landscape. To the northwest the land falls towards the coast and there is a view towards the sea, islands and Hoy windfarm.	The closest parts of the forestry visible within the Site would be felled and not replanted as part of the Habitat Management Plan. Most of the proposed Development would remain screened by intervening terrain and forestry, but two of the closest turbines would appear to sit on the edge of the forestry, with lower parts of towers screened by the terrain, and several further blades would be seen turning above the skyline and landform, contrasting markedly with the scale of the nearby settlement and farmland.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.
25 – Rattar (new)	There are open views in all directions from this location, with pasture divided by wire fences and occasional clumps of trees and homes forming the main elements of the view. Dunnet Head can be seen looking northwest and the turbines at Lochend and Taigh na Muir Dunnet are seen along the skyline to the south and southwest. Buildings, trees and forestry to the southeast largely screen Slickly and Stroupster windfarms.	The proposed Development would be seen looking along the road and to the left of Lochend Windfarm. The turbines would be partly screened by terrain, nearby buildings and trees and forestry, such that the main visibility would be of the group of 5 turbines seen closer to Lochend Windfarm.	Distant blade tips of Cairnmore Hill Windfarm would be seen directly behind the Taigh na Muir Dunnet turbine. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.
26 – Mey (new)	Views from the A836 through Mey are partly enclosed by housing and/or low sparse hedgerows to both south and north, but occasional more open views are available allowing windows out across farmland towards the sea (to the north) and views over nearby pasture towards higher ground and forestry forming the skyline to the south.	The proposed Development would be seen with tower bases screened by terrain and some of the turbines mostly screened by forestry. They would be a new feature in the view given that other windfarms are mostly not visible from the A836 as it passes through Mey.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.

Viewpoint	Key features of existing view	Predicted changes to view	Cumulative
27 - West Dunnet (new)	This view from a road junction in West Dunnet looks out from an area of sparse settlement within pastoral farmland. Rising ground and moorland form the nearby skyline to the north and northwest, and Dunnet Bay can be seen to the south. Looking east towards the site, a smooth inland skyline of forestry and farmland forms the skyline in the middle distance, with Stroupster, Lochend and Slickly windfarms mostly screened by the forestry and nearby houses and trees.	The proposed Development would be seen across the open farmland skyline to the east, occupying a prominent position for people leaving the village on the local road, whose views would be directed eastwards. The turbines would be partly screened by terrain, with the hubs and blades visible.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.
28 – Canisbay (new)	Rising ground and nearby homes in Canisbay contain views to the north and focus the outlook towards the southwest from this local road at the southern edge of Canisbay. The Hill of Warse and homes at Upper Gills are seen forming the skyline in the middle ground. Continuing along the road to where views open up to the southeast, turbines at Slickly are likely to be seen along the skyline.	The proposed Development would be mostly seen as blades above the skyline to the left of the houses. They would be a new feature in the view given the limited visibility of existing and consented windfarms in this location.	None of the windfarms in planning would be visible from this location.
29 - East Mey (new)	Views from the A836 as it passes through East Mey are very open, with occasional homes set within open pasture divided by wire fences. The land gently rises to the north and falls to the south, Lochend, Stroupster and Slickly windfarms are seen along the skyline to the south of the road.	The proposed Development would be seen along the skyline in front of Lochend Windfarm and extending across to the left, leaving a small gap to Slickly Windfarm. The turbines would appear markedly larger/closer than the existing and consented wind farms and some of the towers would be partly screened by landform and forestry, though the closest turbine would be at the edge of the forestry after felling to facilitate the proposed peatland restoration.	The windfarms in planning would be seen as distant additions to existing and consented windfarms. Effects arising from the proposed Development would remain unchanged in all cumulative development scenarios.