

FILE NOTE

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WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT AT FARR – PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR A SECTION 36 VARIATION

1. Introduction

Ventient Energy are currently considering applying for a section 36 variation to the relevant condition of the existing planning permission for Farr Wind Farm, near Inverness, within the Kyllachy Estate (Ref: 02/00871/S36IN). Farr Wind Farm was granted consent on 5 October 2004 and construction of the wind farm began in April 2005 with the last turbine erected on 13 March 2006. A section 36 application would allow the continuation of its use rather than the planned decommissioning after the consented 25 years. Farr comprises 40 turbines with a hub height of 60m and blade length of 40m with a tip height of 101m and no changes to existing turbines or infrastructure are proposed.

A desk based review of Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual Assessment of the Farr Wind Farm Environmental Statement (ES) (hereinafter referred to as the '2002 ES') prepared by Envirospire and National Wind Power in 2002¹, followed by a desk based review of the wider study area, was undertaken by Ross Allan, Associate Director, Landscape at RSK to ascertain whether the site and study area had undergone any significant changes since the original planning application. The desk based review included analysis of aerial imagery and a review of relevant landscape policy and guidance pertinent to the landscape and visual baseline.

The review also identifies wind farms in the study area which have been consented but not yet constructed. In particular, the review includes a specific analysis of potential cumulative effects reported in Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Assessment of the Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm ES 2013 (undertaken for the proposed Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm and hereinafter referred to as the '2013 ES'). Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm is a consented scheme under construction immediately to the south of Farr Wind Farm comprising of 20 wind turbines each with a maximum tip height of 110m.

Since the 2002 ES was published, the following relevant guidance and advice has been published and is current:

- Cairngorms National Park Authority. 2009. *Landscape Character Assessment*;

¹ Farr Wind Farm Environmental Statement, Volume 2, Written Statement and Volume 3 Figures.

- Landscape Institute. 2019. *Visual representation of Development Proposals*;
- Landscape and Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. 2019. *Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland*;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. 2017. *Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas – Technical Guidance*;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. 2017. *Siting and Designing Wind farms in the Landscape Version 3a*;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. 2017. *Visual Representation of Wind Farms Version 2.2*;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. 2012. *Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments*;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. 2010. *The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 374 (iBids and Project No 648)*;
- The Highland Council. 2017. *Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal: Black Isle, Surrounding Hills, Moray Firth Coast and Caithness*;
- The Highland Council. 2016. *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments*;
- The Highland Council. 2016. *Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance*; and
- The Highland Council. 2011. *Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas*.

The review therefore also takes account of this established/current guidance and advice and has been split into three main sections below. The first provides a summary of the main conclusions of the LVIA within the Farr Wind Farm ES. The second section provides an overview of the changes known to have occurred since the Farr Wind Farm ES assessment was completed and development permission secured. Sections 1 and 2 provide the basis upon which an appraisal of the likely effects of extending the operation life of the wind farm has been completed and reported in Section 3.

2. Farr Wind Farm 2002 Landscape and Visual Assessment

The 2002 ES uses the following published landscape character assessments published by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH):

- Richards, J. 1999. *Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 114*;
- Fletcher, S. 1998. *Inner Moray Firth Landscape Character Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 90*;
- Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership, 1998. *Moray and Nairn Landscape Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 101*; and
- Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership, 1996. *Cairngorms Landscape Assessment. Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 75*.

Farr Wind Farm is in the Rolling Uplands Landscape Character Type (LCT) and adjacent to the Farmed Straths LCT. These two LCT are described in detail in the 2002 ES with Rolling Uplands being assessed

as High-medium sensitivity to change and Farmed Straths as Medium sensitivity. The potential effects of Farr Wind Farm on landscape character within the 25km LVIA study area are assessed using 16 viewpoints. Of these 16 viewpoints, six are in the Rolling Upland LCT and four are in the Farmed Strath LCT.

The 2002 ES identifies the following specific landscape characteristics of Rolling Uplands LCT in the immediate vicinity of the wind farm site:

- *'This landscape possesses a simple visual composition, its main elements being the sky, gently rounded summits and extensive moorland cover.*
- *Occasional boulders dot upper hill slopes and tops and disrupt the smooth cover of heather and grass. Areas of muir burn and haggling occur within some parts of moorland, the former attracting attention on account of its geometric strip pattern. Isolated trees and scrubby juniper occur in glens and on some hillsides.*
- *Hills are more craggy topped to the west of the site, with narrow rocky gorges cutting through and allowing slot views of distant mountain summits.*
- *The Allt Tarsuinn cuts a deep and narrow sheer sided glen to the south-west of the site, flowing through Glen Kyllachy to the River Findhorn in Strathdearn. This grassy-banked winding glen is a striking feature in views from the minor public road between Farr and Garbole and leads the eye up to the smoothly rounded hill tops.*
- *A single track road is aligned over the hills immediately to the west of the site, linking Strathdearn with Strathnairn. An overhead powerline is aligned close to this road and is a highly visible feature on account of the openness of the hills.*
- *Extensive coniferous plantations occur on the fringes of this type as it borders Strathnairn, Strathdearn and the A9 corridor. Many of these are currently in the process of restructuring with recently felled areas appearing raw and contrasting with the smooth texture of adjacent moorland.*
- *The area of the Rolling Uplands in the vicinity of the site is uninhabited, this combined with the extensiveness of the hills and with few roads, give a sense of remoteness. The site lies on the eastern fringes of the Rolling Uplands where although 'Wildland' qualities of remoteness and lack of built artefacts are evident (and striking in relation to the area's proximity to the A9 corridor), they are diminished to some extent by the pylon line and nearby forestry.'*

The 2002 ES identifies the following specific landscape characteristics of Farmed Straths LCT:

Strathnairn

- *'Within Strathnairn, landscape character changes from east to west. Towards its eastern end and adjacent to the A9 corridor, industry is evident in the extensive quarrying and forestry operations being carried out at Meall Mor. Towards the middle of the strath at Inverarnie, the flat valley floor becomes more undulating and broken by glacial deposits and flanking slopes are shallower.*
- *Further to the west in the Farr area, estate policies and buildings are particularly evident and include avenues of lime, stone walls – fringed at the base with ferns, parkland and extensive areas of*

rhododendron. This part of the strath has an intimate scale created by the undulating valley floor and woodland.

- *Upper Stathnairn opens out into a broad 'U' shaped valley and merges with Farmed and Wooded Foothills where the strath floor becomes less open and flat being broken by knolls and dominated by a matrix of woodlands and small undulating fields which diminish the contrast between the strath floor and flanking hill slopes.*
- *The River Nairn is edged by birch woodland and is generally a visually insignificant feature in views from the road.*
- *This is a relatively well-settled strath with a higher proportion of newer housing than Strathdearn. Housing tends to be aligned along roads and at junctions at the transition between the strath floor and hill slopes.*
- *Isolated farms and houses are often set against forest edges on lower and mid hill slopes with square pastures to the front.*
- *The forests of Meall Mor and Farr comprise extensive stands of commercial conifers and form a dark backdrop on the southern hill slopes of Strathnairn.'*

Strathdearn

- *'Strathdearn has a more remote character than Strathnairn due to its sparser population and lack of through roads to major settlements.*
- *The meandering River Findhorn is a focus within the open farmland within the broad strath floor. Pasture on the valley floor is interspersed with rush infested ground. Occasional Scots pine shelterbelts cross the floor, disrupting the openness.*
- *Birch woodlands are extensive on the southern hill slopes of the strath, hill tops are open, covered with heather moorland. Coniferous plantations are a prominent feature further up the valley and displace farmland, extending onto an increasingly constricted strath floor as it merges with the Rolling Uplands.*
- *The architectural integrity of estate buildings is a distinctive feature of Strathdearn. Cottages, farmsteads and shooting lodges are generally located either side of the strath floor on lower hill slopes, a few extend on the valley floor itself. Many of these buildings are traditional in style with grey painted timber detailing. Large houses set within wooded, and sometimes ornamental, grounds are located either side of the strath.'*

The 2002 ES assessed the effects on Rolling Uplands LCT as significant in a small part of the LCT and would '*...occur in an area where the influence of adjacent forestry and communications is apparent.*'

The ES concluded that effects on Farmed Straths LCT would be to '*...diminish the present contrast between the complex patterns and settlement of this type and the openness, simplicity and scale of the Rolling Uplands to some extent.*' However, the effects on landscape character would not be significant.

Regarding effects on visual amenity, the 2002 ES assessed effects on four viewpoints within 6km of Farr Wind Farm as being significant. Two of the viewpoints were used to represent views from a minor road to

the west of the site and two viewpoints were used to represent walkers using hill land to the south of Strathdearn and residents in the strath and residents and motorists to the west of the village of Farr.

Cumulative effects of Farr with the existing Novar Wind Farm and the proposed Dunmaglass wind farm were assessed. The cumulative assessment indicated that significant cumulative effects on landscape and visual amenity would occur at a single viewpoint: Viewpoint 16, Carn Sgulan which is 22.5km to the south.

Overall, the 2002 ES concluded that significant effects on landscape and visual amenity would occur within a 6.1km radius of Farr Wind Farm and it is on that basis that it was subsequently consented.

3. Changes to the Landscape and Visual Baseline and Guidance Since 2002

Key changes that have occurred since the publication of the 2002 ES and subsequent consenting of the Farr Wind Farm are detailed below.

Wind farm developments

The main changes to the landscape and visual baseline with respect to wind farm development in the 25km LVIA study area used in the 2002 ES are:

- Glen Kyllachy wind farm (consented in 2019) which is under construction 0.5km to the south of Farr Wind Farm comprising of 20 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 110m;
- Operational (since 2016) Moy wind farm 7.5km to the northeast comprising of 20 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 125m;
- Operational (since 2017) Dunmaglass wind farm 11km to the southwest comprising of 33 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 117.5m;
- Operational (since 2017) Tom nan Clach wind farm 13km to the northeast comprising of 13 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 125m;
- Operational (since 2016) Corriegarth wind farm 20km to the southwest comprising of 23 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 119m;
- Consented in 2017 but not constructed Aberarder wind farm 10km to the southwest comprising of 12 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 130m; and
- Consented in 2017 but not constructed Cairn Dhuie wind farm 25km to the northeast comprising of 20 No. wind turbines each with a tip height of 110m.²

Landscape Designations

In 2009, the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) published the *Cairngorms National Park Landscape Character Assessment* which is coincident with the area covered by the 1996 Cairngorms

² Wind farm data sourced from The Highland Council, Highland Wind Turbine Mapping – Jan 2020 <https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5ec04b13a9b049f798cadbd5055f1787> and The Highland Council planning portal [accessed 18/03/2020].

Landscape Assessment. The Cairngorms National Park was established in September 2003. The 2002 ES does not include an assessment of the potential effects of Farr Wind Farm on the National Park.

In 2010, SNH published a description of the special qualities of each National Scenic Area (NSA) in Scotland³. The nearest NSA to Farr Wind Farm is The Cairngorm Mountains NSA approximately 22km to the southeast which is coincident with the Cairngorms National Park. The 2002 ES includes a viewpoint (Viewpoint 3: Ptarmigan Station, Cairngorm) in The Cairngorm Mountains NSA.

In 2011, The Highland Council (THC) undertook a review of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) and prepared descriptions of citations for each of the 27 SLA in THC administrative area which are described in *Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas*. The nearest SLA to Farr Wind Farm is Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA approximately 4.5km to the west. Drynan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA is 7km to the north-east and 8km to the east. The 2002 ES does not include an assessment of the potential effects of Farr Wind Farm on SLAs.

In 2014 SNH published a map of 42 Wild Land Areas (WLA) and in 2017 published descriptions of each WLA. The nearest WLA to Farr Wind Farm is WLA 20 Monadhliath which is approximately 12km to the south. The 2002 ES does not include an assessment of the potential effects of Farr Wind Farm on WLA.

In summary, and taking account of the above, the key landscape designations within the 25km LVIA study area for Farr Wind Farm are:

- The Cairngorm Mountains NSA approximately 22km to the south-east;
- The Cairngorms National Park although not solely designated for landscape reasons is 8km to the southeast;
- A number of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL) of which Leys Castle GDL is the nearest approximately 12km to the north-west;
- Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA approximately 4.5km to the west;
- Drynan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA 7km to the north-east and 8km to the east which is coincident with the Cairngorms National Park; and
- Wild Land Area 20 Monadhliath which is approximately 12km to the south. Wild land areas are not a landscape designation although they are identified by SNH as being of national importance.

Landscape Character

The four SNH landscape character publications used in the 2002 ES have been updated by *Landscape Character Assessment in Scotland* in 2019 which was a review of all landscape character assessments published by SNH at the level of Landscape Character Types.

³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 374 (iBids and Project No 648).

Farr Wind Farm is situated in the Rolling Uplands LCT as identified in the 1999 Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment which is referred to as LCT 221 Rolling Uplands – Inverness in the 2019 update. The 2019 description of key characteristics states there are *'few signs of active management in the interiors, creating a strong perception of remoteness, although this is affected by a number of large wind farm development.'* The landscape character description also refers to *'a number of large wind farm developments in this Landscape Character Type, in the southern and western fringes of the Monadhliath mountains above Loch Ness and near Moy and Farr'* which reduce the perception of remoteness.

The presence of wind energy development is the main difference between the 1999 description of landscape character and the 2019 update.

The Farmed Strath LCT identified in the 1999 Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment is approximately 3.5km to the north-west of Farr Wind Farm. It is referred to as LCT 227 Farmed Strath – Inverness in the 2019 update. The 2019 description of key characteristics states there is *'and overall sense of enclosure, which directs distant views along the strath and allows uninterrupted views of the flanking hill slopes.'* The 2019 update does not mention wind farms in the Monadhliath or to the north-east of the A9 at Moy and Tom nan Clach. The enclosed character of LCT 227 Farmed Strath and the location of Farr Wind Farm and other wind energy development on the higher plateau of LCT221 Rolling Upland means there is limited visibility of Farr Wind Farm from the strath floor and sides.

There is no notable change to baseline landscape character of LCT 227 Farmed Strath.

Visual Amenity

Farr Wind Farm is situated in a rural area of upland character at a height of between 500-550m AOD. The upland area is largely uninhabited, and the majority of residential properties, settlements and roads are in the lower lying straths to the north, west and east of Farr Wind Farm. Residents and the majority of road users, with the exception of the minor road 1.1km to the west, experience longer distance views of Farr Wind Farm. It is a noticeable feature in existing views from the wider area although not an overbearing or dominating influence on views experienced by residents and the majority of road users. The upland area is used for recreation by walkers and cyclists and Farr Wind Farm is a very noticeable feature in short range views receding in scale in longer distance views where the large scale Rolling Uplands landscape is the defining feature in views.

The 2002 ES includes viewpoints representative of sensitive visual receptors that include residents, road users, walkers and tourists. The main change to the visual baseline since 2002 is the presence of the operational wind farms listed earlier in this File Note. With regard to new visual receptors, there are adopted Core Paths in Strathnairn to the northwest and at Tomatin in the east in addition to National Cycle Network (NCN) route 7 which runs parallel to the A9. For the purposes of this assessment it is RSK's view that the assessment of receptors in Strathnairn, at Tomatin and using the A9 in the 2002 ES and in the 2013 ES have captured the likely effects on new visual receptors identified above both singly and cumulatively.

Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance

The Highland Council published the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) in 2016 which included a sensitivity study of landscape character in the Loch Ness area followed by a sensitivity study for the Black Isle and surrounding Hills, Moray Firth Coast and Caithness in 2017. The OWESG sets out how THC will manage onshore wind energy development proposals in line with the Town and Country Planning Act 1997 as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. The OWESG is part of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) supplementing key principles set out in policies of the HwLDP and is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Farr Wind Farm has been operational since 2006 and is part of the landscape baseline on which the OWESG is based. Judgements on sensitivity and the guidance on siting and design in the OWESG take into account the presence of Farr Wind Farm in the landscape. For the purposes of this assessment Moy, Dunmaglass, Tom nan Clach and Corriegarh wind farms, which are all operational, form part of the landscape baseline. Glen Kyllachy wind farm is under construction and is anticipated to be operational in late 2021. It forms part of the future baseline and is a key consideration in this assessment.

Farr Wind Farm is situated in Landscape Character Area 6 or LN6: Monadhliath ridge and tops, Rolling Uplands as identified in the OWESG. LN6 is described in the OWESG as *'the most extensive landscape in the Study Area. External views are mostly from elevated viewpoints north of Loch Ness where it presents an multi-layered receding landscape, giving an impression of vast extent. From within the LCA itself views are varied in character according to elevation.'*

The OWESG identifies key views of the LCA are obtained from Loch Ness West including Loch End, Aldourie Castle GDL, Doros Beach and An Torr on Loch Ness. The south western part only of LN6 is important to the integrity of these views. Key views are obtained from the Great Glen from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, a hill with a height of 699m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) approximately 27km to the southwest of Farr Wind Farm. The OWESG indicates that while Rolling Uplands are highly visible from Meall Fuar-mhonaidh, they do not form part of the main direction of views. Key routes identified in the OWESG are the B862 Stratherrick and the A9 from which there are long views towards existing wind farm developments within the LCA travelling south from Tore which is approximately 25km to the northwest of Farr Wind Farm.

The OWESG does not identify any gateways relevant to LN6.

The OWESG evaluates the sensitivity of LN6 as slightly higher than Rolling Uplands in general *'in recognition of existing density of (wind farm) development.'* The pattern of development is described as:

- *'Large wind farms set 2.5-3km back from Rolling Uplands boundary with Farmed Straths LCAs;*
- *Generally the layout is deeper in the axis perpendicular to the Great Glen than the parallel axis;*
- *Tend to be contained within shallow 'bowls' in the landscape which are visible from within the LCA but not in more distant views; and*
- *Earlier developments appear at a regular spacing of 7-10km edge to edge. More recent applications/scoping reduce this spacing.'*

Regarding the potential for wind energy development, the OWESG states there is limited scope for additional large turbines within the existing pattern and gives the following guidance:

Turbines should:

- *'Not breach skyline when viewed from north side of Loch Ness.*
- *Be set back from Key Routes*
- *Preserve mitigation established by current schemes*
- *Maintain the landscape setting of each existing scheme.*
- *Avoid coalescence with current positioning*
- *Respect spacing and scale of existing development pattern.*

Development of turbines (all scales) in other locations within the LCA should be avoided to ensure that the scale of the landform is maintained and that perspective - when viewed across the loch in particular - is not adversely affected.'

The summary of key findings of the landscape and visual sensitivity appraisal concludes that:

'The remaining capacity for larger scale development is limited. The study identifies that any remaining capacity for this scale of development should be focused around existing clusters that are generally found in rolling uplands, rugged massif and rocky moorland Landscape Character Types, but only where these are well designed, integrated into the existing pattern of development and do not undo the landscape and visual mitigation agreed for existing schemes. These limitations will help to limit any additional cumulative effect and increase the potential for future development to share existing site infrastructure.'

The OWESG indicates that Farr Wind Farm occupies an area that is both in 'Group 2: Areas of significant protection' and 'Group 3 Areas with potential for wind farm development', as shown on the Spatial Framework for Onshore Wind Energy map. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Table 1 defines Group 2 Areas as areas in which 'wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.' SPP defines Group 3 Areas as areas in which 'wind farms are likely to be acceptable, subject to detailed consideration against identified policy criteria.'

4. RSK's Assessment of Effects of the Proposed Extension of Life

This section describes an assessment of an extension of life of the existing Farr Wind Farm from 25 years to 35 years meaning it would be operational until 2040. Farr Wind Farm would not result in the installation of any additional wind turbines. The existing wind turbines would remain at their current positions and height. The existing tracks and ancillary development would remain unaltered and would be subject to maintenance and repair during the operational period of Farr Wind Farm.

The main effect of the ten year extension of life of Farr Wind Farm would be to extend the duration of effects on landscape and visual resources.

Appraisal Against OWESG Criteria

The OWESG provides a list of ten criteria that set out the key landscape and visual aspects that THC will use as a framework for assessing proposals for wind farm development. The criteria do not set absolute requirements but provide information on key constraints. THC expect applicants to site and design wind farms to ‘avoid significant adverse impacts in order that they reflect the criteria.’ Table 1 describes an appraisal of Farr Wind Farm against the 10 criteria. The appraisal takes into account the current baseline of operational wind farm development and a future baseline that would include an operational Glen Kyllachy wind farm which is currently under construction.

Table 1: Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Against OWESG Criteria

| Criterion 1 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
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| Relationship between Settlements/ Key locations and wider landscape respected. | The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development | It is an existing wind farm set back from settlements and key locations in a large scale landscape. Moy and Tom nan Clach wind farms are also set back and the perception of encirclement is not apparent. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements/ Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes. | Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm adds to Farr Wind Farm resulting in concentration of development in one place rather than extending the influence of wind farm development more widely |
| Criterion 2 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
| Key Gateway locations and routes are respected | The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes. | No Gateway locations are likely to be affected by Farr Wind Farm. There would be no visibility of Farr Wind Farm the B862. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | Wind turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes. | Farr Wind Farm would be visible from sections of the A9 between Tore and Inverness, Daviot and Milton of Leys and between Slochd and Tomatin. When considered with operational cumulative development, the extension of life of Farr Wind Farm would increase the duration of time during which |

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| | | cumulative sequential effects would be experienced. |
| Criterion 3 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
| Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected | The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks | As per SNH guidance, the existing baseline includes Farr Wind Farm, which does not diminish the prominence of local landmarks. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting. | |
| Criterion 4 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
| The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected. | The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.) | <p>Farr Wind Farm would be visible in distant views from Munros and Corbetts in the Monadhliath to the south such a Carn Sgulain at a distance of 22.5km. It would also be visible from short sections of the Great Glen Way 20km to the west and from short sections of NCN route 7, 5km to the east. From these locations it would be visible primarily in combination with Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm and in the case of Carn Sgulain, Dunmaglass (operational) and Aberarder wind farms (consented not constructed) would be noticeable and appear closer in views.</p> <p>Farr Wind Farm is an established feature in views in combination with cumulative development. An extension of life would increase the duration of effects but would not introduce effects not already considered during determination of Farr Wind Farm and the operational and cumulative development present in the baseline environment.</p> |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | Wind turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways. | |
| Criterion 5 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |

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| <p>The amenity of transport routes is respected</p> | <p>The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access)</p> | <p>The 2002 ES assessed effects on the A9 as ranging from Minor to Moderate and concluded that effects would not be significant. The 2002 ES identified significant effects on the minor road that passes 1.1km to the west of the Farr Wind Farm.</p> |
| <p>Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:</p> | <p>Wind turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of transport routes</p> | <p>There would be cumulative sequential effects on users of the A9 and cumulative effects on the minor road to the west of Farr Wind Farm. Cumulative effects have been considered during determination of Farr Wind Farm and the operational and cumulative development present in the baseline environment.</p> <p>An extension of life would increase the duration of effects but would not introduce effects not already assessed in the operational and consented developments.</p> |
| <p>Criterion 6</p> | <p>Measure</p> | <p>Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension</p> |
| <p>The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.</p> | <p>The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turbine height and proportions; • density and spacing of turbines within developments; • density and spacing of developments; • typical relationship of development to the landscape; • previously instituted mitigation measures; and • Planning Authority stated aims for development of area | <p>Farr Wind Farm would not affect the existing pattern of operational and consented wind farms.</p> |

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| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area. | |
| Criterion 7 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
| The need for separation between developments and/ or clusters is respected | The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters | Farr Wind Farm would not affect the existing separation distances between operational and consented wind farms. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters | |
| Criterion 8 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
| The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected | The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance. | Farr Wind Farm would extend the duration of time over which cumulative effects with Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm would occur on recreational receptors to the south whose perception of scale and distance is more likely to be affected. However, the degree of change resulting from Glen Kyllachy and Farr Wind Farm has been accepted in combination with Dunmaglass and Aberdarder and the extension of life would not result in effects not already assessed. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and/ or distance in the receptors' perception. | |
| Criterion 9 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
| Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected | The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal. | Farr Wind Farm would not alter the present baseline. Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm is under construction and it is anticipated that it will be operational in 2021 with an operational life of 25 years until 2046. The Farr Wind Farm extension of life would be until 2040. The principal of combined development in Farr and Glen Kyllachy wind farms has been established and the extension of life would not result in effects not already assessed. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines | |

| Criterion 10 | Measure | Appraisal of Farr Wind Farm Life Extension |
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| Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected | The extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape. | The landscape character baseline has changed since the 2002 ES primarily by the addition of wind farm development in the Rolling Upland LCT. However, as mentioned above, Farr Wind Farm would not affect the existing pattern, massing or spacing of existing and consented wind farm development. |
| Development should seek to achieve a threshold where: | Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained. | Farr Wind Farm would not result in any additional effects that would affect the integrity and variety of landscape character areas. |

5. Conclusions

The proposal is for an extension of the operational life of the existing Farr Wind Farm by 10 years. The extension of life would not result in the installation of any additional wind turbines nor would the position or dimensions of the existing wind turbines be altered. No new infrastructure would be constructed or installed, and the existing access track and ancillary development would be unaltered.

New guidance and advice relevant to landscape and visual assessment of wind energy development has been published since the Farr Wind Farm ES was prepared in 2002. The landscape and visual baseline has changed primarily by the construction of new wind farms in the 25km LVIA study area used in the 2002 ES and particularly in the Rolling Uplands LCT. Four new wind farms became operational in the Rolling Uplands LCT in 2016/2017: Moy, Dunmaglass, Tom nan Clach and Corriegarth. The most recent is Glen Kyllachy Wind Farm which, at the time of writing this File Note, is under construction and for which an ES was prepared in 2013.

Regarding policy and designations which were not considered in 2002, the following are of most relevance:

- The Cairngorms National Park established in 2003;
- A description of the special qualities of National Scenic Areas published by SNH in 2010;
- The Highland Council Assessment of Special Landscape Character Areas in 2011; and
- Publication of a map of Wild Land Areas by SNH in 2014 and subsequent descriptions in 2017.

While these matters were not a consideration in the 2002 ES, there was a thorough assessment of the underlying landscape character baseline and an assessment of effects on visual amenity. In addition, these matters have been a consideration in the determination of the cumulative wind farm developments mentioned above including Glen Kyllachy wind farm consented in 2019.

The review of baseline environment and assessment of effects on landscape and visual amenity of Farr Wind Farm indicates that the extension of life would not result in effects not already assessed and taken into account in the determination of Farr Wind Farm and operational and consented cumulative wind farm development in the study area. The extension of life of Farr Wind Farm would increase the duration of time in which cumulative effects arising from Farr Wind Farm in addition to other wind farm development would be experienced i.e. beyond the year 2030. However, cumulative effects without Farr Wind Farm would continue until at least 2041 as a result of the combined effects of Moy, Dunmaglass, Tom nan Clach, Corriegarth and Glen Kyllachy, with Glen Kyllachy being present in the vicinity of Farr Wind Farm until 2046.

The appraisal of effects described in Table 1 has taken account of the existing baseline and cumulative effects beyond the consented operational life of Farr wind farm. The appraisal indicates that the extension of life of Farr Wind Farm meets the requirements of the 10 criteria and no additional significant effects not already considered in the determination of Farr Wind Farm and other operational and consented wind farm developments are likely to occur.

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