

Appendix 7 Effects less than Moderate

Introduction

1. Effects which are Moderate or greater (i.e. those which are significant and just below the threshold of significance) are reported in the Updated Cumulative LVIA Report. Where effects on receptors are judged to be of lesser importance (Moderate/minor or lower) they are described below.

Landscape Character

LCT 134 Sweeping Moorland and Flows / CT5 Dunnet Interior

2. As shown by Figure 7.5a, this unit of the LCT is located 7.5 km to the northwest and is of the same character type as the host LCT unit considered at paragraphs 96-101 of the Updated Cumulative LVIA report. The area is a very small pocket of the character type on a peninsula and does not exhibit the large scale and remoteness to the same degree as other units of the character type. This unit of the LCT is close to settlement to the south and visitors pass through on the local road visiting the Special Landscape Area and lighthouse at Dunnet Head.
3. As set out within the analysis in Appendix 5, this unit of the LCT is judged to be of Regional value, taking into account that most of the unit is included within a Special Landscape Area; its recognition as the most northerly point on the UK mainland and the presence of the moorland forming part of a locally distinctive landmark alongside the cliffs of Dunnet Head. Susceptibility is judged to be High/medium – slightly lower than the rating of '1' indicated within the OWESG – with the openness, simple landcover and gentle landform of the moorland indicating lower susceptibility, whilst other factors indicate higher susceptibility. Considering value and susceptibility together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
4. Effects on this unit of the LCT would mostly consist of small scale changes to views as a result of views inland towards the turbines from more elevated locations within the LCT, as illustrated by Figure 7.5a and Viewpoint 4. A small area of Medium/small changes to views would arise at the southeast corner of the unit as illustrated by Figure 7.5a and Viewpoint 27. The OWESG identifies all views except those southeast towards the Site as being important to this unit of the LCT, and the views towards the Site already include windfarms seen beyond and in front of the proposed Development. The scale of change to landscape character would be of Negligible for a Wide extent of the LCT. The magnitude of change would be Negligible and effects would be Minimal, Neutral and not significant.

LCT 143 Farmed Lowland Plain / CT9 North Caithness

5. As shown by Figure 7.5a, this LCT wraps around the unit of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows character type that hosts the proposed Development to the north, west and south, with a small arm of the LCT extending to within 0.6 km north of the turbines and the larger area of the LCT within 1.2 km to the west. The control compound, its access track and the edge of the solar area would be located along the boundary between this character type and LCT 134, and part of the proposed upgraded existing access track would be within this LCT.
6. Key characteristics of the LCT are described within the National Landscape Character Assessment as:
 - *"A generally open, low-lying plain, gently undulating to form shallow broad valleys, which are often filled with lochs and mosses, and subtle low ridges.*
 - *Occasional smooth hills rise above the more low-lying plain forming local landmarks.*
 - *The broad and shallow valley of the River Wick forming the largest of a series of valleys generally aligned south-east/north-west across the plain.*
 - *Agriculture the predominant land cover.*
 - *More intensively managed farmland near the coast around Thurso and Wick, and close to Loch Watten.*
 - *Distinctive Caithness flagstone fences in some parts, creating low, sharp edges to fields.*
 - *Sparse woodland, mainly comprising small angular coniferous plantations planted for shelter on farms.*

- *Larger conifer woodlands located at the transition with the Sweeping Moorland and Flows standing out where they are planted on poorer wetter ground on low ridges.*
 - *Farm buildings and houses forming focal points within the landscape.*
 - *Occasional loose clusters of croft houses located on more marginal upper slopes and near the coast.*
 - *A number of historic environment features, including conspicuous castles, Baronial mansions and tall 'Lairds' houses, usually with broadleaf shelter woods planted around them.*
 - *Roads reinforce the settlement pattern, often following the field and property boundaries, running straight and then swinging around sharp corners.*
 - *A number of large settlements, including the towns of Thurso and Wick, situated on the coast, as well as several smaller settlements.*
 - *Many historic features, including brochs and cairns, dotted across farmland and situated on hills within, or adjacent to, this area.*
 - *Small groups of large wind turbines sited on some of the low ridges and hills and prominent visibility of larger wind farms in adjacent Landscape Character Types.*
 - *Extensive views due to the openness of the landscape, and the clarity of northern air and light.*
 - *Dramatic views from the northern part of this landscape to Dunnet Head and the distant Orkney islands, and views from the A9 on the western edge of this landscape of the Lone Mountains of Movern and Scaraben seen across the low-lying Sweeping Moorland and Flows."*
7. In the area north of the Site, the differences between this landscape type and the similar and adjacent Coastal Crofts and Small Farms are subtle and mainly expressed through a slightly increased prevalence of vegetation and settlement and a greater intervisibility with the sweeping moorland within this LCT, as is shown by Figure 7.5a, due to landform sloping gently inland from high points at Hill of Rattar and Mey Hill.
 8. As set out within the analysis in Appendix 5, the LCT is judged to be of Community value, taking account of the heritage assets, natural heritage and recreational use associated with the North Coast 500 route providing some indication of increased value. Susceptibility is judged to be Medium – lower than the rating of '1' indicated within the OWESG – with most factors indicating low or medium susceptibility and only the open views both inland and to the sea indicating higher susceptibility. Considering value and susceptibility together, sensitivity is judged to be Medium/low.
 9. Effects on the LCT would consist primarily of changes to views as a result of views towards the turbines. In the areas of visibility within 5 km (see Figure 7.5a) changes to views would range between Large and Medium scale as illustrated by Viewpoints 8, 11, 25 and 26. Changes to character in this Localised extent of the LCT would be Medium/small, with changes to character in the areas to the west moderated by the intervening presence of Lochend Windfarm, and changes to the north being moderated by more limited visibility. An area of small scale changes to character would also arise where there are medium/small changes to views 5-7 km to the west as illustrated by Viewpoints 22 and 27. In this Localised extent of the LCT visibility of existing windfarms is relatively limited and the proposed Development would be a noticeable change. Across the main body of this extensive LCT, increasing distance and the presence of nearer and or more visible windfarms would mean that changes to character would be Negligible.
 10. Considered together, these changes would be Medium/small scale across a Localised extent of the LCT and Small scale for a Localised extent of the LCT resulting in a Small magnitude of change. Effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.

LCT 144 Coastal Crofts and Small Farms / CT1 Dunnet to Brough

11. This unit of the LCT is of the same character type as that described at paragraphs 102-105 of the Updated Cumulative LVIA report and as shown by Figure 7.5a is a small area extending between Dunnet Bay and Brough located 6.1 km to the northwest. As set out at paragraph 108 of the Updated Cumulative LVIA Report, this LCT is judged to be of Medium sensitivity.

12. Effects on this unit of the LCT would consist of widespread Medium/small scale changes to views as illustrated by Viewpoint 27 at West Dunnet and Figure 7.5a. The proposed Development would be more visible than the existing and consented windfarms, but would still appear distant, resulting in Small changes to character across a Wide extent of this unit of the LCT. The magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and Not significant.

LCT 141 High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays / CT8 Dunnet Head and Duncansby Head)

13. As shown by Figure 7.5a, this LCT comprises two discrete units which are located 8.6 km to the northwest and 8.6 km to the northeast of the proposed turbines.
14. Key characteristics of the LCT are described within the National Landscape Character Assessment as:
- *“Duncansby Head, with high, fissured and blocky cliffs, jagged asymmetric rock stacks, arches and geos.*
 - *Dunnet Head, with towering cliffs edged by low rocky reefs.*
 - *Occasional inlets and coves, often with very deep and sheltered waters, and sometimes containing tiny harbours tucked between cliffs and not readily visible from the main coast road and settlement.*
 - *Harbours on the east Caithness coast which have a strong association with settlements which are perched above the cliff.*
 - *Moorland largely abutting this Landscape Character Type which is particularly open and sweeping to the east and north within Caithness.*
 - *The most prominent and exposed headlands marked by lighthouses.*
 - *Exhilarating experience of being precariously perched upon a high edge on the cliff tops, offering open elevated views and a perception of huge space.*
 - *Views of turbulent currents at the juncture of the Pentland Firth and North Sea, heightening the sense of wildness experienced from the headland.*
 - *The absence of development along the remote stretches of coast and a strong sense of naturalness creating a wild landscape character.”*
15. As set out within the analysis in Appendix 5, the LCT is judged to be of Regional value, with both areas forming the core of Special Landscape Areas. Susceptibility is judged to be High/medium – slightly lower than the rating of ‘1’ indicated within the OWESG – with landform and views, including views towards the cliffs from the islands and ferry routes indicating higher susceptibility and other factors indicating lower susceptibility. Considering value and susceptibility together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
16. Effects on the LCT would consist of changes to views as a result of distant visibility of the turbines as illustrated by Viewpoints 4 and 6. In both cases an Intermediate extent of the LCT units would be affected; as although the areas of visibility are not extensive, the visibility coincides with key visitor locations within the LCT. In the areas of visibility, the proposed Development would be seen alongside existing windfarms, and the small scale changes to views would give rise to Negligible scale changes to character.
17. For each area of the LCT there would be a Negligible magnitude of change. Effects would be Minimal, Neutral and not significant.

Visual receptors

Lyth and Howe (4.8 km, S)

18. Lyth is located around a crossroads to the south of the Site, and Howe to the southeast of Lyth along the local road as it continues towards the coast. The dispersed settlements are located on the north side of a shallow valley. The local residents and visitors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views, and views from this area are judged to be of Community value. Considering these two factors together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
19. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, visibility of the proposed Development would be largely confined to the western end of the settlement. Tall roadside hedgerows are also a notable feature of this area, and further limit views to

occasional open vistas to the north where there are gaps in the hedges. As shown by Viewpoint 13 in the EIA Report, the proposed Development would be seen in the moorland and forestry beyond the nearby rolling farmland. It would be seen adjacent to Lochend Windfarm, and well separated from the closer turbines at Slickly, with a similar apparent scale to the turbines at Stroupster. The scale of change to views would be Medium for a Limited extent of the settlement. The magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.

Freswick, Tofts and Skirza (6.5 km, E)

20. Freswick and Tofts are located along the A99 with Skirza further to the east near Freswick Bay. The homes are widely spaced and vegetation is limited to trees and shrubs within gardens and around properties. The local residents and visitors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views, and views from this area are judged to be of Community value. Considering these two factors together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
21. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, visibility of the proposed Development would be relatively widespread in Freswick, Tofts and the eastern edge of Skirza, with views from the more elevated locations towards the north of Tofts and west of Skirza being similar to, but less elevated than, those shown for Viewpoint 10 and changes to views would be Medium/small scale for this Localised extent of the settlements. Further south, the turbines would be seen more immediately to the right of the closer turbines at Stroupster and changes to views would be Small scale for an Intermediate extent of the settlements. Visibility from Skirza would be confined to the western edge, with no visibility from the remainder of the settlement as shown by Figure 7.2. Considering these changes together, the magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.

John O'Groats (7 km, NE)

22. John O'Groats is a small settlement near Duncansby Head. The local residents and visitors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views, and views from this area are judged to be of Community value. Considering these two factors together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
23. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, a group of hills inland between Hill of Warse and Warth Hill screen views towards the Site such that typically only blade tips of the proposed Development would be seen from the settlement, with some small areas of greater visibility where up to two turbines may be visible from below hub height, seen through gaps between the hills forming the skyline. The scale of change to views would be Small for a Localised extent of and the magnitude of change would be Small/negligible. Effects would be Minor, adverse and not significant.

Bower (7.2 km, SW)

24. Bower is a small dispersed settlement on the B876 and is situated on the south side of a shallow valley. The local residents and visitors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views, and views from this area are judged to be of Community value. Considering these two factors together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
25. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, views towards the Site increase further south within the settlement, as elevation increases. Viewpoint 12 illustrates views from the more elevated areas of the settlement, showing that the turbines would be seen on the moorland skyline beyond the open undulating pasture seen in the foreground and middle ground. The proposed Development would be seen as part of a group, forming a cluster of a similar scale and appearance to the turbines at Stroupster and Slickly which are well separated to the right. The scale of change to views would be Small for a Wide extent of the settlement. The magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, adverse and not significant.

Castletown (8.5 km, W)

26. Castletown is a nucleated settlement located on the A836 to the south of Dunnet Bay. The local residents and visitors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views, and views from this area are judged to be of Community value. Considering these two factors together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
27. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, views of the proposed Development from within Castletown would be largely screened by surrounding woodland and buildings. A small area of visibility is indicated along Harbour Road at

the northwest edge of the settlement. The stretch of road closest to the houses has a roadside hedge which limits views, but further north a very short stretch of the road has more open views and the proposed Development would be seen looking out over the nearby open field on the distant skyline seen above the houses and woodland at the edge of the town. Views of the proposed Development are also likely to be available from nearby locations along Castlehill Avenue, Core Path CA 03.01 (Battery Walk) which runs along the coastline westwards before connecting into the A836; and from the south end of Harland Road. The composition of the turbines would be very similar to those illustrated for nearby Viewpoint 22, with the proposed Development seen behind and appearing larger than Lochend windfarm and seen to the left of more distant blades of Stroupster and Slickly. Effects in this very Limited extent of the settlement would be Medium/small scale and the magnitude of change would be Small/Negligible. Effects would be Minor, Adverse and not significant.

Beaches between Murkle Bay and Castletown (8.5 km, W)

28. Visitors to the sandy beach at Murkle Bay and the rocky beaches between Castletown and Murkle Bay would have a High susceptibility to changes to views and the views in this location would be of Community value. Taking these together, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.
29. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, there would be visibility of the proposed Development from these beaches where it would be seen looking east along the coast. From locations closer to the low tide line; Murkle Bay and the core path connecting Murkle Bay to West Murkle the views would be more open, whereas from the tops of the rocky beaches above the high tide line views would sometimes be screened by nearby higher ground. As illustrated by nearby Viewpoint 22, the turbines would be seen behind those at Lochend. Changes to views in this area would be Small scale with distance and would affect a Wide extent of the receptor group. The magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.

A99 (6.5 km, E)

30. The A99 runs north-south along the east coast from John O' Groats, connecting into the A9 at Latheron. Road users include people travelling within and beyond the local area who would have a Medium susceptibility to changes to views from this main road route. The route within 12 km of the turbines between John O'Groats to Ackergill Links (where non-negligible changes to views may be experienced as set out at paragraph 91 of the Updated Cumulative LVIA report) does not pass through any designated areas and views are judged to be of Community value. Considering value and susceptibility together, sensitivity is judged to be Medium.
31. For southbound route users, there would be views of blade tips, and sometimes up to two hubs as they head through and south of John O'Groats. These would be most noticeable where the route turns southwest towards the site as the road leaves John O'Groats. There would be a brief gap in visibility as the route rounds Warth Hill, before views open up around the south side of the hill (Viewpoint 10) and the proposed Development would be seen to the right with Slickly and Stroupster seen ahead of the direction of travel. The influence of the proposed Development would decrease heading further south as Stroupster is seen closer and the proposed Development would be increasingly behind the direction of travel. Changes to views would be Small scale near John O'Groats, and Medium/small to Small scale between Warth Hill and Freswick, affecting a Localised extent of the route.
32. For northbound route users, the first views of the proposed Development would be distant and barely noticeable views of blade tips seen beyond the turbines at Stroupster and Slickly as illustrated by Viewpoint 14 at Keiss, where the scale of change to views would be Negligible. The first more open view would be from Hill of Harley just south of Freswick where changes to views would also be Negligible, with brief glimpsed views of the proposed Development seen beyond close and open views of Stroupster and Slickly. Passing through Freswick and Tofts, there would be Small and Medium/small changes to views for a Limited extent of the route before the road turns northeast as it ascends Warth Hill. Beyond Warth hill the proposed Development would be behind the direction of travel.
33. Considering these changes to views together, the magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, adverse and not significant.

Local road users between 5-12 km

34. This receptor group encompasses local road users outside of settlements, including travellers on the B876; B855 and the local road network southwest and west of Castletown. Users of these routes would mostly be local residents and would have a Medium susceptibility to changes to views from these routes. Except for the short stretch of the B855 which lies within the Dunnet Head SLA, views from these routes do not have scenic value and are judged to be of Community value. Considering susceptibility and value together, sensitivity is judged to be Medium.
35. As shown by Figure 7.2, visibility from local roads would be concentrated primarily within 8 km of the proposed turbine locations. The main areas of wider visibility would be from the B876 near Killimster, where effects would be Negligible as set out at paragraph 112 of the Updated Cumulative LVIA report; and the network of local roads to the southwest and west of Castletown, where effects would be Small scale. Effects on the B855 would consist of Small and Medium/small changes to views for road users heading back inland from Dunnet Head towards the A836, as illustrated by Viewpoints 4 and 27. Effects for road users on the B876 would consist of a Small scale changes to views as a result of seeing the turbines to one side of the direction of travel for approximately 3 km of the route southeast of Bower as illustrated by Viewpoint 12. Beyond this to the southeast effects would reduce to Negligible as a result of intervening turbines at Slickly.
36. For routes between 5-12 km, effects would be Medium/small scale for a Limited extent of the B855 and Small scale for a Localised extent of the road network. The magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.

John O'Groats to Burwick, South Ronaldsay ferry (8 km, NE)

37. Ferry users on this route between the north coast and Orkney would include local residents and tourists who, in good weather conditions, would be enjoying the views on this short crossing which takes around 40 minutes, sailing twice a day in summer. They would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Community value and High/medium sensitivity.
38. As illustrated by Figure 7.2, visibility of the turbines would reduce closer to John O'Groats as a result of screening by landform, but from the rest of the route there would be open views of the proposed Development on the mainland skyline. The effects would be Small scale in the closest views, beyond approximately 12 km (an Intermediate extent of the route) effects would be Negligible as illustrated by Viewpoint 2.
39. Considering these changes to views from the route and the near continuous views of the proposed Development, the magnitude of change would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.