

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 7.3: VIEWPOINT ASSESSMENT

Kirkton Energy Park
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Volume 3bi-ii – NatureScot visualisations, Figures 7.5 to 7.23

Volume 3ci-ii – The Highland Council visualisations, Figures 7.28 to 7.46

1.0 Introduction

This Technical Appendix sets out the findings of the detailed viewpoint assessment, carried out as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park (proposed development). The findings of the Viewpoint Assessment are used to inform the overall assessment of effects of the proposed development on landscape character and visual amenity reported in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual** of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.

An overview of the 19 viewpoints included in the assessment for Kirkton Energy Park, and which were agreed with The Highland Council (THC), are shown on **Figures 7.2a to 7.2c**, Volume 3 of this EIA Report. NatureScot was provided with the details of the viewpoints, however, they declined to comment on the detailed selection. During the EIA Scoping consultation NatureScot¹ provided feedback that the Kyle of Tongue National Scenic Area (NSA) could be scoped out of the LVIA. Therefore, baseline viewpoint photography has not been obtained for viewpoints 16 and 17 and no assessment has been prepared for these locations. However, for reference, wireline visualisations have been prepared for these two viewpoints and are included in Volume 3.

The viewpoints were selected to cover points of specific importance including: recognised viewpoints and landmarks, landscape designations (for example Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)), settlements, and important tourist routes (for example the North Coast 500), to inform the likely extent of significant landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed development. A variety of landscape character types and locations at different directions, distances and elevations from the site have been represented in the selected viewpoints.

In addition to the viewpoints assessed in this Technical Appendix, viewpoints specific to the Wild Land Assessment for the East Halladale Flows Wild Land Area (WLA) have been prepared and are included in **Technical Appendix 7.5**. One of the viewpoints, Viewpoint 8, is located within the East Halladale WLA and is also included in the Wild Land Assessment as Viewpoint C. All the viewpoint photography and visualisations are included in Volumes 3b and 3c.

An assessment of the potential effects on both landscape character and visual amenity arising from the proposed development at each of the agreed viewpoints has been carried out in line with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2013, Third Edition (GLVIA 3). The existing and predicted views from each of these viewpoints have been described and analysed in order to identify the magnitude of change and the residual effects of the proposed development on landscape character and visual amenity.

An assessment of the potential cumulative effects of the proposed development on landscape character and visual amenity has been made for the viewpoints which have, or would have, visibility of the wind farms included in the cumulative assessment. The visibility of cumulative wind farms that comprise the baseline context at each viewpoint is described, with this relating to both operational and consented wind farm developments. The viewpoint assessment identifies the cumulative magnitude of change with the addition of the proposed development to operational and/or consented wind farms (baseline cumulative scenario). It then, where relevant, identifies the cumulative magnitude of change from the proposed development with these operational and/or consented wind farms and the sites that are currently under consideration for planning permission.

The cumulative context in the 40km radius Study Area is shown in **Figures 7.3a and 7.3b**. This cumulative wind farm context is complex, including large wind farms, together with numerous small, single turbines, particularly in the eastern part of the Study Area. Single turbines have been considered in the study area and included where they are over 50m in blade tip height. Wind farm proposals at scoping stage are shown **Figure 7.3a and 7.3b**, Volume 3. However, they are not shown in the viewpoint Figures due to the absence of final design information and lack of certainty that these projects will proceed to a planning application.

¹ NatureScot Scoping Consultation Response, Dated 13 May 2021

A judgement was then made on the wind farm sites to be included in the assessment. This considered the relative size and distance of each of the wind farms in relation to the proposed development; the extent of any simultaneous visibility; as well as the potential for sequential cumulative effects on the key transport routes in the study area. **Table 1-1** (on the following page) and **Figure 7.3a** identify the wind farms which have been included in the detailed cumulative assessment. This totals 28 operational and consented sites, 6 proposed wind energy developments at planning application stage and 9 wind farms at EIA scoping stage. Proposed wind farms at EIA scoping stage have been referenced where appropriate, but specific assessment judgements have not been made due to uncertainty in relation to the final design and layout of these sites.

Table 1-1: Wind Farm Developments Considered in the CLVIA

Status	Wind farm	No of Turbines	Height of Turbines to Blade Tip (m)	Direction from Kirkton Energy Park	Approx. distance from Kirkton Energy Park (km)
Operational/Consented	Achairn	03	100	SE	41.78
	Achlachan	05	115	SE	26.97
	Bad a Cheo	13	112	SE	29.11
	Bettyhill	2	119	W	13.1
	Bilbster	3	93	SE	38.88
	Baillie	21	115	NE	13.5
	Boulfruich	15	75	SE	34.94
	Camster	25	100	SE	37.44
	Causeymire	24	101	SE	27.38
	Cogle Moss	12	100	E	38.35
	Dounreay Tri	10	270	N	14.13
	Forss	2	76	NE	15.31
	Forss Extension	4	78	NE	15.19
	Golticlay	19	130	SE	36.39
	Halsary	15	120	SE	29.65
	Hill of Lybster	1	99.5	NE	15.67
	Hill of Stroupster	12	110	NE	44.27
	Limekiln Extension	5	149.9	E	10.47
	Limekiln S36 Variation	19	149.9	E	8.04
	Lochend	4	99.5	NE	36.9
	Strathy North	33	110	W	5.41
	Strathy South	34	200	SW	8.39
	Strathy Wood	20	180	SW	4.97
	Tacher	2	130	SE	30.56
	Taigh Na Muir Dunnet	1	79.6	NE	38.22
	Wathegar	5	100	SE	39.47
Wathegar 2	9	110	SE	40.42	
Weydale Farm	1	66	NE	25.33	
Proposed (Planning Application)	Armadale	12	149.9	NW	6.83
	Forss Extension 3	2	125	NE	15.19
	Golticlay	19	130	SE	36.39
	Slickly	11	149.9	NE	42.74
	Bettyhill Extension	11	149.9	W	12.39
	Tormsdale	12	149.9	SE	26.11
EIA Scoping Stage	Cairnmore Hill	5	138.5	NE	18.01
	Corsback Hill	4	149.9	E	32.01
	Dounreay Test and Demo Floating	10	270	N	14.98
	Lochend Extension	5	150	E	39.27
	Loch Toftingall	6	138.5	SE	30.32
	Melvich Wind Energy Hub	13	149.9	N	0.16
	Rangang Farm	2	150	SE	32.9
	Stemster	11	200	SE	35.13
	West of Orkney Offshore	Up to 125	370	NW	32.52

The 19 viewpoints are illustrated by **Figures 7.5a to 7.23f**, Volume 3bi-ii (NatureScot visualisations) and **Figures 7.28a to 7.46d**, Volume 3ci-ii (THC visualisations).

For each viewpoint, a viewpoint location plan is provided. This illustrates the viewpoint and surrounding area at a scale 1:25,000. The plan identifies the extent of the view arcs illustrated on the photographic panorama, cumulative wireline and, if relevant, the photomontage. Within the legend of the location plan, the viewpoint information and location description are given. The viewpoint photography was captured in March and May 2022.

Following the location plan, 90° photo-panoramas and wirelines have been provided, the number of which relates to the available cumulative view. For all viewpoints, cumulative wirelines are presented with the Kirkton Energy Park turbines shown in blue; existing turbines are shown in black, consented turbines shown in green and proposed turbines in the planning system are in orange.

In some instances, for example Viewpoint 6 (Portskerra), a photomontage has not been prepared. This is due to a variety of factors, such as elements in the view that screen the proposed development, the limited extent of the proposed development that would be seen and the distance between the viewpoint and the proposed development. Where the above factors combine to result in very limited visibility of the proposed development the assessment is based on the wirelines that have been prepared.

The photomontages for viewpoints 1, 2, 4, 8/C, 13, (together with viewpoints A, B and D in the Wild Land Assessment) illustrate the proposed forest felling that forms part of the proposed development shown in the Forestry Felling Map (see **Figure 3.2.4**) as well as the proposed infrastructure predicted to be visible from these locations. Infrastructure and borrow pits have been incorporated where appropriate, with the relevant viewpoints being 1, 2, 4, 8/C, (together with viewpoints A, B and D in the Wild Land Assessment). At other viewpoints a combination of separation distance, woodland and/or elevation of the viewpoint would greatly restrict or prevent visibility of all elements other than the proposed wind turbines.

The LVIA **Technical Appendix 7.2 Visualisation Methodology** explains the processes followed to produce the viewpoint illustrations. Guidance published by both NatureScot and THC has informed the methodology used in the preparation of the viewpoint illustrations for the LVIA.

In the viewpoint assessment text, every effort has been made to focus on the key cumulative interactions between the proposed development and the most relevant of the existing, consented and proposed wind farms rather than to describe all the wind farms which are predicted to be visible from any given viewpoint. All of the wind farms included in the cumulative assessment which are predicted to be visible from any given viewpoint are shown in the wirelines. The distances from the viewpoint to the nearest turbine in the cumulative wind farms is included in a table for each location presented in **Tables 4-1 to 20-1**. The assessment text and tables presented for each viewpoint identify those sites where important cumulative interactions are considered to occur. As single turbines of less than 50m to blade tip height have not been included in the assessment, there are some viewpoint locations from where these single turbines may be seen in the photography of the existing view, but these are not shown in the cumulative wireline Figures. Where considered relevant these have been factored into the assessment, but in general terms it is judged that Kirkton Energy Park in conjunction with such small sized, individual turbines, would not result in significant cumulative effects.

Summary tables of the viewpoint assessment for both landscape and visual receptors at each viewpoint are provided at the end of this Technical Appendix.

2.0 Viewpoint 1: A897, Strath Halladale, Achiemore

Figures 7.5a-7.5c (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.28a-7.28d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 289398, 957657

2.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 1.5km south east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 31m AOD on the A897 in Strath Halladale, and the bridge over the Smigel Burn. It is representative of views that would be obtained by local residents and road users on the A897 in this part of Strath Halladale. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Strath – Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Type (LCT).

2.2 Existing View

The viewpoint is at a small cluster of residential properties and a bunkhouse alongside the road, with an open aspect over Strath Halladale to the west. To the north and south are views along the Strath, whilst to the east the landform rises, limiting the extent of the view in this direction. The foreground landscape, and floor of the Strath are a mix of small to medium fields comprising pasture and rough grassland. The fields are typically delineated by post and wire fencing with occasional remnant stone walls. There is intermittent gorse and scrub throughout the view, particularly along the course of the Smigel Burn. There is a small area of commercial forestry on the western side of the Strath, together with further areas of forestry on the ridgeline further west. The rising landform on the west side of Strath Halladale contains the view in this direction and predominately comprises rough grassland and moorland. A small cluster of buildings, associated with the timber processing development at Upper Bighouse, is located towards the left side of the view, at the foot of the rising landform to the west. Overall it is a view of a medium scale, relatively simple, containing relatively small scale landscape elements within Strath Halladale.

2.3 Baseline Cumulative View

No baseline wind farm developments are visible from this viewpoint.

2.4 Sensitivity

2.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Strath – Caithness and Sutherland LCT.

The relative simplicity and general small to medium scale of the landscape components within the view (a few individual trees, forestry and open fields across rolling hillsides) provides a landscape that is considered to have a High susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations at this location. This is a farming and open moor landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with scrub and small areas of commercial forestry. There are no distinctive scenic qualities or aspects that are rare or unusual, and it is considered to have a Medium value.

Combining the High susceptibility and Medium value as set out in the methodology (see **Technical Appendix 7.1**), the landscape receptor is considered as having a High-medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

2.4.2 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents to change of the nature envisaged from the proposed development is considered to be High, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties generally orientated to take advantage of the views across Strath Halladale.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

2.4.3 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium and the value Medium, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

2.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

No existing or consented wind farms are visible from this location.

The wireline illustrates that the majority of all 11 turbines of the proposed development would be visible from this viewpoint. The lower parts of the towers of the most northerly and southerly turbines (T1 and T11) would be partly screened by the intervening landform. They would comprise a line of regularly spaced structures, seen above the horizon in views to the north west.

2.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development would be seen across Strath Halladale extending along the ridgeline to the west. The lower parts of some towers in the very northern and southern parts of the site, would be screened by the intervening landform. The proposed development would be a clearly visible and a very noticeable change to the view, with the nearest turbine at a distance of approximately 1.5km. The prominence of the turbines results from their proximity, elevation and the extent of the view they occupy in this direction. They would be seen in combination with the buildings and forestry in the Strath, with the scale of the turbines contrasting with the elements in the baseline landscape.

The positioning of the turbines on the ridge to the west provides a degree of separation from the Strath landscape. The proposed turbines would be seen in an upland context, on the ridgeline above the Strath in which the properties are located. The turbines would be evenly spaced and their composition would be a relatively simple linear arrangement, with no overlapping of blades.

The borrow pits and substation compound (including the substation and control building and battery storage units) are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint. The tracks in the vicinity of the turbines would be theoretically visible. However, the relative elevation of the viewpoint means they would not be conspicuous.

The magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape at this location is considered to be **Substantial**.

2.7 Predicted Effects

2.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Strath – Caithness and Sutherland LCT is considered to be of High-Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Substantial** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major** and **Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view

having regard to the small scale and varied nature of the LCT, together with the sense of enclosure provided by the landform.

2.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Substantial** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major** and **Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development. For road users, who have a medium sensitivity to wind farm development, the resulting effect would be **Major-Moderate** and **Significant**.

2.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Proposed Wind Farms

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, would lie directly to the right of Kirkton Energy Park. Melvich Wind Energy Hub would comprise a prominent addition to the view and, based on the current scoping stage layout which consists of an irregular group of 13 turbines at 149.9m blade tip height, it could contrast with the linear configuration of turbines within the proposed development.

3.0 Viewpoint 2: A897, Strath Halladale, Golval

Figures 7.6a-7.6c (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.29a-7.29d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 289908, 962062

3.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 2.2km north east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 32m AOD on the A897 towards the northern end of Strath Halladale, close to the residential properties of Golval and Akron. It is representative of views that would be obtained by local residents and road users in this part of Strath Halladale. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Strath – Caithness and Sutherland LCT.

3.2 Existing View

The viewpoint is located on the A897, a short distance to the south of Golval. It is a relatively elevated position on the eastern side of Strath Halladale, with an open view across the Strath to the west. To the north and south are views along the Strath, whilst to the east the landform rises, limiting the extent of the view in this direction. The foreground landscape, and floor of the Strath are a mix of small to medium fields comprising pasture and rough grassland, transitioning to improved pasture in the floor of the Strath. The fields are typically delineated by post and wire fencing. There is intermittent gorse and scrub throughout the view, particularly alongside the A897 and Halladale River, which is visible in the middle distance. There are small areas of woodland (mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees) throughout the view, with these mainly located on the lower slopes on the western side of the Strath. The commercial forestry in the northern part of the site is located on the ridge towards the right side of the view presented in **Figure 7.6a**. The rising landform on the west side of Strath Halladale contains the view in this direction and predominately comprises rough grassland and moorland, together with the areas of woodland and commercial forestry mentioned above. A small cluster of buildings at Kirkton are located towards the right side of the view towards the site. Overall, it is a view of a medium scale, relatively simple, containing relatively small scale landscape elements within Strath Halladale.

3.3 Baseline Cumulative View

No baseline wind farm developments are visible from this viewpoint.

3.4 Sensitivity

3.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Strath – Caithness and Sutherland LCT

The relative simplicity and general small to medium scale of the landscape components within the view (areas of forestry with open fields and rolling moorland across rolling hillsides) provides a landscape that is considered to have a High susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations at this location. This is a farming and open moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with scrub and areas of woodland and commercial forestry. There are no distinctive scenic qualities or aspects that are rare or unusual, which is considered to have a Medium value.

Therefore, the landscape receptor is considered as having a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

3.4.2 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents is considered to be High, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties generally orientated to take advantage of the views across Strath Halladale.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

3.4.3 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium and the value medium, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

3.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

No existing or consented wind farms are visible from this location.

The wireline illustrates that the majority of all 11 turbines would be visible from this viewpoint. The lower parts of the towers of the more southerly turbines (T7 to T11) would be partly screened by the intervening landform. They would comprise a line of regularly spaced structures, seen above the horizon in views to the south west.

3.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development would be seen across Strath Halladale extending along the ridgeline to the west. The lower parts of some towers, particularly wind turbines in the southern part of the site, would be screened by the intervening landform. The proposed development would be a clearly visible and a very noticeable change to the view with the nearest turbine at approximately 2.2km distance. The prominence of the turbines results from their proximity, elevation and the extent of the view they occupy in this direction. They would be seen in combination with the buildings and forestry in the Strath, with the scale of the turbines contrasting with the elements in the baseline landscape.

The positioning of the turbines on the ridge to the west provides a degree of separation from the Strath landscape. The proposed turbines would be seen in an upland context, on the ridgeline above the Strath in which the properties are located. The turbines would be evenly spaced and their composition would be a relatively simple linear arrangement, with no overlapping of blades.

The borrow pits and substation compound are predicted to be visible from this viewpoint. The borrow pits would be positioned mid way up the slope on the west side of the Strath. Whilst they would be seen, there are multiple small to medium scale variations in the baseline landform, which would limit the change associated with the borrow pits. The substation compound (including the substation and control building and battery storage units) would be located near the base of the rising ground on the west side of the Strath, positioned adjacent to small areas woodland. This includes an area of young deciduous trees to the east of the compound, which would gradually provide visual screening as they mature. The tracks in the vicinity of the turbines would be theoretically visible. However, the relative elevation of the viewpoint means they would not be conspicuous.

The magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Substantial**.

3.7 Predicted Effects

3.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Strath – Caithness and Sutherland LCT is considered to be of High-medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Substantial** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major** and **Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view having regard to the small scale and varied nature of the LCT, together with the sense of enclosure provided by the landform.

3.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Substantial** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major** and **Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development. For road users, who have a medium sensitivity to wind farm development, the resulting effect would be **Major-Moderate** and **Significant**.

3.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Proposed Wind Farms

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, would lie directly to the right of Kirkton Energy Park. Melvich Wind Energy Hub could comprise a prominent addition to the view and, based on the current scoping stage layout as described in respect of Viewpoint 1, it could contrast with the linear configuration of turbines within the proposed development.

4.0 Viewpoint 3: South East Edge of Melvich

Figures 7.7a-7.7e (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.30a-7.30d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 288801, 964004

4.1 Location

This viewpoint is located 3.1km north of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 26m AOD at the south western edge of Melvich. It is representative of views that would be obtained by residents on the edge of the village, visitors to the adjacent camping and caravan site, and road users travelling along the A836 (part of the North Coast 500 route). It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT.

4.2 Existing View

The viewpoint located at the northern end of Strath Halladale, close to where this meets the coastline. The view to the south is across the northern part of the Strath. The landform in the Strath is gently undulating and is backed by the more distant hills to the east and south. Loch Beag and Loch Mor are visible in the foreground to middle distance and form relatively small elements in the view. The rising landform on the west side on the Strath is the most prominent component of the view, with pasture transitioning to moorland with increasing elevation.

4.3 Baseline Cumulative View

No operational wind farm developments are visible from this viewpoint. The consented Dounreay Tri development is theoretically visible from this location. However, the wireline in **Figure 7.7c** demonstrates that only the blade tips of one turbine would be seen and it is likely this would barely be discernible in the view. In addition, the baseline viewpoint photography demonstrates that building in the foreground of the view to the north would prevent views to this offshore turbine from this exact location.

4.4 Sensitivity

4.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT

This occurrence of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT comprises a small area closely related to the settlement pattern of Melvich and Portskerra. It extends to the coastline and the landform generally directs views towards the sea. It is a relatively complex landscape owing to the combination of housing, field pattern, landform, sea and transport routes. The LCT is strongly associated with the coastline and views towards the sea, away from the proposed development, in addition the mix of elements give rise to a relatively developed landscape in relation to the surrounding context. Overall, the LCT is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint does not lie within any landscape designation but the north western part of this occurrence of the LCT lies within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra Special Landscape Area (SLA). The views to the coastline and connection with the sea contribute to the scenic qualities of the LCT. It is considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

The landscape receptor is considered as having an overall Medium overall sensitivity to wind farm development.

4.4.2 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents is considered to be High, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties generally orientated to take advantage of the views toward the coastline and sea.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

4.4.3 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

This section of the A836 forms part of the North Coast 500, a nationally promoted tourist route. Therefore, the value associated with road users is considered to be High.

Road users along this road are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

4.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.7a-c** and is summarised in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1: Viewpoint 3 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km) ²	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	3.1	SW
Operational /Consented	Dounreay Tri	11.88	N

The wirelines show the blades or blade tips of four turbines of the proposed development would be visible from this location, with these seen above the higher landform on the western side of Strath Halladale. The remaining seven turbines would be screened by the intervening landform.

4.6 Magnitude of Change

Whilst the proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines with associated blade movement would be a detracting element in the view, they would not form a key point of focus. The views at this location are across the northern part of the Strath and towards the coastline, and not in the direction of the proposed development. The turbines would occupy a small part of the extensive view with the blades of the two turbines visible above a small portion of the skyline. These factors would contribute to reducing the overall prominence of the proposed development.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

The only consented wind farm that would be visible from this location is the Dounreay Tri offshore development. However, only the blade tips of one turbine are predicted to be seen from this location, also noting that the café in the foreground would screen any visibility from this specific location. Given the limited extent of visibility of the operational/consented Dounreay Tri offshore turbines, the predicted magnitude of change from the Kirkton Energy Park on its own, is considered to be Slight.

² This comprises the approximate distance from the viewpoint to the closest turbine in the cumulative wind farm development.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape with the limited predicted visibility of the offshore Dounreay Tri from this location is also considered to be **Slight**.

4.7 Predicted Effects

4.7.1 Landscape Character

The Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT LCA landscape receptor at this viewpoint has a Medium sensitivity to the proposed development, combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change, the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-minor** and **Not Significant** effect on landscape character

4.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a High sensitivity to wind farm development. For road users on this part of the A836, who have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development, the resulting effect would be **Moderate-minor** and **Not Significant**.

4.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Proposed Wind Farms

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, would lie in front of (to the north west of) Kirkton Energy Park. Melvich Wind Energy Hub could comprise a prominent addition to the view and, based on the scoping stage layout shown on **Figure 7.3a**, it would be seen across a larger extent of the view from this location than the proposed development.

5.0 Viewpoint 4: A836, at the Junction to Bighouse

Figures 7.8a-7.8c (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.31a-7.31d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 290172, 963999

5.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 3.7km north east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 42m AOD. It is positioned at the junction between the A836 and the minor road to Bighouse at the northern end of Strath Halladale. It is representative of views that would be obtained by road users, principally people travelling in a westerly direction along the A836 towards the northern part of Strath Halladale. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs.

5.2 Existing View

Whilst this viewpoint is located a short distance from the A836, it represents the view as people descend towards the northern part of Strath Halladale, when travelling in a westerly direction. The foreground of the view comprises moorland with occasional areas of scrub vegetation. The edges of commercial forestry are visible on the left hand side of the view presented in **Figure 7.8a**, together with a small area of coniferous woodland on the right hand side. Strath Halladale extends across the view, with the pasture within the Strath just visible, before transitioning to moorland on the rising landform to the west. The commercial forestry in the northern part of the site is located on the ridge towards the right side of the view presented in **Figure 7.8a**. The summits of Ben Griam Mor and Ben Griam Beg are visible in the distance, towards the left side of the baseline photograph.

5.3 Baseline Cumulative View

No existing wind farms are visible from this location. The consented developments of Strathy Wood and Strathy South Wind Farms (approximately 14.43km and 10.37km to the south west respectively) would be visible, when constructed, from this viewpoint. However, the wirelines presented in **Figure 7.8a** and **7.8b** show that the extent of these wind farms that would be visible is predicted to be very limited, restricted to blade tips just extending above the horizon.

5.4 Sensitivity

5.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

It is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations at this location, although Wild Land Areas extend across parts of the LCT. This is a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

5.4.2 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

This section of the A836 forms part of the North Coast 500, a nationally promoted tourist route. Therefore, the value associated with road users is considered to be High.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

5.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.8a** and **7.8b** and is summarised in **Table 5-1**.

Table 5-1: Viewpoint 4 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	3.7	SW
Operational/ Consented	Strathy South	14.43	SW
	Strathy Wood	10.37	SW

The wirelines illustrate that the majority of all 11 turbines of the proposed development would be visible from this viewpoint. The most southerly turbines would be seen in front of Ben Griam Mor. They would comprise a line of regularly spaced tall structures, seen above the horizon in views to the south west, with associated blade movement apparent.

5.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development would be seen extending along the ridgeline to the west of Strath Halladale. The majority of all the turbines would be seen, with landform screening a small proportion of some towers. The proposed development would be a clearly visible and a very noticeable change to the view. The prominence of the turbines results from their proximity and elevation, with all the turbines extending above the horizon. They would be seen in combination with the buildings and forestry in the Strath, with the scale of the turbines contrasting to the elements in the baseline landscape.

The location of this view limits the prominence of the Strath, meaning the turbines would be more associated with the moorland landscape to the west. The proposed turbines would be seen in an upland context, on the ridgeline above the Strath in which the properties are located. The turbines would be evenly spaced and their composition would be a relatively simple linear arrangement, with very limited overlapping of blades.

The borrow pits are predicted to be visible from this viewpoint. These would be seen towards the upper part of the slope on the west side of the Strath. Whilst they would be seen, there are multiple small to medium scale variations in the baseline landform, which would limit the change associated with the borrow pits. It is predicted that the substation compound would be screened from view at this location, being positioned behind the small area of woodland to the south of Kirkton Farm. The tracks in the vicinity of the turbines would be theoretically visible. However, the relative elevation of the viewpoint and intervening distance means they would not be conspicuous elements.

The consented Strathy South and Strathy Wood Wind Farm developments, once constructed, would form limited components of the view. The limited contribution to the view would be lessened further due to the transitory nature of the visual receptors, meaning it may be difficult for road users to discern the presence of these cumulative developments from this location.

The magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape with the baseline wind farms is considered to be **Substantial**.

5.7 Predicted Effects

5.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Substantial** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-Moderate** and **Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

5.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Substantial** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-Moderate** and **Significant** effect on the visual amenity of road users who have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

5.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Proposed Wind Farms

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, would lie directly to the north (right hand side of the wirelines) of Kirkton Energy Park. Melvich Wind Energy Hub could comprise a prominent addition to the view and based on the current layout for this scoping stage site, it could contrast with the linear configuration of turbines within the proposed development.

6.0 Viewpoint 5: Bighouse

Figures 7.9a-7.9c (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.32a-7.32d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 289095, 964737

6.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 3.9km north of the nearest turbine of the proposed development, at an elevation of approximately 5m AOD on the minor road that terminates at Bighouse, where there is a group of listed buildings centred around the property of Bighouse. It is positioned to the south of the small cluster of residential properties at this location. It is also close to a Core Path (reference SU19.050) which is routed towards the coastline at Bighouse, with sections extending to the east of Bighouse and also to the west to Melvich. The section of Core Path towards Melvich crosses the Halladale River via a bridge and also provides access to Melvich Bay. The location is principally representative of views that would be obtained by residents, walkers and people accessing the beach. As the road is not a through route, the key road users would comprise people accessing the residential properties. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT and is located at the transition with the Sandy Beaches and Dunes LCT.

6.2 Existing View

The viewpoint is at a low lying position adjacent to the banks on the Halladale River. Views from this location are directed south, down Strath Halladale, the landform providing a degree of containment in other directions. The broad, sandy estuary of the Halladale River extends throughout the foreground of the view to the south. Beyond the estuary, on the right hand side of the photograph presented in **Figure 7.9a**, the landform rises to towards the village of Melvich, beyond which is the undulating ridge on the west side of Strath Halladale. There are views along the Halladale River on the left hand side of the view, leading the eye towards the land within Strath Halladale.

6.3 Baseline Cumulative View

No baseline wind farm developments are visible from this viewpoint.

6.4 Sensitivity

6.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

The Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT comprises a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic on the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. However, this viewpoint is located at the transition with the Sandy Beaches and Dunes LCT and the Strath – Caithness and Sutherland LCT. Having regard to the susceptibility judgements for these LCTs the landscape at this location is considered to have a High-medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint is located on the edge of the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA, although the view towards the site is away from this landscape designation. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

On account of the location of this viewpoint being at the transition between the three LCTs referred to above the landscape receptor at this location is considered as having a High-medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

6.4.2 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents is considered to be High, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties generally orientated to take advantage of the views across Strath Halladale.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

6.4.3 Visual Receptors: Walkers

The susceptibility of walkers is considered to be High and the value medium, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Walkers at this location are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

6.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

No existing or consented wind farms are visible from this location.

The wireline illustrates that all 11 turbines of the proposed development would be visible from this viewpoint, but the extent of the turbines seen would be limited by the intervening landform. The blades and blade tips of T1 to T9 would be visible, while the hubs and blades of T10 and T11, the most southerly turbines within the site would be seen.

6.6 Magnitude of Change

A limited proportion of the proposed development would be visible. However, at a distance of 3.9km to the closest turbines, it would comprise a noticeable addition to the view with blade movement apparent. The continual motion of the blades above the landform would draw the eye and the turbines would be presented within a relatively narrow part of the view. The turbines would be slightly offset from the main focus of view, with this comprising the estuary which directs views southward towards Strath Halladale. Notwithstanding this, the higher ground on the west side of the Strath is a conspicuous element framing the view, and the proposed turbines would be seen above this part of the horizon.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks would not be visible from this location, being screened by intervening landform.

The magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Medium**.

6.7 Predicted Effects

6.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor at this location is considered to be of High-medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Medium** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-moderate** and **Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

6.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Medium** of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-moderate** and **Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development.

For walkers, who have a high-medium sensitivity to wind farm development, the resulting effect would also be **Major-moderate** and **Significant**.

6.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Proposed Wind Farms

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, is likely to lie in front of and to the right (in the wirelines) of Kirkton Energy Park. Based on the current layout for this scoping stage site, it would be in closer proximity to this viewpoint on the landform above Melvich and may be more prominent than the proposed development due to the shorter separation distance.

7.0 Viewpoint 6: Portskerra

Figures 7.10a-7.10e (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figure 7.33a (THC Volume 3ci-ii)
Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 287685, 965540

7.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 4.6km north of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 56m AOD within the settlement of Portskerra. Whilst this viewpoint is located on a minor road, it is a road that primarily provides access to the settlement and therefore the receptors at this location have been assessed as comprising local residents. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT

7.2 Existing View

The viewpoint is located within Portskerra and the primary elements within the view are the residential properties alongside the road through the south western part of the village. The buildings and road frame the view, and lead the eye, to the landform to the south of Portskerra, which forms part of the hills located on the western side of Strath Halladale. The houses, together with surrounding vegetation, extend above and interrupt views to the horizon. The properties within Portskerra are generally (but not consistently) orientated north east, taking advantage of views towards the coastline and sea.

7.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The operational developments of Forss Wind Farm and Forss Wind Farm Extension are visible to the east, in views along the coastline. The consented Hill of Lybster Wind Farm development also lies to the east, in close proximity to Forss and Forss Extension in the view. The two turbines of the consented Dounreay Tri offshore wind development (approximately 10.87km to the north east) would be visible from this viewpoint.

7.4 Sensitivity

7.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT

This occurrence of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT comprises a small area closely related to the settlement pattern of Melvich and Portskerra. It extends to the coastline and the landform generally directs views towards the sea. It is a relatively complex landscape owing to the combination of housing, field pattern, landform, sea and transport routes. The LCT is strongly associated with the coastline and views towards the sea, away from the proposed development, in addition the mix of elements give rise to a relatively developed landscape in relation to the surrounding context. Overall, the LCT is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint lies within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra Special Landscape Area (SLA). The views to the coastline and connection with the sea contribute to the scenic qualities of the LCT. It is therefore considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium overall sensitivity to wind farm development.

7.4.2 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents is considered to be High, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties generally orientated to take advantage of the views toward the coastline and sea.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

7.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.10a-e** and is summarised in **Table 7-1**.

Table 7-1: Viewpoint 6 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	4.6	S
Operational /Consented	Forss	14.85	NE
	Forss Extension	14.66	NE
	Hill of Lybster	15.31	NE
	Dounreay Tri	10.87	NE
Proposed	Forss Extension 3	15.18	NE

The wirelines show the blade tips of three turbines of the proposed development would be theoretically visible from this location. However, these would only just break the horizon in a location where this is interrupted by buildings and vegetation. As part of the fieldwork, this viewpoint location has been tested carefully on the ground, including capturing alternative viewpoint photography and with consideration of the ZTV. No locations were identified where there are likely to be clearer views of the proposed development from the local access roads. However, there is potential for views towards the proposed development from some properties in the settlement.

7.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development is unlikely to be visible from this location on the local access road. There may be locations with Portskerra where the turbines would be seen, but they are not predicted to comprise prominent elements in the view, with the majority of the proposed development expected to be screened by the intervening landform. The turbines would also be located away from the primary focus of views from Portskerra, which is towards the coastline and sea.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

Several operational and consented wind farms are visible from this location. These comprise Forss, Forss Extension, and Hill of Lybster to the east, which are grouped together in views along the coastline. The Dounreay Tri development would be located to the north east, comprising two turbines in the sea.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Negligible**, due to the very limited extent of the proposed development that is predicted to be visible from Portskerra.

7.7 Predicted Effects

7.7.1 Landscape Character

The Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT LCA landscape receptor at this viewpoint has a Medium sensitivity to the proposed development, combined with a **Negligible** magnitude of change, the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on landscape character

7.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development.

7.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

Forss Extension 3 would be located to the east and located alongside with the operational and consented developments at Forss. Given the very limited predicted visibility of the proposed development, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Negligible** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 7.7 above.

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, is likely to lie in front of (to the north of) Kirkton Energy Park. Melvich Wind Energy Hub lies in closer proximity to this viewpoint and on the landform above Melvich, and based on the layout presented at scoping stage, may comprise a prominent addition to the view. The Dounreay Test and Demo may be visible, potentially intensifying the presence of wind farm development on the coast and in the sea to the north east.

8.0 Viewpoint 7: A836, West of Strathy

Figures 7.11a-7.11d (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.34a-7.34d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 282728, 965421

8.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 6.9km north west of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 75m AOD on the A836 to the west of the settlement of Strathy. It is representative of views that would be obtained by road users travelling in an easterly direction on the A836. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs.

8.2 Existing View

The view from this location is an open, exposed panoramic view throughout all 360 degrees. The primary element throughout the view in all directions is open moorland, which extends across the foreground and to the horizon in most directions. The exception to this is to the north east, where there are views to the coastline and sea at Strathy Bay. Buildings within Strathy are also visible to the north east and introduce a sense of scale to an otherwise simple view.

8.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The operational development of Baillie Wind Farm is theoretically visible from this location. However, the wireline in **Figure 7.11a** shows this is limited to blade tips. The consented developments of Limekiln Wind Farm (Section 36 Variation) and Strathy Wood Wind Farm would also be theoretically visible, but again only blade tips of the turbines would be seen from this location. The two turbines of the consented Dounreay Tri offshore development would also be visible from this viewpoint.

8.4 Sensitivity

8.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

It is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

This viewpoint is located just within the edge of the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA. In addition, Wild Land Areas extend across parts of the LCT. This is a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development. This judgement is made based on the scale and simplicity of the landscape, together with the ZTV pattern being primarily coincidental with the non-designated parts of the LCT.

8.4.2 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

This section of the A836 forms part of the North Coast 500, a nationally promoted tourist route. Therefore, the value associated with road users is considered to be High.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

8.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.11a-c** and is summarised in **Table 8-1**.

Table 8-1: Viewpoint 7 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	6.9	S
Operational /Consented	Baillie	19.21	E
	Dounreay Tri	13.86	NE
	Limekiln S36 Variation	14.83	SE
	Strathy Wood	8.87	S

The wirelines show all 11 proposed turbines of the proposed development would be visible. However, the extent of the turbines visible would be limited. The blades of two turbines would be seen together with the upper blades and blade tips of the remaining nine turbines. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen between the Limekiln Section 36 Variation and Strathy Wood Wind Farms, noting that only the blade tips of these consented developments would be visible.

8.6 Cumulative Magnitude of Change with Baseline Wind Farms

The majority of the proposed development would be screened by the intervening moorland ridge, which extends across the view in an easterly direction. The movement in the blades would be discernible as they break the horizon and would be seen against the sky. The turbines would be seen in views that are oblique to the direction of travel for road users. In addition, the primary focus of the view from this section of the A836 is the coastline and Strathy Bay.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

Several operational and consented wind farms are theoretically visible from this location. These comprise Baillie, Dounreay Tri, Limekiln Section 36 Variation and Strathy Wood. The wirelines show that, with the exception of Dounreay Tri, only the blade tips of the baseline cumulative wind farms are visible from this location. The Dounreay Tri turbines would be seen in views across Strathy Bay to the north east.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape with these baseline wind farms is considered to be **Slight**.

8.7 Predicted Effects

8.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

8.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of road users who have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

8.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Proposed Wind Farms

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, at scoping stage, is likely to be visible to the north of Kirkton Energy Park (left hand side of **Figures 7.11b** and **7.11c**). The extent to which Melvich Wind Energy Hub would be visible above the ridgeline would depend on the proposed layout at planning application stage.

9.0 Viewpoint 8: Beinn Ratha

Figures 7.12a-7.12f (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.35a-7.35d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 295405, 961311

9.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 7.4km east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 239m AOD on the summit of Beinn Ratha. It is representative of views that would be obtained by walkers visiting the summit. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCT.

Viewpoint 8 is also included in the Wild Land Assessment presented in **Technical Appendix 7.5** as Viewpoint C, being located in the East Halladale Flows WLA.

9.2 Existing View

Beinn Ratha is a relatively low, but notable summit on the northern edge of the Sweeping Moor and Flows LCT. It extends above the lower lying, broadly horizontal moorland that surrounds it, which gives rise to open, expansive and panoramic views over the landscape and sea. To the east and south the views are across open moorland, the distant horizon punctuated by a number of distinctive summits, including Ben Griam Mor and Ben Griam Beg to the south, and Ben Hope and Ben Loyal to the west. To the north, the moorland slopes gradually descend towards the coastline, transitioning to agricultural land in the vicinity of Reay. The Dounreay nuclear site is visible to the right side of the view presented in **Figure 7.12b**. To the east the moorland descends towards an area of extensive commercial forestry, beyond which is the agricultural landscape of Caithness.

9.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The panoramic views available from Beinn Ratha include the presence of numerous wind farms, particularly to the west and east, as illustrated by **Figures 7.12a-d**. The closest and most prominent of these are the consented developments of Limekiln Wind Farm (Section 36 Variation) and Limekiln Wind Farm Extension. Further to the east is Baillie Wind Farm, positioned beyond the commercial forestry. In the distance to the east, beyond approximately 20km are multiple wind farm developments in Caithness, which extend across the view. To the west, in the direction of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park site, are several existing and consented developments, including the operational Strathy North Wind Farm (approximately 13km to the west), with the consented Strathy Wood and Strathy South Wind Farms continuing the extent of turbines to the south (left in the view). The two operational Bettyhill Wind Farm turbines form a less conspicuous development in the view due to a combination of the number of turbines, intervening distance (over 20km) and partially intervening landform. The Dounreay Tri offshore development is located to the north at a distance of approximately 14km.

9.4 Sensitivity

9.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

It is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

Wild Land Areas extend across parts of the LCT, with this viewpoint located within the East Halladale Flows Wild Land Area. This is a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, at this location the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development. This judgement is made based on the scale and simplicity of the landscape, together with the ZTV pattern being primarily coincidental with the non-designated parts of the LCT.

9.4.2 Visual Receptors: Walkers

The susceptibility of the visual receptors is considered to be High for walkers, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Beinn Ratha lies within the East Halladale Flows Wild Land Area. It comprises a relatively distinctive landform in the local area and could draw people to walk to this location. However, there are no core paths that lead to the summit or obvious signs that it is frequently visited. Overall, it is considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

Walkers are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

9.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.12a-e** and photomontage in **Figure 7.12f** and is summarised identifying the key cumulative wind farms in **Table 9-1**.

Table 9-1: Viewpoint 8 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	7.4	W
Operational /Consented	Achairn	35.97	SE
	Achlachan	21.52	SE
	Bad a Cheo	23.95	SE
	Bettyhill	21.55	W
	Bilbster	33.01	SE
	Baillie	7.5	NE
	Boulfruich	32.51	SE
	Camster	32.08	SE
	Causeymire	22.32	SE
	Cogle Moss	32.09	E
	Dounreay Tri	14.27	N
	Forss	10.54	NE
	Forss Extension	10.54	NE
	Golticlay	32.49	SE
	Halsary	24.29	SE
	Hill of Lybster	10.75	NE
	Hill of Stroupster	37.89	NE
	Limekiln Extension	4.06	E
	Limekiln S36 Variation	1.58	E
	Lochend	33.31	NE
Strathy North	13.69	W	
Strathy South	16.63	SW	

	Strathy Wood	13.28	SW
	Tacher	25.89	SE
	Taigh Na Muir Dunnet	32.18	NE
	Wathegar	33.66	SE
	Wathegar 2	34.66	SE
	Weydale Farm	19.02	NE
In Planning	Armadale	15.22	W
	Bettyhill Extension	20.87	W
	Forss Extension 3	10.73	NE
	Slickly	36.36	NE
	Tormsdale	21.24	SE

The wireline (**Figure 7.12e**) illustrates that the full extent of all 11 turbines of the proposed development would be visible. They would comprise an evenly spaced, single row of turbines, and would be seen almost entirely against the landform.

9.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development would lie partly in front of, but also extending to the right of, the operational and consented wind farms of Strathy North, Strathy South and Strathy Wood. The blades of the proposed turbines would overlap with those within the operational and consented developments which are more distant. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would extend across the gap between Strathy North Wind Farm and the two operational Bettyhill turbines. The relative elevation of the viewpoint means views are above the landform of the Kirkton site and it is possible to perceive the land separating the proposed Kirkton Energy Park development from these operational and consented sites. This, combined with the relative distance to the turbines, means Kirkton Energy Park would read as a separate, distinct development, at closer proximity to the viewpoint.

In the opposite direction to the proposed Kirkton Energy Park, the consented wind farms of Limekiln Section 36 Variation and Limekiln Extension would comprise prominent developments in close proximity to this location. Baillie Wind Farm is also visible to the east, but less prominent due to the intervening distance. The numerous operational and consented developments within Caithness, whilst visible, form more recessive elements in the view from this location.

The borrow pits and access tracks at the proposed development are predicted to be visible from this viewpoint. The borrow pits would be positioned in the vicinity of T1, T2 and T3. Whilst they would be seen, there are multiple small to medium scale variations in the baseline landform, which would limit the change associated with the borrow pits. The substation compound is not predicted to be visible from this location, being positioned on lower ground within Strath Halladale and would be screened by the intervening landform. The removal of the commercial forestry in the northern part of the site, and proposed peatland restoration, would be visible from this location. This change to the landscape could continue beyond the decommissioning of the proposed development.

Considered in the context of this overall pattern, the proposed development would not introduce a new or defining component in the landscape, but would be adding to the number of wind farms. The proposed development would represent a prominent, but localised change within the overall view and context of existing wind farms, and the cumulative magnitude of change is considered to be **Medium**.

9.7 Predicted Effects

9.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT at this location is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Medium** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view. This judgement relates to the relative proximity and prominence of the consented Limekiln Wind Farm.

9.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Medium** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-Moderate** and **Significant** effect on the visual amenity of walkers who have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

9.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The key proposed developments at planning application stage from this viewpoint are Armadale Wind Farm and Bettyhill Extension. These are located in the same direction as Kirkton Energy Park and would lie to the right and behind the proposed development as seen from this viewpoint. They would be more distant in the view, being located at approximately 15km (Armadale Wind Farm) and 20.8km (Bettyhill Extension). Forss Extension 3, Slickly and Tormsdale Wind Farms are all located adjacent to operational wind farms and would not alter the overall existing pattern of wind farm developments seen from this location.

The relative positions and prominence of these proposed developments means the primary focus, and cumulative effects would be associated with the larger and closer existing and consented developments, particularly Limekiln Section 36 Variation, Limekiln Extension, and the Strathy Wind Farms. Therefore, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Medium** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 9.7 above.

Notable (in relation to this viewpoint) proposed wind farm developments that are at scoping stage are Melvich Wind Energy Hub and the Dounreay Test and Demo Floating developments. Melvich Wind Energy Hub would lie directly to the right (as seen from **Figure 12a**) of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park and could comprise a prominent addition to the view with the layout contrasting with the linear configuration of turbines of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park development. The Dounreay Test and Demo Floating development would intensify the level of wind farm development in the sea to the north. There may also be distant views of the West of Orkney Offshore Wind Farm to the north west of this viewpoint.

10.0 Viewpoint 9: Totegan, near Strathy Point

Figures 7.13a-7.13f (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.36a-7.36d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 282784, 968406

10.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 9.1km north west of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 68m AOD on the minor road leading towards Totegan at Strathy Point. It is principally representative of views that would be obtained by road users visiting Strathy Point and the dispersed residential properties in the vicinity of Totegan. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT.

This location has been selected rather than Strathy Point itself as predicted visibility becomes more fragmented in the vicinity of the northern part of the peninsula. In addition, this location is close to the car park where visitors to Strathy Point would park.

10.2 Existing View

The view from this location is an open, exposed panoramic view throughout all 360 degrees. The rocky coastline and sea are the primary focus and extend across over 180 degrees of the view. Strathy Bay lies towards the centre of the photograph in **Figure 7.13a**, and to the left (east) of this are views along the coastline towards Dunnet Head in clear conditions. Similarly, when visibility is good there are views across to the Orkney Islands. The view to the south and south west is across open moorland, which in comparison with the view towards the coastline, is simple with relatively few notable features.

10.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.13a, 7.13b** and **7.13d** show the operational developments of Strathy North Wind Farm, Bettyhill Wind Farm, Forss and Forss Extension Wind Farms and Baillie Wind Farm are visible from this location. Strathy North is the most prominent of the operational wind farms with only one blade of the Bettyhill development predicted to be visible. The consented developments of Limekiln (Section 36 Variation) Wind Farm, Limekiln Wind Farm Extension, Strathy Wood Wind Farm and Strathy South Wind Farm and Hill of Lybster Wind Farm would also be visible from this viewpoint. The two turbines of the consented Dounreay Tri offshore wind development would also be visible from this location. The Limekiln developments would be visible with hubs and blades visible above the horizon to the east and the further Strathy developments would intensify the group of turbines at Strathy North to the south

10.4 Sensitivity

10.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT

This occurrence of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT comprises a small area closely related to the settlement pattern of Strathy and Totegan. It extends to the coastline and the landform generally directs views towards the sea. It is a relatively complex landscape owing to the combination of housing, field pattern, landform, distinctive cliff coastal edge, the expanse of sea and transport routes. The LCT is strongly associated with the coastline and views towards the sea, away from the proposed development, in addition the mix of

elements give rise to a relatively developed landscape in relation to the surrounding context. Overall, the LCT is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint lies within the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra Special Landscape Area (SLA). The views to the coastline and connection with the sea contribute to the scenic qualities of the LCT. It is therefore considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a High-Medium overall sensitivity to wind farm development, recognising the local distinctiveness of this landscape and its scenic quality.

10.4.2 Visual Receptors: Residents, Visitors to Strathy Point

The susceptibility of visual receptors at this location is considered to be High, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**. This susceptibility judgements applies to residents and visitors to Strathy Point (including walkers and road users).

The value attached to the view for residents and visitors to Strathy Point is considered to be High. Views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties generally orientated to take advantage of the views toward the coastline and sea. Strathy Point is a distinctive place in the local landscape due to relative prominence of the headland and the lighthouse at the northern end of the peninsula forming a focal point. In addition, it is marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a tourist feature.

Visual receptors at this viewpoint are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

10.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.13a-d** and is summarised in **Table 10-1**.

Table 10-1: Viewpoint 9 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	9.1	SE
Operational /Consented	Bettyhill	11.76	SW
	Baillie	19.36	E
	Dounreay Tri	11.87	NE
	Forss	19.23	E
	Forss Extension	18.99	E
	Hill of Lybster	19.74	E
	Limekiln Extension	17.82	E
	Limekiln S36 Variation	15.87	E
	Strathy North	9.53	S
	Strathy South	15.3	S
	Strathy Wood	11.85	S
In Planning	Armadale	6.64	SW
	Bettyhill Extension	12.20	SW
	Forss Extension 3	19.58	E

The wirelines show all 11 proposed turbines of the proposed development would be visible. However, the extent of the turbines visible would be limited. The blades of five turbines would be seen together with the blade tips of the remaining six turbines.

10.6 Magnitude of Change

The lower parts of the turbines of the proposed turbines of the proposed development would be screened by the intervening moorland ridge, which extends across the view in an easterly direction. The movement in the blades would be apparent as they break the horizon and would be seen against the sky. The turbines would be seen in the opposite direction to Strathy Point from this location. However, it would be seen in views across the SLA, behind Strathy Bay and along the coastline to the east. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen between the consented Limekiln Wind Farm developments and the consented and operational Strathy Wind Farm developments, occupying a gap in the pattern of existing and consented wind farms.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

Several operational and consented wind farms are visible from this location. Dounreay Tri offshore wind development comprises a relatively prominent and distinctive element in views over the sea. The existing and consented wind farms at Forss and Baillie are more distant and recessive developments, although they are present in the part of the view that is a key focus from this location. Limekiln Section 36 Variation and Limekiln Extension are both visible in the wireline in **Figure 7.13a** but a large proportion of the turbines is screened by the intervening landform. Only the tips of one of the operational Bettyhill Wind Farm turbines is visible from this viewpoint. The existing and consented Strathy Wind Farms are the most prominent due to a combination of the intervening distance and position of the turbines on more elevated ground to the south. The Dounreay Tri turbines would be seen in views across Strathy Bay to the north east.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Medium**.

10.7 Predicted Effects

10.7.1 Landscape Character

The Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT LCA landscape receptor at this viewpoint has a High-medium sensitivity to the proposed development, combined with a **Medium** magnitude of change, the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-Moderate** and **Significant** effect on landscape character

10.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Medium** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Major-Moderate** and **Significant** effect on the visual amenity of visual receptors at this location, that have a high sensitivity to wind farm development.

10.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The key proposed development at planning application stage from this viewpoint is Armadale Wind Farm. This is located to the right (in **Figure 7.13b**) of the Strathy Wind Farms, but would be more prominent due to the closer proximity of the turbines. It would continue the presence of turbines along the ridgeline to the south and south west of this viewpoint. Bettyhill Extension would be visible to the right of Armadale Wind Farm, however much of the proposed wind turbines would be screened by the intervening landform from this viewpoint. Forss Wind Farm Extension 3 would also be visible from this location, but would be seen alongside the existing developments at Forss and would result in limited change to the view.

The cumulative effect resulting from the introduction of Kirkton Energy Park would be limited by the proportion of the turbines that would be seen. Although it would be located within a gap in the visible pattern of turbines. Overall, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Medium** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 10.7 above.

Notable proposed wind farm developments predicted to be visible from this location that are at scoping stage are Melvich Wind Energy Hub and the Dounreay Test and Demo Floating developments. Melvich Wind Energy Hub would be located immediately to the left (**Figure 7.13a**) of Kirkton Energy Park and the relative prominence of the turbines would depend on the proposed layout at planning application stage. The Dounreay Test and Demo Floating development would intensify the level of wind farm development in the sea to the north. There may also be distant views of the West of Orkney Offshore Wind Farm to the north of the viewpoint.

11.0 Viewpoint 10: A836, West of Armadale

Figures 7.14a-7.14f (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.37a-7.37d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 277450, 963350

11.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 10.8km north west of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 125m AOD on the A836 to the west of the settlement of Armadale. It is representative of views that would be obtained by road users travelling in an easterly direction on the A836. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs.

11.2 Existing View

The view from this location comprises views across open moorland. It is slightly more enclosed by the local landform particularly to the north, than other characteristic locations in the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs. Views to the south and south east are open, exposed and panoramic. The landscape is more distinctive than locations further east within this LCT, with exposed rocky hills present throughout, giving more vertical scale to the landscape, although a long horizontal horizon predominates. In contrast with other locations on the A836, there are no views to the coastline and sea, which is a consequence of the road being routed further inland.

11.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.14a to 7.14e** show the operational and consented developments of Limekiln (Section 36 Variation) Wind Farm, Strathy North Wind Farm, Strathy South Wind Farm and Strathy Wood Wind Farm, the Bettyhill Wind Farm development and the Dounreay Tri offshore turbines are visible from this location. However, the wirelines in **Figure 7.14a to 7.14e** show the visibility of the Limekiln (Section 36 Variation) turbines, Bettyhill turbines and Dounreay Tri turbines would be very limited, restricted to blade tips. The constructed and consented Strathy Wind Farm developments are more prominent, extending along the ridge in the view to the south.

11.4 Sensitivity

11.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

It is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations at this location, although Wild Land Areas extend across parts of the LCT. This is a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

11.4.2 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

This section of the A836 forms part of the North Coast 500, a nationally promoted tourist route. Therefore, the value associated with road users is considered to be High.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

11.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.14a-e** and is summarised in **Table 11-1**.

Table 11-1: Viewpoint 10 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	10.8	SE
Operational /Consented	Bettyhill	4.45	SW
	Dounreay Tri	19.18	NE
	Limekiln S36 Variation	19.64	
	Strathy North	5.71	SE
	Strathy South	9.89	SE
	Strathy Wood	8.24	S
In Planning	Armadale	0.89	SE
	Bettyhill Extension	4.85	S

The wirelines show seven of the proposed turbines would be visible. However, the extent of all the turbines that would be seen would be limited to upper blades and tips. The Kirkton turbines would be seen to the left (**Figure 7.14a**) of the Strathy Wind Farm developments.

11.6 Magnitude of Change

Kirkton Energy Park would be positioned on the far side of a ridge to the south east of this location. The majority of the proposed development would be screened by this intervening moorland ridge, which is a more distant ridge between two closer low hills. The more open, expansive views from this viewpoint are to the south/south west, away from the site. The movement in the blades would be discernible as they break the horizon and would be seen against the sky. The A836 is roughly orientated east to west and the views towards the site would be slightly oblique for people travelling in an easterly direction. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen between Limekiln (Section 36 Variation) Wind Farm and Strathy North and Strathy Wood Wind Farms, occupying a gap in the pattern of existing and consented wind farms, although noting that the visibility of the Limekiln Wind Farm (Section 36 Variation) would be limited to blade tips.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

Several operational and consented wind farms are visible from this location: Strathy North, Strathy Wood, Strathy South, Bettyhill, Dounreay Tri and Limekiln (Section 36 Variation). The most prominent of these would be the Strathy group, with the closest of the Strathy north turbines slightly closer to the viewpoint than the proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines. However, visibility of the other operational and consented wind farms is typically limited to blade tips from this viewpoint.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Slight**.

11.7 Predicted Effects

11.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

11.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of visual receptors at this location, who have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

11.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The only proposed development at planning application stage from this viewpoint is Armadale Wind Farm. This would be positioned across the foreground of the view in a south easterly direction. The proximity of the Armadale turbines would result in them comprising a prominent element in the view.

The cumulative effect resulting from the introduction of Kirkton Energy Park would be limited by the proportion of the turbines that would be seen. The proposed Armadale Wind Farm would be positioned in front of the Kirkton Energy Park site and would further diminish the presence of the proposed turbines. Bettyhill Extension would be visible to the south, however this would be limited to blades and blade tips. Overall, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to be **Negligible** due to the relative prominence of the proposed Armadale Wind Farm and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity reduce compared with the judgements made in section 11.7 above. However, the judgement that the cumulative effects of the proposed development would remain **Not Significant**.

The key wind farm predicted to be visible at this viewpoint at the scoping stage is Melvich Wind Energy Hub. Melvich Wind Energy Hub would be located immediately to the left (**Figure 7.14a**) of Kirkton Energy Park and the relative prominence of the turbines would depend on the proposed layout at planning application stage.

12.0 Viewpoint 11: RSPB Lookout Tower, Forsinard

Figures 7.15a-7.15d (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.38a-7.38d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Specific Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 288605, 942088

12.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 15.8km south of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 166m AOD. It is positioned on the platform of a viewing tower, which provides slightly elevated views over the surrounding moorland and flows. It specifically illustrates views that would be obtained by visitors to the Forsinard Flows RSPB Lookout Tower, although the viewpoint is also close the A897 and comparable views would be obtained by people travelling in a northerly direction along this road. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs.

12.2 Existing View

The view from this location comprises views across open moorland and flows. It is an open, exposed panoramic view throughout all 360 degrees, with the elevation above ground level afforded by the RSPB Lookout Tower contributing to this. A primary element throughout the view in all directions is open moorland with the distinctive pools of water characteristic of the flow country evident in the foreground. The moor extends across the foreground and towards the horizon in most directions. There are areas of commercial forestry to the north and east (including towards the site) forming dark green bands across the view. Ben Griam Beg and Ben Griam Mor comprise distinctive landforms to the west. Occasional buildings within Forsinard lie to the north, the most conspicuous of which are the white rendered buildings of Forsinard Hotel.

12.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.15a to 7.15c** show the operational and consented developments of Strathy North, Strathy South and Strathy Wood, Dounreay Tri and Limekiln (Section 36 Variation) Wind Farms. However, the wirelines demonstrate the limited visibility of all these cumulative wind farm developments. The most visible are the consented developments of Strathy South and Strathy Wood, but the majority of turbines are screened by the intervening landform with blades and blade tips predominately seen above the ridge to the right of Ben Griam Beg. The exception to this is two turbines in the northern part of Strathy South, where the wireline shows visibility of the hubs and blades of two turbines.

12.4 Sensitivity

12.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

It is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations at this location, although Wild Land Areas extend across parts of the LCT. This is a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development. This judgement is made based on the scale and simplicity of the landscape, together with the ZTV pattern being primarily coincidental with the non-designated parts of the LCT.

12.4.2 Visual Receptors: Visitors to RSPB reserve

The susceptibility of visitors to the RSPB reserve is considered to be High-Medium. The key reason people are attracted to the reserve is the ornithology interest. However, it is acknowledged that the landscape setting contributes to the overall visitor experience.

The viewpoint is not located within any landscape designations. It is close to the Ben Griams SLA, but the view towards the site is away from this SLA. It is a promoted location with the RSPB reserve marked on Ordnance Survey maps and the lookout tower is a feature in the local landscape. Therefore, the value associated with this location is considered to be Medium.

Visitors to the RSPB reserve are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

12.4.3 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium and the value medium, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

12.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.15a-c** and is summarised in **Table 12-1**.

Table 12-1: Viewpoint 11 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	15.8	N
Operational /Consented	Dounreay Tri	33.45	N
	Strathy North	15.96	NW
	Strathy South	10.98	NW
	Strathy Wood	13.92	NW
	Limekiln S36 Variation	20.05	NE

The wirelines show all 11 turbines of the proposed development are theoretically visible from this viewpoint in a clustered group and two individual turbines. This theoretical visibility relates to turbine blades, although the hubs of some turbines just show above the intervening landform. However, commercial forestry lies between the viewpoint and the site, and it is predicted this would screen a large proportion of the turbine blades.

12.6 Magnitude of Change

Kirkton Energy Park would be positioned on the far side of a low ridge at nearly 16km to the north of this location. The majority of the proposed development would be screened by a combination of this intervening moorland ridge and commercial forestry. The turbines are closely grouped together and would cluster in views to the north, with the blades overlapping. However, they would occupy a small proportion of the open, expansive view obtained from this location and commercial forestry would limit the extent of the turbines that would be seen. In addition, the main focus of the view is the landforms of Ben Griam Beg and Ben Griam Mor, which are positioned away from the proposed development.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen between the Dounreay Tri offshore wind farm, Limekiln Wind Farm (Section 36 Variation) and the Strathy wind farm developments, occupying a gap in the pattern of existing and consented wind farms, although of these developments it is anticipated that only the Strathy Wind Farm developments would be clearly visible.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Negligible**.

12.7 Predicted Effects

12.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

12.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of both visitors to the RSPB reserve and road users at this location, who have a medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

12.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

No proposed developments at planning application stage are predicted to be visible from this location.

Melvich Wind Energy Hub, a proposed development at scoping stage, would be located north of (beyond) Kirkton Energy Park and the relative prominence of the turbines would depend on the proposed layout at planning application stage.

13.0 Viewpoint 12: Northern edge of Causeymire – Knockfin Flows Wild Land Area

Figure 7.16a-7.16d (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.39a-7.39d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 293754, 943063

13.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 16km south east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 235m AOD. It is positioned on the north facing slope of Cnoc nan Gall, to the south of the railway line between Forsinard and Altnabreac stations and the northern edge of the Causeymire – Knockfin Wild Land Area. It principally illustrates views seen by walkers, but also provides an indication of possible views obtained by train passengers travelling on the railway. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs.

13.2 Existing View

It is an open, exposed panoramic view, across open moorland although the rising ground limits views in a southerly direction. To the west, north and east the elevation of the viewpoint relative to the lower lying landscape gives rise to open views across the landscape. A primary element throughout the view in all directions is open moorland, which extends across the foreground and towards the generally horizontal horizon in most directions. There are areas of commercial forestry to the west, north and east (including towards the site) forming dark green bands across the view. Ben Griam Beg and Ben Griam Mor comprise distinctive landforms to the west. Sletill Hill forms a distinctive landform to the north, with this being positioned to the right of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park site in the view. The railway line between Forsinard and Altnabreac stations is just visible in the lower part of the viewpoint photograph, comprising a relatively subtle line in the image.

13.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.16a** and **7.16b** show the operational and consented developments of Strathy North, Strathy South and Strathy Wood, Bettyhill, Limekiln (Section 36 Variation), Limekiln Extension and Baillie wind farms. However, the wirelines demonstrate the limited visibility of the cumulative wind farm sites to the north east. The sites to the west and north west (Strathy South, Strathy Wood and Strathy North Wind Farms) are more conspicuous, with the turbines clearly extending above the horizon. The exception to this is Bettyhill Wind Farm, where only blade tips can be seen above the horizon.

13.4 Sensitivity

13.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

As previously described, this is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint lies on the northern edge of the Causeymire – Knockfin Wild Land Area. The LCT comprises a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial

forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development. This judgement is made based on the scale and simplicity of the landscape, together with the ZTV pattern being primarily coincidental with the non-designated parts of the LCT.

13.4.2 Visual Receptors: Walkers

The susceptibility of the visual receptors is considered to be High for walkers, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The viewpoint lies on the northern edge of the Causeymire – Knockfin Wild Land Area. It is a location on open moorland, however, there are no core paths that lead to the viewpoint or obvious signs that it is frequently visited. Overall, it is therefore considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

Walkers are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

Whilst the viewpoint is principally representative of walkers, it is also indicative of the view that may be obtained by people travelling on the railway between Forsinard and Altnabreac stations. Train passengers are considered to be of lower sensitivity than walkers due to their occupation and the transitory nature of the view. Therefore, the judgements relating to the sensitivity of walkers would represent a worst case. The lower elevation of the railway, compared with the viewpoint location, would also reduce the visibility of the proposed development.

13.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.16a-c** and is summarised in **Table 13-1**.

Table 13-1: Viewpoint 12 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	16	NW
Operational /Consented	Baillie	23.25	NE
	Bettyhill	26.42	NW
	Strathy North	18.20	NW
	Strathy South	14.61	NW
	Strathy Wood	15.99	NW
	Limekiln Extension	18.11	NE
	Limekiln S36 Variation	17.32	NE
In Planning	Armadale	22.98	NW
	Bettyhill Extension	24.43	NW

The wirelines show all 11 turbines of the proposed development are theoretically visible from this viewpoint. A large proportion of turbines numbered T3 to T11 on **Figure 7.16c** is predicted to be visible in the wireline, but the extent of visibility of turbines T1 and T2 would be restricted by the landform of Sletill Hill. The photomontage in **Figure 7.16d** shows that the commercial forestry to the west of Sletill Hill would reduce the extent of the turbines that would be seen, although the upper parts of the towers, hubs and blades would still be visible above the trees. Additionally, the proposed turbines would be visible as shown on the wirelines following felling of the forestry.

13.6 Magnitude of Change

Kirkton Energy Park would be positioned on the far side of a ridge to the north west of this location and to the west of Sletill Hill. The lower parts of the proposed development would be screened by a combination of this intervening landform and the commercial forestry. It would be seen as a line of turbines, with limited overlapping of blades. They would occupy a small proportion of the open, expansive view obtained from this location.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen between wind farms that form the baseline pattern of wind farm developments. These are clusters in two areas to the west/north west and to the north east. Kirkton Energy Park would lie in a gap between these clusters, although of these developments it is anticipated that only the Strathy Wind Farm developments would be clearly visible.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Slight**.

13.7 Predicted Effects

13.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

13.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of walkers at this location, who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development.

The actual visibility of Kirkton Energy Park is predicted to be reduced for train passengers compared to the bare earth theoretical view shown on the wirelines. However, taking into account the above judgements it is predicted that the effect on visual amenity for train passengers would be less than moderate, and therefore not significant.

13.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The proposed developments at planning application stage that are predicted to be visible from this viewpoint are Armadale Wind Farm and Bettyhill Extension. Both these proposed developments are located in the same part of the view as Strathy North and would be seen largely behind this operational wind farm. Therefore, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Slight** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 13.7 above.

Melvich Wind Energy Hub may be visible from this location, to the right (**Figure 7.16b**) of Kirkton Energy Park, although it could be screened by the intervening landform of Sletill Hill.

14.0 Viewpoint 13: Ben Griam Beg

Figure 7.17a-7.17f (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.40a-7.40d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 283179 941180

14.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 17.4km south west of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 565m AOD on the summit of Ben Griam Beg. It is representative of views that would be obtained by walkers visiting the summit. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Lone Mountains LCT.

14.2 Existing View

Ben Griam Beg is a distinctive summit, grouped with Ben Griam Mor and Meall a' Brùirich, rising above the lower lying surrounding moorland. Its elevation gives rise to open, expansive and panoramic views over the landscape and towards the sea to the north. Views across the lower lying moorland predominate, but these are punctuated by surrounding summits, particularly in relation to distant views, and also with Ben Griam Mor present in the middle distance to the south west. The pattern of moorland is broken by medium to large areas of commercial forestry, particularly in views to the north and east.

14.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The panoramic views available from Ben Griam Beg include numerous operational and consented wind farms, with these being present to the north west through to the east of the viewpoint, as illustrated by **Figures 7.17a-d**. The closest and most prominent of these are the operational and consented wind farm developments of Strathy South, Strathy North and Strathy Wood. In the distance, extending across the view to the north east and east, beyond approximately 23km are multiple wind farm developments in Caithness. The Dounreay Tri offshore wind development is located to the north at a distance of over 35km.

14.4 Sensitivity

14.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Lone Mountains LCT

This LCT comprises individual mountains set within expansive moorland, meaning they form distinctive landmarks within the overall landscape. They are large scale landscapes, especially when considered in their context. There is no wind farm development within this occurrence of the LCT, but they are an acknowledged component of the surrounding landscape. It is a landscape that is considered to have a High-Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The LCT largely corresponds with the Ben Griams SLA. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

14.4.2 Visual Receptors: Walkers

The susceptibility of the visual receptors is considered to be High for walkers, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Ben Griam Beg lies within the Ben Griams SLA. It comprises a distinctive landform in the local area, rising above the surrounding moorland and could comprise a focus for people walking within the area. However, there are no core paths that lead to the summit. Overall, it is considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium. Walkers are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

14.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.17a-e** and photomontage in **7.17f** and is summarised identifying the key cumulative wind farms in **Table 14-1**.

Table 14-1: Viewpoint 13 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP	
Application Site	Kirkton	17.4	N	
Operational /Consented	Achairn	47.37	NE	
	Achlachan	33.28	NE	
	Bad a Cheo	34.12	NE	
	Bettyhill	21.41	NW	
	Bilbster	45.09	NE	
	Baillie	30.22	NE	
	Boulfruich	32.8	E	
	Camster	42.04	NE	
	Causeymire	32.88	NE	
	Cogle Moss	46.51	NE	
	Dounreay Tri	35.37	N	
	Forss	34.04	NE	
	Forss Extension	34.02	NE	
	Golticlay	37.47	E	
	Halsary	35.3	NE	
	Hill of Lybster	34.2	NE	
	Hill of Stroupster	55.69	NE	
	Limekiln Extension	25.26	NE	
	Limekiln S36 Variation	23.72	NE	
	Lochend	52.42	NE	
	Strathy North	15.17	N	
	Strathy South	8.6	N	
	Strathy Wood	13.58	N	
	Tacher	34.41	NE	
	Taigh Na Muir Dunnet	52.81	NE	
	Wathegar	45.4	NE	
	Wathegar 2	46.02	NE	
	Weydale Farm	39.13	NE	
	In Planning	Armadale	20.65	N
		Bettyhill Extension	19.14	NW
		Forss Extension 3	34.19	NE
		Slickly	54.19	NE
Tormsdale		31.27	NE	

The wireline (**Figure 7.17e**) illustrates that the full extent of all 11 turbines of the proposed development would be visible, comprising an evenly spaced, single row of turbines, seen almost entirely against the landform and

sea. The position of the viewpoint relative to the site means the wind turbines would form a fairly compact group, with some overlap between the blades, particularly in the northern part of the site.

14.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development would lie in a gap in the pattern of operational and consented wind farms, with Strathy North, Strathy South, Strathy Wood and Bettyhill lying to the north west and various wind farm sites within Caithness lying to the north east. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would comprise a development of relatively limited size in comparison with the baseline developments. With the exception of the Dounreay Tri offshore wind turbines which would be directly behind Kirkton Energy Park, the location of the proposed development differs from the pattern of existing and consented wind farms. However, the separation distance and scale of the expansive, open view in which they would be seen would limit the prominence of the proposed development. The view towards the site is also arguably less distinctive than other directions, with the broadly flat moorland being less of a focus than the mountains that can be seen to the west and south. The elevation of the viewpoint relative to the site means the proposed turbines would be seen predominately against the landform, with the blades of more northerly turbines seen against the sea.

Whilst elements of the site infrastructure would be theoretically visible from this location, the intervening distance means they would not be discernible in the view.

Considered in the context of this overall pattern of wind farms visible from this location, the proposed development would not introduce a new or defining component in the landscape, but would add to the number of turbines. The proposed development would represent a notable, but localised change within the overall view and context of existing wind farms, and the cumulative magnitude of change is considered to be **Slight**.

14.7 Predicted Effects

14.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Lone Mountains LCT is considered to be of High-Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

14.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of walkers who have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

14.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The proposed developments at planning application stage predicted to be visible from this viewpoint would be seen in the context of, and/or behind, the existing and consented developments. Therefore, they would result in limited alteration to the overall pattern of wind farm developments seen from this location. The relative positions and prominence of these proposed developments means the primary cumulative effects would be associated with the larger and closer existing developments, particularly the Strathy Wind Farms to the north west. In addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Slight** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 14.7 above.

Several developments that are at scoping stage would be seen from this location. However, as with the proposed developments that are at planning application stage, these would be seen in the context of the existing and consented developments. The notable exceptions to this are the Melvich Wind Energy Hub and the proposed

offshore developments, particularly Dounreay Test and Demo Floating site. These would be seen in the same part of the view as Kirkton Energy Park, being located behind the proposed development.

15.0 Viewpoint 14: A836, Forss

Figure 7.18a-7.18d (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.41a-7.41d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 305647, 969395

15.1 Location

This viewpoint is located 19.5km north east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 71m AOD on the A836 near Forss. It is principally representative of views that would be obtained by road users travelling in a westerly direction on the A836, but also reflects views seen from residential properties close to the viewpoint. It is also representative of views from the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT.

15.2 Existing View

The view from this location comprises agricultural land, used for pasture. The fields are bounded by a combination of post and wire fences, stone walls and locally distinctive Caithness stone flagstone fences. It is an open view across the farmland, with this land use present across much of the view, which extends to a low, horizontal horizon. There are small areas of woodland in the middle distance, contrasting with the farmland. Sweeping moorland landscape is visible as a narrow band below the horizon. There are views to the sea to the north. Existing wind farms, Baillie and Forss (including Forss Extension) are visible to the left and right sides of the view presented in **Figure 7.18a**.

15.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.18a** and **7.18b** show the operational and consented developments of Baillie Wind Farm, together with Forss (and Forss Extension) and Hill of Lybster Wind Farms in the middle distance, with Limekiln (Section 36 Variation) and Limekiln Extension, Strathy North, Strathy South and Strathy Wood and Bettyhill Wind Farms beyond. The Dounreay Tri offshore turbines are visible further to the right from this location. The wirelines show the visibility of the Strathy and Bettyhill Wind Farm developments is limited, restricted to blades and blade tips. The Baillie and Forss Wind Farms are the most prominent being closest and contribute most to the baseline cumulative view.

15.4 Sensitivity

15.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Farmed Lowland Plain LCT

It is a simple, large scale open landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations within this LCT. It is a farmed, settled landscape with limited scenic value. It is considered to have a Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

15.4.2 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

This section of the A836 forms part of the North Coast 500, a nationally promoted tourist route. Therefore, the value associated with road users is considered to be High.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

15.4.3 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents is considered to be High, as set out in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties frequently located to take advantage of the views over the landscape.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

15.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.18a-c** and is summarised in **Table 15-1**.

Table 15-1: Viewpoint 14 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	19.5	SW
Operational /Consented	Baillie	4.02	SW
	Bettyhill	33	SW
	Dounreay Tri	14.27	NW
	Forss	3.43	NW
	Forss Extension	3.52	NW
	Hill of Lybster	3.15	NW
	Limekiln Extension	9.68	SW
	Limekiln S36 Variation	10.41	SW
	Strathy North	26.05	SW
	Strathy South	29.62	SW
	Strathy Wood	26.04	SW
In Planning	Armadale	26.62	SW
	Bettyhill Extension	32.71	SW
	Forss Extension 3	3.26	NW

The wirelines show all 11 of the proposed turbines would be visible. However, the extent of all the turbines that would be seen would be limited to blades and blade tips. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen in front of the blades and blade tips of the more distant Strathy South, Strathy Wood and Strathy North wind farms.

15.6 Magnitude of Change

Kirkton Energy Park would be positioned on the far side of landform, which forms the horizon to the south west of this viewpoint. The majority of the proposed development would be screened by this intervening landform, with only the blades and blade tips of the proposed development visible. It is an open, expansive view. However, the A836 is roughly orientated east to west and the views towards the site would be directly in line with the road direction at this point. The movement in the blades would be discernible as they break the horizon and would be seen against the sky.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen directly in front of, and at closer distance than the Strathy North, Strathy Wood and Strathy South wind farms, with these also being seen as blade tips extending above the horizon. It would also be seen in the context of the closer Baillie and Limekiln developments, as well as the Forss developments, which are more prominent in the view. Therefore, Kirkton Energy Park would not introduce any new element to the view and would not contrast with the pattern of existing wind farm development.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Slight**.

15.7 Predicted Effects

15.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

15.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development. For road users, who have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development, the resulting effect would be **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant**.

15.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The key proposed development at planning application stage predicted to be visible from this viewpoint is Armadale Wind Farm. This would comprise a relatively distant wind farm to the west, positioned between Kirkton Energy Park and the turbines at Forss and in front of the two turbines at Bettyhill. Forss Extension 3 would also be visible from this location, it would be located in the context of the existing and consented wind farm development at Forss, reinforcing this pattern of baseline development, with the Baillie and Limekiln Wind Farms the most prominent group of turbines closest to the viewpoint. Bettyhill Extension is also predicted to be visible, but this would be limited to blades or blade tips at a distance of over 30km.

Kirkton Energy Park would be located in the same part of the view as the existing and consented Strathy wind farm developments, which combined with the restricted extent of the proposed turbines that would be seen, would limit its contribution to cumulative effects. This group would be seen in the middle distance, separately from the proposed Armadale Wind Farm and existing Bettyhill turbines as well as the nearby Baillie and Limekiln Wind Farms. Overall, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Slight** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 15.7 above.

Several wind farms at scoping stage would be visible from this location. The closest of these to the proposed Kirkton Energy Park in the view would be Melvich Wind Energy Hub, which would be positioned immediately to the right of Kirkton Energy Park (**Figure 7.18c**). The Dounreay Test and Demo site would intensify the presence of wind farm development in the sea to the north west, and there may be distant views of the West of Orkney Offshore Wind Farm.

16.0 Viewpoint 15: Ben Alisky

Figures 7.19a-7.19e (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figures 7.42a-7.42d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 304562, 938649

16.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 25.4km south east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 344m AOD on the summit of Ben Alisky. It is representative of views that would be obtained by walkers visiting the summit. It is also representative of views from this occurrence of the Sweeping Moors and Flows LCTs.

16.2 Existing View

Ben Alisky is a relatively low summit set within the sweeping moorland that dominates the surrounding landscape. Its elevation compared with the surrounding moorland gives rise to open, expansive and panoramic views over the landscape and towards the sea, with the sea being visible to the north and south east. Views across the lower lying moorland with associated open pools of water predominate, punctuated by surrounding summits, particularly in relation to distant views, the most prominent summits being Morven and those along the Scaraben ridge to the south. The pattern of moorland is broken by medium to large areas of commercial forestry, particularly in views to the north.

16.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The panoramic views available from Ben Alisky include numerous operational and consented wind farms, with these being present to the north west through to the east of the viewpoint, as illustrated by **Figures 7.19a-d**. The most prominent of these are the development of Strathy South Wind Farm to the north west and a group of sites to the north east including Causeymire, Bad a Cheo, Halsary and Achlachan wind farms. Further in the distance across the view are a number of operational and consented wind farms in Sutherland to the north west and Caithness to the north and east.

16.4 Sensitivity

16.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

It is a relatively simple and large scale landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint lies on the northern edge of the Causeymire – Knockfin Wild Land Area and The Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA. The LCT comprises a moorland landscape of medium landscape condition, interspersed with blanket bog and areas of commercial forestry. It is an exposed, open landscape, with a strong sense of remoteness in places. It is considered to have a High-Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered to have a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

16.4.2 Visual Receptors: Walkers

The susceptibility of the visual receptors is considered to be High for walkers, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

Ben Alisky lies within the Causeymire – Knockfin Wild Land Area. It comprises a local high point, rising above the surrounding moorland and could constitute a focus for people walking within the area. There are no core paths that lead to the summit, although there are core path routes along the tracks to the north and west. There is also a path to the summit marked on ordnance survey maps. Overall, it is considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

Walkers are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

16.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.19a-d** and photomontage in **7.19e** and is summarised identifying the key cumulative wind farms in **Table 16-1**.

Table 16-1: Viewpoint 15 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	25.4	NW
Operational /Consented	Achairn	27.68	NE
	Achlachan	16.55	NE
	Bad a Cheo	15.04	NE
	Bettyhill	37.65	NW
	Bilbster	26	NE
	Baillie	26.05	N
	Boulfruich	11.34	E
	Camster	22.19	NE
	Causeymire	15.01	NE
	Cogle Moss	28.56	NE
	Forss	31.01	N
	Forss Extension	30.88	N
	Golticlay	16.24	E
	Halsary	17.15	NE
	Hill of Lybster	30.82	N
	Hill of Stroupster	39.34	NE
	Limekiln Extension	21.93	N
	Limekiln S36 Variation	21.74	N
	Lochend	37.89	NE
	Strathy North	29.25	NW
	Strathy South	26.26	NW
	Strathy Wood	27.04	NW
	Tacher	15.1	NE
Taigh Na Muir Dunnet	40.05	NE	
Wathegar	26.03	NE	
Wathegar 2	26.45	NE	
Weydale Farm	28.25	NE	
In Planning	Armadale	33.48	NW
	Bettyhill Extension	35.78	NW
	Forss Extension 3	30.93	N
	Slickly	38.18	NE
	Tormsdale	13.89	NE

The wireline (**Figure 7.19d**) illustrates that all 11 turbines of the proposed development would be visible. The extent of the turbines that would be seen varies across the site, with the upper part of the towers, hubs and blades of the more southern turbines predicted to be visible. However, this would gradually reduce for the more northerly turbines, restricted to the blades of turbines T1 and T2, as shown on **Figure 7.19d**. The proposed development would comprise an evenly spaced, single row of turbines, and would be seen partly against the landscape, but with the blades extending above the horizon.

16.6 Magnitude of Change

The proposed development would lie in a gap in the pattern of operational and consented wind farms, with Strathy North, Strathy South, Strathy Wood and Bettyhill Wind Farms lying to the north west and sites within Caithness lying to the north east. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would comprise a development of relatively limited size in comparison with the baseline developments. The location of the proposed development differs from the pattern of existing and consented wind farms. However, the separation distance and scale of the expansive, open view in which the proposed development would be seen, limits its prominence. The view towards the site is also arguably less distinctive than other directions, with the broadly flat moorland being less of a focus than the mountains that can be seen to the west and south.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

Considered in the context of this overall pattern of wind farms, the proposed development would not introduce a new or defining component in the landscape, but would add to the number of turbines. The proposed development would represent a noticeable, but localised change within the overall view and context of existing wind farms, and the cumulative magnitude of change is considered to be **Slight**.

16.7 Predicted Effects

16.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

16.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Slight** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of walkers who have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

16.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The proposed developments at planning application stage from this viewpoint would be seen in the context of and/or behind the existing and consented developments. Therefore, they would result in limited alteration to the overall pattern of wind farm developments seen from this location. The relative positions and prominence of these proposed developments means the primary focus, and cumulative effects would be associated with the larger existing developments, particularly the Strathy Wind Farms to the north west and those in the vicinity of Causeymire Wind Farm to the north east. In addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Slight** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 16.7 above.

Several developments that are at scoping stage would be seen from this location. However, as per the proposed developments that are at planning application stage, these would be seen in the context of the existing and consented developments. The Melvich Wind Energy Hub would be positioned to the right (**Figure 7.19d**) of Kirkton Energy Park.

17.0 Viewpoint 16: Achnahuaigh

Figures 7.20a-7.20b (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figure 7.43a (THC Volume 3ci-ii)
Wireline only

Grid Coordinates: 257739 964403

This viewpoint is located approximately 30.4km west of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 94m AOD, near Achnahuaigh on the edge of the Kyle of Tongue NSA. The viewpoint has been excluded from detailed assessment based on the EIA Scoping consultation feedback from NatureScot. This identified that the Kyle of Tongue NSA could be scoped out of the LVIA due to a combination of the intervening distance, limited theoretical visibility and presence of other wind farms between the designation and the proposed Kirkton Energy Park.

A wireline visualisation has been prepared to illustrate the potential visibility of the proposed development and the context in which it would be seen. The wireline in **Figure 7.20a** demonstrates that only blade tips of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be visible above the intervening landform. Based on this and the EIA Scoping consultation comments, no further assessment has been undertaken for this viewpoint.

18.0 Viewpoint 17: Ben Loyal

Figures 7.21a-7.21b (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figure 7.44a (THC Volume 3ci-ii)
Wireline only

Grid Coordinates: 257801 948875

This viewpoint is located approximately 31.5km south west of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 743m AOD, at the summit of Ben Loyal within the Kyle of Tongue NSA. As with viewpoint 16 above, the viewpoint has been excluded from detailed assessment based on the EIA Scoping consultation feedback from NatureScot.

A wireline visualisation has been prepared to illustrate the potential visibility of the proposed development and the context in which it would be seen. The wireline in **Figure 7.21a** demonstrates that the proposed Kirkton Energy Park would be visible from this location. However, the proposed development would be seen at a distance of over 30km in the context of multiple existing and consented wind farms, being located directly behind Strathy North Wind Farm. Based on this and the EIA Scoping consultation comments no further assessment has been undertaken for this viewpoint.

19.0 Viewpoint 18: Dunnet Head

Figures 7.22a-7.22c (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figure 7.45a (THC Volume 3ci-ii)
Specific Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 320532, 976513

19.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 36km north east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 123m AOD at the viewing area at Dunnet Head. It is representative of views that would be obtained by people visiting Dunnet Head, for whom a car park is provided. It is promoted for being the most northerly point in mainland Britain, with associated signage and interpretation. It is also representative of views from the High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays LCT.

19.2 Existing View

The view from this location comprises coastal grassland and moorland, which occupies the majority of the headland, together with Long Loch in the foreground of the view. Inland beyond Long Loch, lies the farmed lowland plain of north Caithness. Views to the east, north and west are predominately across the sea, with views to the Orkney Islands to the north east. Views are open, exposed and panoramic, and extend to a low, generally horizontal horizon. There are distant views to summits in the south west and west.

19.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.22a to 7.22c** show the operational and consented wind farm developments present across north Caithness and north east Sutherland. The closest of these comprise Taigh Na Muir Dunnet (a single turbine) Lochend, and Hill of Stroupster wind farms. Groups of operational and consented development are present across the view from east to west. In the direction of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park site, are relatively distant views of Baillie Wind Farm, Limekiln Wind Farm (Section 36 Variation), Limekiln Wind Farm Extension and the Strathy Wind Farms, which appear to coalesce as a single group. The Dounreay Tri offshore turbines are visible further to east from this location.

19.4 Sensitivity

19.4.1 Landscape Receptor: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays LCT

It is a simple, large scale open landscape with an absence of development, high cliffs and views of often turbulent seas contributing to a sense of wildness and naturalness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a High-Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

The viewpoint lies within the Dunnet Head SLA. The views to the coastline and connection with the sea contribute to the scenic qualities of the landscape. It is therefore considered that the value of the landscape is High-Medium.

The landscape receptor is considered as having a High-Medium overall sensitivity to wind farm development.

19.4.2 Visual Receptors: Residents, Visitors to Dunnet Head

The susceptibility of the visual receptors is considered to be High for local residents and visitors to Dunnet Head, as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for visitors to Dunnet Head is considered to be High. It is promoted for being the most northerly point in mainland Britain, which together with being marked as a viewpoint on Ordnance Survey maps, make it a popular destination for visitors.

Visual receptors at this viewpoint are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

19.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.22a-c** and is summarised in **Table 19-1**.

Table 19-1: Viewpoint 18 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	36	SW
Operational /Consented	Achairn	27.51	S
	Achlachan	24.93	S
	Bad a Cheo	26.8	S
	Bettyhill	49.32	SW
	Bilbster	25.56	S
	Baillie	20.17	SW
	Boulfruich	40.84	S
	Camster	28.27	S
	Causeymire	25.97	S
	Cogle Moss	20.83	S
	Dounreay Tri	27.89	W
	Forss	19.54	SW
	Forss Extension	19.49	SW
	Golticlay	35.37	S
	Halsary	25.19	S
	Hill of Lybster	19.39	SW
	Hill of Stroupster	16.15	SE
	Limekiln Extension	25.63	SW
	Limekiln S36 Variation	26.26	SW
	Lochend	10.31	SE
	Strathy North	42.54	SW
	Strathy South	46	SW
	Strathy Wood	42.51	SW
	Tacher	29.29	S
	Taigh Na Muir Dunnet	6.16	SE
	Wathegar	26.3	S
Wathegar 2	26.66	S	
Weydale Farm	13	SW	
In Planning	Armadale	43	SW
	Bettyhill Extension	49.14	SW
	Forss Extension 3	19.35	SW
	Slickly	15.11	SE
	Tormsdale	27.15	S

The wirelines show all 11 of the proposed turbines at Kirkton Energy Park would be visible. However, the extent of all the turbines that would be seen would typically be limited to blades and blade tips, the exception being

turbines T4 and T5 as shown on **Figure 7.22c**, where the hubs would also be visible. The proposed development would be seen in front of the Strathy South, Strathy Wood and Strathy North wind farms.

19.6 Magnitude of Change

Kirkton Energy Park would comprise a distant element, lying 36km from this viewpoint. It would be positioned on the far side of intervening landform which forms part of the horizon to the south west of this location. The majority of the proposed development would be screened by this intervening higher ground, with the hubs and blades of two turbines visible together with the blades and blade tips of nine turbines. The proposed development would occupy a small proportion of the open, expansive 360 degree view. Blade movement would be discernible as the turbines break the horizon and would be seen against the sky. However, the proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen directly in front of the Strathy North, Strathy Wood and Strathy South Wind Farms and also in the context of the closer Limekiln, Baillie, and Forss wind farm developments. Therefore, it would not introduce anything distinctly different and would not contrast with the pattern of existing wind farm development.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Negligible**.

19.7 Predicted Effects

19.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays LCT is considered to be of High-Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

19.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of visitors to Dunnet Head who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development.

19.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The key proposed development at planning application stage from this viewpoint is Slickly Wind Farm. This would be positioned to the south east of this viewpoint and therefore in a different part of the view to the proposed Kirkton Energy Park. Slickly Wind Farm would also be located in the context of the operational Hill of Stroupster and Lochend Wind Farms. Tormsdale, Armadale, Bettyhill Extension and Forss Extension 3 Wind Farms would comprise relatively distant developments located in the context of the baseline existing and consented wind farms.

Kirkton Energy Park would be located in the same part of the view as the existing and consented Strathy wind farm developments, which combined with the restricted extent of the turbines that would be seen, would limit its contribution to cumulative effects. Overall, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Negligible** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 19.7 above.

Several wind farms at scoping stage would be visible from this location. The closest of these to the viewpoint would be Lochend Extension and Corsback Hill, both of which would be seen to the south east and south and in a separate view to the proposed Kirkton Energy Park. Cairnmore Wind Farm Resubmission would be seen to the

south west and therefore in the same direction as Kirkton Energy Park. The Dounreay Test and Demo site and more distant West of Orkney Offshore Wind Farm would intensify the presence of wind farm development in the sea to the west and north west.

20.0 Viewpoint 19: A836, Balmore

Figures 7.23a-7.23f (NatureScot Volume 3bi-ii) and Figure 7.46a-7.46d (THC Volume 3ci-ii)

Representative Viewpoint

Grid Coordinates: 300516, 967595

20.1 Location

This viewpoint is located approximately 15km north east of the nearest turbine of the proposed development at an elevation of 49m AOD on the A836 at Balmore. It is principally representative of views that would be obtained by road users travelling in a westerly direction on the A836, but also reflects views seen from residential properties close to the viewpoint. It is also representative of views from Farmed Lowland Plain LCT.

20.2 Existing View

The view from this location comprises agricultural land, used for a mix of arable crops and pasture with the field in the foreground having been cultivated for planting. The land to the left of the view in **Figure 7.23a** comprises young scrub and trees. The fields are bounded by a combination of post and wire fences, stone walls and locally distinctive Caithness stone flagstone fences. There are occasional dispersed residential properties seen from this location. The Dounreay nuclear site is visible to the west, contrasting with the otherwise rural and coastal scene. It is an open view across the farmland, with this land use present across much of the view, which extends to a low, broadly horizontal horizon. Sweeping moorland landscape is visible as a narrow band below the horizon. There are views to the coastline and sea to the east and north. Existing wind farms at Baillie and Forss are clearly visible from this location, although in opposing directions to views towards the proposed Kirkton Energy Park site.

20.3 Baseline Cumulative View

The wirelines in **Figures 7.23a to 7.23e** show the clear views of the operational wind developments of Baillie Wind Farm to the south east and Forss (and Forss Extension) Wind Farm to the north east. The consented developments of Limekiln Wind Farm (Section 36 Variation) and Limekiln Wind Farm Extension to the south are also prominent in the wirelines. In the direction of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park site, the Strathy North and Bettyhill wind farm developments are theoretically visible, although the wirelines show this is limited to blade tips. The Dounreay Tri offshore turbines lie to the north west from this viewpoint.

20.4 Sensitivity

20.4.1 Landscape Receptor: Farmed Lowland Plain LCT

It is a simple, large scale open landscape. Wind farms are a noted characteristic of the fringes of this LCT within Caithness. It is a landscape that is considered to have a Medium susceptibility to wind farm development.

There are no landscape designations within this LCT. It is a farmed, settled landscape with limited scenic value. It is considered to have a Medium value.

Overall, the landscape receptor is considered as having a Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

20.4.2 Visual Receptors: Road Users

The susceptibility of road users is considered to be Medium as set out in the methodology in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

This section of the A836 forms part of the North Coast 500, a nationally promoted tourist route. Therefore, the value associated with road users is considered to be High.

Road users along this local road are considered to have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

20.4.3 Visual Receptors: Local Residents

The susceptibility of the local residents is considered to be High, as set out in **Technical Appendix 7.1**.

The value attached to the view for residents is considered to be High as views obtained by residents from their homes in this location are considered to be highly valued, with properties frequently located to take advantage of the views over the landscape.

Residents are considered to have a High sensitivity to wind farm development.

20.5 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline Wind Farms

The predicted cumulative view is illustrated in the wirelines in **Figures 7.23a-e** and is summarised in **Table 20-1**.

Table 20-1: Viewpoint 19 Key Existing and Proposed Wind Energy Developments Visible

Status	Wind Farm	Distance from VP (km)	Direction from VP
Application Site	Kirkton	15	SW
Operational /Consented	Baillie	2.38	SE
	Bettyhill	27.58	SW
	Dounreay Tri	11.01	NW
	Forss	2.44	NE
	Forss Extension	2.44	NE
	Hill of Lybster	2.68	NE
	Limekiln Extension	5.71	SW
	Limekiln S36 Variation	6.48	SW
	Strathy North	20.64	SW
	In Planning	Armadale	21.19
Bettyhill Extension		27.28	SW
Forss Extension 3		2.64	NE

The wirelines (**Figure 7.23e**) show nine of the proposed turbines would be visible, and the extent of all the turbines that would be seen would be limited to blade tips. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines theoretically would be seen in front of the Strathy South Wind Farm, although the wirelines show that the visibility of this development would be very limited and may not be perceptible.

20.6 Magnitude of Change

Kirkton Energy Park would be positioned on the far side of intervening landform, which forms the horizon to the south west of this viewpoint. The majority of the proposed development would be screened by this intervening landform, with only the blade tips of the proposed development predicted to be visible. It is an open, expansive 360 degree view. However, the A836 at this location is roughly orientated north east to south west and the views towards the site (south west) would be directly in line with the road direction at this point. Blade

movement would be discernible as the turbines break the horizon and would be seen against the sky. The proposed Kirkton Energy Park turbines would be seen directly in front of the Strathy South Wind Farm, although the wirelines demonstrate that the visibility of this consented development would be very limited at this location. Overall, the prominence of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park would be limited at this location, particularly in the context of the closer Baillie, Forss and Limekiln wind farm developments.

The borrow pits, substation compound and access tracks are not predicted to be visible from this viewpoint.

The cumulative magnitude of change from the introduction of the Kirkton Energy Park to the landscape is considered to be **Negligible**.

20.7 Predicted Effects

20.7.1 Landscape Character

The landscape receptor of the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to wind farms, which combined with a **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the landscape character within the view.

20.7.2 Visual Amenity

A **Negligible** magnitude of change from the introduction of the proposed development would result in a **Moderate-Minor** and **Not Significant** effect on the visual amenity of local residents who have a high sensitivity to wind farm development. For road users, who have a High-Medium sensitivity to wind farm development, the resulting effect would be **Minor** and **Not Significant**.

20.8 Predicted Cumulative View with Baseline and Proposed Wind Farms

The most relevant proposed developments at planning application stage visible from this viewpoint are Armadale Wind Farm and Forss Extension 3. Armadale Wind Farm would comprise a relatively distant wind farm to the west, positioned to the right (**Figure 7.23e**) of the proposed Kirkton Energy Park. Forss Extension 3 would also be visible to the north east from this location and it would be located in the context of the existing and consented wind farm development at Forss, reinforcing this pattern of baseline development. Bettyhill Extension would also be theoretically visible from this location, but this would relate blade tips at over 25km.

As described above, it is predicted that a limited extent of Kirkton Energy Park would be seen from this location, which would limit its contribution to cumulative effects. Overall, in addition to the baseline and proposed wind farms, the magnitude of cumulative change of the proposed development with baseline and proposed wind farms is considered to remain **Negligible** and the cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity would be assessed as in section 20.7 above.

The key wind farms at scoping stage that would be visible from this location are likely to comprise the Melvich Wind Energy Hub and the Dounreay Test and Demonstration Floating Wind Farms. The closest of these to the proposed Kirkton Energy Park in the view would be Melvich Wind Energy Hub, which would be located immediately to the right (**Figure 7.23e**) of the proposed development. The Dounreay Test and Demo site would intensify the presence of wind farm development in the sea to the north east and there may also be distant views of the West of Orkney Offshore Wind Farm in the same direction.

EUROPEAN OFFICES

United Kingdom

AYLESBURY

T: +44 (0)1844 337380

BELFAST

T: +44 (0)28 9073 2493

BRADFORD-ON-AVON

T: +44 (0)1225 309400

BRISTOL

T: +44 (0)117 906 4280

CARDIFF

T: +44 (0)29 2049 1010

CHELMSFORD

T: +44 (0)1245 392170

EDINBURGH

T: +44 (0)131 335 6830

EXETER

T: +44 (0)1392 490152

GLASGOW

T: +44 (0)141 353 5037

GUILDFORD

T: +44 (0)1483 889800

LONDON

T: +44 (0)203 805 6418

MAIDSTONE

T: +44 (0)1622 609242

MANCHESTER

T: +44 (0)161 872 7564

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

T: +44 (0)191 261 1966

NOTTINGHAM

T: +44 (0)115 964 7280

SHEFFIELD

T: +44 (0)114 245 5153

SHREWSBURY

T: +44 (0)1743 23 9250

STIRLING

T: +44 (0)1786 239900

WORCESTER

T: +44 (0)1905 751310

Ireland

DUBLIN

T: +353 (0)1 296 4667

France

GRENOBLE

T: +33 (0)6 23 37 14 14