

# TECHNICAL APPENDIX 7.5

## WILD LAND AREA ASSESSMENT

**Kirkton Energy Park**

Prepared for: Kirkton Wind Farm Limited

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## 1.0 Introduction

This Technical Appendix sets out the assessment of potential effects of Kirkton Energy Park on the East Halladale Flows Wild Land Area (WLA 39). The proposed development would not be located in the WLA, but the nearest proposed turbine would be approximately 2km from its western boundary.

The East Halladale Flows WLA consists of open, undulating sweeping moorland and peatland often punctuated by pools characteristic of the flow country. There are also more elevated areas in parts of the WLA. It extends from the east side of Strath Halladale westward to Ben Dorrery, and from just north of Beinn Ratha southward to Altnabreac Forest.

There are three other WLAs within the 40km Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) study area for the proposed development. However, no detailed assessment was requested for these during the EIA Scoping process, due to distance and the limited zone of theoretical visibility of Kirkton Energy Park predicted, as described below. Specific consultation has been undertaken with NatureScot on the assessment of East Halladale Flows WLA. **Figures 7.1b** and **7.2e** of the main LVIA shows the location of the proposed development site relative to the WLAs in the LVIA study area.

The Wild Land Area Assessment (WLAA) is accompanied by the following illustrations:

- **Figure 7.5.1:** an enlargement of the East Halladale Flows WLA together with the turbine layout for the proposed development overlaid with a blade tip Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) showing the 4 representative viewpoints;
- **Figure 7.5.2:** as above, with an overlay of the hub height ZTV; and
- **Figure 7.5.3:** as **Figure 7.5.1** together with the locations and predicted blade tip visibility of the other wind farms, (as listed in **Table 4-1** below), that have been taken into account in the assessment of cumulative effects on the WLA.

Four viewpoints have been considered as part of the WLAA, which were identified and confirmed as part of the consultation with NatureScot. Due to the presentation requirements for the viewpoint photography and visualisations they are included in Volume 3b (NatureScot Visualisations) and Volume 3c (The Highland Council Visualisations). The viewpoints assessed as part of the WLAA are as follows:

- Viewpoint A: Loch na Caorach (see LVIA **Figure 7.24**);
- Viewpoint B: Cnoc Bad Mhairtein (see LVIA **Figure 7.25**);
- Viewpoint C: Beinn Ràtha (see LVIA **Figure 7.12**, this also comprises Viewpoint 8 of the LVIA); and
- Viewpoint D: Beinn nam Bad Mòr (see LVIA **Figure 7.26**).

## 2.0 Consultation

A document setting out the proposed approach to the assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development on the East Halladale Flows Wild Land Area (WLA), together with the proposed WLAA viewpoints, was sent to NatureScot on 07/10/21. This set out that the WLAA would be undertaken in accordance with the guidance published by NatureScot (NatureScot, September 2020, Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas: Technical Guidance). The approach proposed is reflected in the methodology described below.

NatureScot responded confirming the approach that was proposed was appropriate stating: *“Overall we are satisfied with what has been proposed for the wild land assessment. We are in agreement that the study area should comprise the whole of the East Halladale Flows WLA 39. Table 1 sets out the wild land qualities to be scoped in for further assessment. We are in agreement that all four of the qualities for WLA39 have the potential to be significantly affected and should be assessed further. We are also content with the selection of the four assessment points within the WLA, these being; Loch na Caorach, Cnoc Bad Mhairtein, Beinn Ratha and Beinn nam Bad Mor.”*

## 3.0 Methodology

The WLAA has been carried out following NatureScot's Technical Guidance : Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas, (NatureScot 2020). The general approach and principles of NatureScot's guidance follow the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (GLVIA, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

The WLA guidance refers to the descriptions of wild land qualities produced by NatureScot for each of the 42 WLAs identified in Scotland (NatureScot 2017) after a process of initial search and refinement. These descriptions, together with field work observations carried out for the Kirkton Energy Park, contribute to defining the WLA baseline against which the predicted effects of the proposed development are assessed.

The assessment considers the potential effects of the proposed development on the physical attributes and perceptual responses that contribute to the WLA qualities, as identified in **Table 5-1** below. The baseline description and key attributes set out in NatureScot's description for the East Halladale Flows WLA have been verified and augmented through desk study and field work.

WLAs are defined at a national level. The value ascribed to WLAs for the purpose of carrying out the WLAA is set out in Section 6.0 below. The susceptibility of the wild land qualities scoped into the assessment are identified in **Table 5-2**, (i.e. identified and verified through desk study and field work), including their physical attributes and perceptual responses. This has been assessed through application of professional judgement, and is accompanied by an explanation of the susceptibility of individual qualities and / or combinations of qualities where there is some commonality between their contributing attributes and responses. The overall sensitivity of the WLA qualities has been identified by combining the value of WLAs with the assessed susceptibility of these qualities.

The magnitude of change that would occur from the proposed development on individual and / or combinations of qualities has been assessed, drawing out which physical attributes and perceptual responses would be affected; how and to what degree. This is derived from the size or scale of predicted change, its extent and duration.

## 4.0 Step 1 – Study Area and Scope of Assessment

The study area for the WLAA comprises the whole of the East Halladale Flows WLA, focussing on the parts of the WLA predicted to have visibility of the Kirkton Energy Park, as shown on **Figure 7.5.1**, and as agreed with NatureScot. The ZTV demonstrates that the main areas with predicted visibility occur on the west side of the WLA within 10km of the proposed development, extending southward from Beinn Ratha to Cnoc an Fhuarain Bhain. There are isolated pockets of predicted visibility on higher ground around Cnoc Preas a' Mhadaidh and north east of Sletill Hill in the south west. The majority of the east side of the WLA has no predicted visibility of the proposed development.

As noted above, there are three other WLAs in the LVIA study area: Causeymire - Knockfin Flows WLA 36 approximately 16 km to the south south east; Ben Klibreck - Armine Forest WLA 35, approximately 26 km to the south south west; and Ben Hope – Ben Loyal WLA 38, approximately 27km to the west. Consultation with NatureScot established that as these are at distances over 15km with limited predicted visibility of the proposed development, an assessment of the potential effects of Kirkton Energy Park on these areas was not required. **Figures 7.1b** and **7.2e** of the main LVIA shows the location of the proposed development site relative to the WLAs in the LVIA study area, with predicted blade tip visibility.

It was agreed through consultation that the WLAA should take account of the potential cumulative effects of Kirkton Energy Park with other nearby wind farms (operational, consented and proposed) that are located in the vicinity of the WLA. Relating the main part of theoretical visibility of Kirkton Energy Park to the pattern of other nearby wind farms and their visibility, the key cumulative developments that are considered to be relevant to this assessment are:

**Table 4-1:**  
**Key Cumulative Wind Farm Developments in the Context of East Halladale Flows Wild Land Area**

Status	Wind farm	No of Turbines	Height of Turbines to Blade Tip (m)	Direction from WLA	Approx. distance from WLA (km)
Operational/Consented	Achlachan*	5	115	E	Over 8km
	Bad a Cheo*	13	112	E	Over 8km
	Baillie	21	115	NE	6
	Causeymire*	24	101	E	Over 8km
	Dounreay Tri	10	270	N	13
	Forss**	2	76	N	9
	Forss Extension**	4	78	N	9
	Halsary*	15	120	E	Over 8km
	Hill of Lybster**	1	99.5	N	9
	Limekiln Extension	5	149.9	NE	Adjoins Limekiln S36 variation
	Limekiln S36 Variation	19	149.9	NE	Adjacent
	Strathy North	33	110	W	7.7
	Strathy South	34	200	W	8.7
	Strathy Wood	20	180	W	7.2
	Tacher*	2	130	E	Over 8km

Proposed (Planning Application)	Armadaale	12	149.9	W	10.2
	Forss Extension 3	2	125	N	9.3
	Tormsdale	12	149.9	E	Over 7km
EIA Scoping Stage	Dounreay Test and Demo Floating	10	270	N	13.6
	Loch Toftingall	6	138.5	E	12.1
	Melvich Wind Energy Hub	13	149.9	NW	4.3

\*forms part of the Causeymire group of wind farms (existing and consented)

\*\*forms part of the Forss group of wind farms (existing and consented)

A cumulative ZTV showing the predicted visibility of Kirkton Wind Farm with the operational and consented wind farms, and the proposed developments at planning application stage detailed above is shown on **Figure 7.5.3**.

Four representative viewpoints were agreed with NatureScot, one of which, Beinn Ràtha, is also an LVIA viewpoint. The view from this summit has been included as it is a location noted in NatureScot's WLA description as being more visited by people. The summit of Beinn nam Bad Mòr has been selected because it is located in a more elevated area towards the central part of the WLA, and most eastern area with predicted visibility. Viewpoints B and D are positioned within the main area of predicted visibility on the west side of the WLA closer to the proposed development. The locations of the viewpoints are identified in **Table 4-2** and shown in **Figure 7.5.1**.

**Table 4-2: WLAA Viewpoint Locations**

Map Ref	VP Name	Approx. distance to the nearest turbine	Direction to site	Easting	Northing
A	Loch na Caorach	3.1km	W	291030	958679
B	Cnoc Bad Mhairtein	6.1km	NW	293203	954908
C	Beinn Ratha	7.4km	W	295405	961311
D	Beinn nam Bad Mor	12.3km	NW	299850	955053



## 5.0 Step 2 – Verification of the Baseline

The description of the East Halladale Flows WLA published by NatureScot (2017) identifies that it is one of the three WLAs comprising low lying peatland with extensive blanket bog that covers the majority of Caithness and Sutherland.

The WLA is uninhabited, although the settlements of Strath Halladale lie outside its edge to the west and there are groups of houses at Broubster, Shurrery and Dorrery to the east. A number of roads pass just outside the WLA accessing these settlements; notably the A836 to the north and the A897 which follows Strath Halladale. However, as identified by NatureScot, it is not easy to see into the WLA from these roads, because of the screening effect of intervening slopes. NatureScot state that the best route from which to gain open views toward the WLA, is the railway line between Forsinard and Scots Calder which is slightly elevated. There are a limited number of tracks or paths entering the WLA and it tends to be visited by few people, except for the peak of Beinn Ràtha in the far north, or for fishing, deer stalking, land management or habitat survey. At a broad scale, management of the Caithness and Sutherland peatlands is currently guided by a strategy developed by the LIFE Peatlands Project.

As identified by NatureScot, the WLA is not covered by any landscape designations, but the majority of the area is covered by conservation designations and the Flow Country is on the Tentative List for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (submitted 27/01/2012). Within the List it states: *‘The Flow Country is also unusual in that it provides an extensive area of wild land and solitude on an otherwise highly developed and densely populated island. As wild areas such as these are typically mountainous... large, continuous areas such as the Flow Country are exceptional’.*

The key attributes and qualities and their potential for being affected by the Kirkton Energy Park are set out in **Table 5-1**. Field work was undertaken in August 2022 and confirmed that these qualities are present in the WLA. **Table 5-1** includes a description of the site observations that were made in relation to the key attributes and qualities. Reflecting on how the WLA key attributes and qualities are expressed in the baseline landscape it was considered that the *“rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape’s simple composition at the broad scale”* relates to physical components that would not be affected by the proposed development.

The railway line between Scots Calder Station and Altnabreac Station, on the south eastern edge of the East Halladale Flows WLA, was not travelled as part of the WLAA. The NatureScot description notes that this is where the WLA is viewed by a relatively high number of people. However, the ZTV (**Figure 7.5.1**) illustrates that the proposed development would not be visible from the railway line and would not affect such views.

**Table 5-1:**  
**East Halladale Flows WLA Key Attributes/Qualities**

Key Attribute/Quality	Relevance to the Wild Land Area Assessment	Fieldwork Observations
An awe-inspiring simplicity of landscape at the broad scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis, 'wide skies' and few foci	<p>The proposed development would introduce new vertical structures that would be visible from parts of the WLA in the context of the horizontal emphasis in the landscape. This would overlap with the fourth attribute/quality outlined below.</p> <p>This attribute/quality is considered relevant to the wild land assessment.</p>	<p>This attribute/quality is generally expressed, particularly within the interior of the WLA. However, a recurring theme during the fieldwork was observations that, whilst there are few foci within the WLA itself, the noted attribute takes limited account of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape. It was clear from the fieldwork undertaken that there are multiple foci outside the WLA that are clearly visible from locations within it and contribute to its character. These include the lone mountains which are referred to in the WLA description, together with multiple blocks of commercial forestry around the edges of the WLA, the sea and boat movements in the Pentland Firth, the settled coastal landscape, Dounreay nuclear site and wind farm developments. Key existing wind farm developments include Strathy North Wind Farm to the west, Baillie Wind Farm and the wind turbines at Forss to the north east, as well as the wind farms at Causeymire to the east. In addition, the consented Limekiln Wind Farm (and consented extension) will be present close to the north east boundary of the WLA (see <b>Figure 7.5.3</b>).</p> <p>These elements in the baseline landscape erode the simplicity of the landscape by forming multiple foci that draw attention away from the interior of the WLA and contribute to its setting.</p> <p>It is apparent, from the fieldwork undertaken, that the WLA borrows from the wider landscape context. The landscapes to the south and west in particular make a clear contribution to the sense of vastness and remoteness.</p>
A remote, discrete interior, with limited access and a strong sense of solitude	<p>The description of the WLA does not define what comprises the interior. However, assuming it may refer to the central part of the WLA, the ZTV (<b>Figure 7.5.1</b>), identifies that there would be theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines from locations towards the centre of the WLA.</p> <p>This attribute/quality is considered relevant to the wild land assessment.</p>	<p>This key attribute/quality was evident within the interior of the WLA. However, as noted in the comments above, the foci visible from summits and the edges of the WLA erode the sense of remoteness and solitude.</p> <p>It is assumed that the reference to a discrete interior relates to a sense of separation from the surrounding landscapes. However, this was not readily apparent from the fieldwork undertaken. Whilst there are areas where this sense of separation occurs, particularly in parts of the WLA remote from any ready means of access, more typically there are strong visual relationships with the surrounding landscape. This does contribute positively to the WLA, particularly to the south, where there are extensive views over the surrounding</p>

Key Attribute/Quality	Relevance to the Wild Land Area Assessment	Fieldwork Observations
		Sweeping Moorland and Flows. These visual connections also result in detracting elements influencing the WLA, as described above.
A rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape's simple composition at the broad scale	<p>The proposed development is located outside the WLA and there would be no physical effects on the landform or associated features/elements.</p> <p>This attribute/quality is considered to have limited relevance to the wild land assessment.</p>	This attribute/quality is clearly evident throughout the WLA. The simple composition at a broad scale is applicable to the land within the WLA, but there is a high degree of intervisibility with elements that are located outside the WLA, as described above.
A remarkably open landscape with extensive visibility, meaning tall or high features in the distance are clearly visible	<p>Consistent with the comments made above in relation to the first key attribute/quality, the proposed development would introduce new vertical structures that would be visible from parts of the WLA.</p> <p>This attribute/quality is considered relevant to the wild land assessment.</p>	<p>This attribute/quality is evident. It was clear during the fieldwork that there is a degree of contradiction between some of the attributes/qualities, particularly the links between intervisibility between the WLA and surrounding landscapes and the sense of remoteness/solitude, and also the reference to few foci. Tall structures within the surrounding landscape, particularly the nearby wind farms, are clearly visible in the baseline. The electricity pylons that are located along the northern and western boundaries of the WLA are also visible, although their lattice form, lack of movement and landscape backdrop (from many locations) mean they are more recessive elements.</p> <p>A key point linked with this attribute/quality is that the elements that detract from the sense of remoteness and wildness are broadly concentrated around the northern part of the WLA. Although the Strathy Wood and Strathy South Wind Farms will extend the extent of vertical structures to the east and the group of wind farms at Causeymire are clearly visible to the east.</p>

## 6.0 Step 3 – Assess Sensitivity of WLA Qualities

In terms of landscape character, the East Halladale Flows WLA is wholly within the Sweeping Moorland and Flows landscape character type. This is judged in the LVIA (effects on landscape character section, **Table 7-9**) to be of medium sensitivity to wind farm development.

As described in Section 3.0, WLAs are identified at a national level. Scottish Planning Policy (The Scottish Government, 2014) places WLAs in Group 2 (areas of significant protection), the middle tier and below National Parks and National Scenic Areas. The Nature Scot guidance document Spatial Planning for Onshore Wind Turbines – Natural heritage Considerations (SNH, June 2015) identifies that “*wild land is not a designation but is afforded significant protection*”. Within Annex 1 – Landscape objectives of the NatureScot guidance document, it sets out:

*“Within local landscape designations and Wild land Areas, the degree of landscape protection will be less than for National Scenic Areas. In these areas, an appropriate objective may be to accommodate wind farms, rather than seek landscape protection.”*

Therefore, based on the LVIA methodology (see **Technical Appendix 7.1**) and taking account of this guidance, the East Halladale Flows WLA is considered to be of **High – medium** value.

The susceptibility of the key qualities of the WLA and their sensitivity to change of the nature envisaged from the proposed development has been judged on the basis of desk study and field work carried out for the WLAA and is set out in **Table 7-1**. The strength of the four noted qualities and attributes of the WLA varies across different parts of the WLA and accordingly, their susceptibility and sensitivity to change that would occur as a result of the proposed development also varies across the WLA.

## 7.0 Steps 4 and 5 – Assess the magnitude of change and significance of effects

In order to present the findings most succinctly, Steps 4 and 5 have been combined. The assessment has drawn on observations made at the four representative viewpoints as presented in Annex 1. **Table 7-1** presents the findings in respect of Kirkton Energy Park with the existing and consented wind farms included in this WLAA (see **Table 4-1** above). **Table 7-1** presents the findings in respect of Kirkton Energy Park with these baseline wind farms. In addition, the key proposed wind farm at planning application stage in the landscape surrounding the WLA is Armadale Wind Farm. Other proposed wind farms at a similar stage (Bettyhill Wind Farm, Forss Extension 3 and Tormsdale Wind Farm) are either more distant from the WLA, or closely grouped with existing operational wind farms. Therefore, the potential contribution of these development in relation to change associated with the East Halladale Flows WLA is likely to be more limited.

### 7.1 Visibility across the WLA

The ZTVs (**Figures 7.5.1** and **7.5.2**) show extensive visibility of Kirkton Energy Park within 10km. There are areas where the landform truncates theoretical visibility within 10km, such as west of the ridge formed by Beinn Ràtha, Sean Airigh and Clachgeal Hill. Beyond 10km the ZTV shows theoretical of the proposed development would be very limited, restricted to small, fragmented areas associated with higher ground such around the summit of Beinn nam Bad Mòr and higher ground at Cnoc Preas a' Mhadaidh as well as to the west and east of Lochan Ealach Mor. The nature of the land cover, i.e. the absence of surface features such as woodland, means the ZTV is likely to present a relatively accurate depiction of where the proposed development would be seen.

The cumulative ZTV in **Figure 7.5.3** indicates the pattern visibility of Kirkton Energy Park in the context of cumulative wind farm developments. The cumulative ZTV shows that Kirkton Energy Park would be almost always seen in conjunction with operational and consented wind farms, with analysis of wirelines for the viewpoints suggesting this combined visibility would relate mainly to the Strathy Wind Farms to the west and Limekiln Wind Farm to the north.

Where visibility of Kirkton Energy Park would be more limited, in the eastern part of the WLA, the wind farms in the vicinity of Causeymire would be seen. Whilst these developments are beyond approximately 8km, observations during fieldwork noted they are clearly visible in views to the east, particularly from eastern part of the WLA.

### 7.2 Effects on the Key Qualities of the WLA – Kirkton Energy Park in Baseline

The overall effects of Kirkton Energy Park on the four key qualities across the WLA have been assessed drawing on desk study and field work judgements at the four representative viewpoints as well as wider observations across the WLA. These are set out in **Table 7-1** below.

**Table 7-1: Assessment of Effects on WLA Attributes/Qualities**

Key Attribute/ Quality	Susceptibility and Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Predicted Effect
An awe-inspiring simplicity of landscape at the broad scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis, 'wide skies' and few foci	<p><b>Medium</b> to <b>Medium – low</b> susceptibility. Varying with location within the WLA. More elevated locations are of lower susceptibility due to detracting elements that form points of focus within views.</p> <p><b>High – medium</b> to <b>Medium</b> sensitivity</p>	<p>The proposed Kirkton Energy Park would not alter the landform of the WLA. It would introduce tall vertical structures close to the west edge of the WLA where the wind turbines would punctate the horizontal emphasis of the landscape. However, in the context of the expansive views that are typically experienced from the wider WLA, the proposed development would result in limited effects on both the horizontal emphasis and wide skies. The relatively limited intervening distance between edge of the WLA and the closest proposed wind turbine (approximately 2km) means the turbines would be noticeably larger structures in views to the west than the Strathly Wind Farms.</p> <p>As set out in <b>Table 5-1</b>, there are typically multiple foci present within the views. Existing and consented wind farms form recurring foci within views. Therefore, the proposed development would reinforce this pattern rather than introduce something new or distinct.</p> <p>The level of change would vary with location within the WLA, being greatest in the western part, where the proposed development would be a prominent feature in views out from the WLA.</p> <p>The magnitude of change resulting from the proposed development in respect of this WLA key attribute/quality is judged to vary between <b>Substantial</b> and <b>Medium</b>, where Kirkton Energy Park would be visible. The greatest magnitude of change would occur on lower slopes and more contained areas at distances of up to approximately 8 – 10km on the western side of the WLA. At greater distances and higher elevations, a reduced magnitude of change would result due to a combination of the separation from Kirkton Energy Park and the other foci with which it would be seen. This would particularly be the case on higher ground in the northern part of the WLA (e.g. Beinn Ràitha) due to the relative prominence of the consented Limekiln Wind Farm.</p> <p>An integral part of the proposed development is the removal of the commercial forestry in the northern part of the site, with peatland restoration proposed in this area. Whilst this change would be more limited than the change resulting from the proposed wind turbines, it</p>	<p>Combining the judgements, it is considered the proposed development would result in a <b>Major to Major – moderate</b> and <b>Significant</b> effect on this key attribute/quality at distances of up to approximately 8 – 10km.</p> <p>Beyond such distances and on higher ground in the north of the WLA, the effect would reduce to a <b>Moderate</b> or less and, <b>not significant</b> effect.</p>

Key Attribute/ Quality	Susceptibility and Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Predicted Effect
		would be positive and could continue beyond the operational life of the wind farm.	
A remote, discrete interior, with limited access and a strong sense of solitude	<p><b>Medium – low</b> susceptibility, although this varies slightly with location within the WLA. Areas of slightly higher susceptibility comprise relatively lower ground where the landscape is more enclosed by the landform. More elevated locations are of slightly lower susceptibility due to expansiveness of views and reduced sense of solitude due to visibility towards more settled and/or agricultural areas.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> sensitivity</p>	<p>The interior is not defined as part of the WLA description. The ZTVs demonstrate there would be limited and fragmented visibility of the proposed development from the majority of the core part of the WLA. Where it is theoretically visible, typically the proposed development would be seen in the context of multiple elements that already affect the sense of solitude and remoteness.</p> <p>It was clear during the fieldwork undertaken, that the sense of solitude and remoteness is most strongly expressed to the south and south west of the WLA, away from the proposed development.</p> <p>The proposed development would have no effect on access to any part of the WLA.</p> <p>The magnitude of change resulting from the proposed development in respect of this WLA key attribute/quality is judged to be <b>Substantial to Medium</b>.</p>	<p>Combining the judgements, it is considered the proposed development would result in an effect that would vary between <b>Major – moderate</b> and significant and <b>Moderate and not significant</b> on this key attribute/quality. The parts of the WLA likely to be affected by the proposed development generally exhibit this attribute/quality to a lesser degree due to the influence of detracting elements around the edges (beyond the WLA). The proposed wind turbines would also be seen in the context of existing and consented with farms. Notwithstanding this, significant effects are predicted to occur at locations closer to the proposed development due to the prominence of the wind turbines.</p>
A rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape's simple composition at the broad scale	None - these comprise physical features within the WLA that would not be affected by footprint of the proposed development.	These comprise physical features within the WLA. There would be no connectivity (direct or indirect) with the proposed development and therefore no changes are predicted to result.	No effect.

Key Attribute/ Quality	Susceptibility and Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Predicted Effect
A remarkably open landscape with extensive visibility, meaning tall or high features in the distance are clearly visible	<p><b>High – medium to Medium - low</b> susceptibility</p> <p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline although tall structures (pylons and wind turbines) already influence views to varying degrees. The blocks of commercial forestry also interrupt the flow of simple moorland around the edges of the WLA from some locations.</p> <p><b>High – medium to Medium</b> sensitivity</p>	<p>Kirkton Energy Park would comprise a line of tall structures approximately 2km to the north west of the WLA. The proposed development would be located outside the WLA, where the westward view is already influenced by wind turbines. The proposed development would be located away from the open expansive landscape to the south, where tall structures are currently absent.</p> <p>The existing and consented Strathy Wind Farms would generally be seen in conjunction with the proposed development in views to the west. Kirkton Energy Park would typically be seen in conjunction with these baseline developments, although it would be closer than the existing and consented wind farms to the west and increase the extent of wind energy development to the north from some locations within the WLA. The baseline wind farm developments to the north of the WLA would also form part of the context to the proposed development, although seen in successive views. Limekiln Wind Farm (and extension) would be particularly prominent from locations in the northern part of the WLA, such as Beinn Ràtha.</p> <p>Kirkton Energy Park would be a visually permeable development, which would not prevent the extensive intervisibility with surrounding landscapes. The linear arrangement of the wind turbines, with regular spacing between structures would result in a degree of simplicity to the proposed development. The position and extent of the WLA in relation to the proposed development means this relatively simple composition of wind turbines would be seen in views from the parts of the WLA with theoretical visibility.</p> <p>The magnitude of change resulting from the proposed development in respect of this WLA key attribute/quality is judged to vary between <b>Substantial</b> and <b>Medium</b>. The greatest magnitude of change would occur on lower slopes and more enclosed areas at distances of up to approximately 8 – 10km on the western side of the WLA, where the proposed wind turbines would comprise tall vertical structures that would be noticeably closer than existing and consented wind farms to the west. Kirkton Energy Park would also increase the extent of wind turbines around the northern sides of the WLA. The proposed wind</p>	<p>Combining the judgements, it is considered the proposed development would result in a <b>Major to Major - moderate and Significant</b> effect on this key attribute/quality at distances of up to approximately 8 – 10km.</p> <p>Beyond such distances and on higher ground in the north of the WLA, the effect would reduce to a <b>Moderate</b> or less and, <b>not significant</b> effect.</p>



Key Attribute/ Quality	Susceptibility and Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Predicted Effect
		turbines would not lie in views to the south, where tall structures are currently absent, thus not affecting the views where there is a stronger expression of wildness. At distances beyond approximately 10km and areas of higher elevation in the northern part of the WLA (e.g. Beinn Ràtha), a reduced magnitude of change would result from the proposed development due to a combination of the separation from Kirkton Energy Park and the other foci with which it would be in seen.	

## 8.0 Potential Cumulative Effects on the Key Attributes/Qualities of the WLA in Combination with Proposed Wind Farms

The key wind farm that is currently the subject of a planning application in the area surrounding Kirkton Energy Park is Armadale Wind Farm, which would be located further west of the WLA than the proposed development. Should this proposed development be granted planning permission, it would therefore form part of the backdrop to Kirkton Energy Park as seen from the WLA in westward views. Armadale Wind Farm would be located approximately 2.7km to the north of Strathy North Wind Farm and would extend the pattern of wind farms established by the combined operational and consented Strathy Wind Farm developments, with these sites lying approximately 6.7km to the west of the WLA (the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm being the closest). The greater separation distance between the WLA and Armadale Wind Farm means it would be less noticeable than Kirkton Wind Farm and would not alter judgements made in Section 7.0.

The other proposed wind farms at planning application stage that are relatively close to the WLA are Tormsdale Wind Farm and Forss Extension 3. Tormsdale Wind Farm would be located approximately 7.1km to the west of the WLA, positioned directly in front of Causeymire and Bad a'Cheò Wind Farms in easterly views from the WLA. The Forss Extension proposal comprises two turbines closely aligned with the operational wind turbines at Forss. These proposed wind energy developments are therefore very closely related to the existing pattern of operational wind farms. Overall, when considered in conjunction with Kirkton Energy Park it is expected that the addition of proposed (planning application stage) wind farm developments in the study area is unlikely to alter the predicted effects described in Section 7.0.

The key wind farm at EIA Scoping stage is Melvich Wind Energy Hub. This would lie immediately to the north of Kirkton Energy Park. It would intensify development in the vicinity of the site, and depending on the final design and size of this emerging project, could increase the potential effects on the WLA. Based, on the available design information, the layout of Melvich Wind Energy Hub may also contrast with the proposed development.

## 9.0 Summary and Conclusions

Kirkton Energy Park would be located to the west of the East Halladale Flows WLA (WLA 39), with the closest proposed wind turbines positioned approximately 2km from the boundary of the WLA. No part of the proposed development would be within the WLA and therefore there would be no physical effects on any elements within it. Accordingly, there would be no effect on the attribute/quality relating to a rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools.

It is predicted that Kirkton Energy Park would have **Major – moderate** and **significant** effects on western parts of the WLA, with this relating to the attributes associated with the horizontal emphasis of the landscape with few foci and the potential for extensive visibility of tall features (the first and fourth key attributes/qualities detailed in **Tables 5-1** and **7-1** above). These significant effects would occur on the western side of the WLA within distances of up to between 8 and 10km. While Strathy North, Strathy Wood and Strathy South Wind Farms would be seen behind or to the south of Kirkton Energy Park in places, the proposed development would be noticeably closer than the wind farm developments to the west. The proposed development would also extend the presence of wind turbines northward towards the coast, resulting in wind farms occupying a more extensive part of the open views to the west of the WLA. Such effects would also mainly occur on lower or more enclosed parts of the western side of the WLA and where any of the operational/consented wind farms to the north and east (Limekiln, Baillie, Forss, the Causeymire group) would either not be visible or form a small, distant or recessive part of the view.

In the northern part of the WLA, e.g. in the vicinity of Beinn Ràtha, and from more elevated ground at distances over approximately 10km, the effects of Kirkton Energy Park would be reduced and **not significant**. This is due to the relatively increased separation between this part of the WLA and the proposed development, as well as the relationship between this part of the WLA (particularly the higher ground) and the more settled, developed, as well as commercially wooded areas to the north and north west of the WLA. In addition, the related influence of existing detractors visible from the northern part of the WLA, notably Limekiln Wind Farm, which will be located immediately to the north, and more distantly, Baillie, Forss and the Causeymire group, reduce the strength of the key qualities and attributes in this area.

It is predicted that the effects of Kirkton Energy Park would also be more limited and **not significant** in the eastern part of the WLA with predicted visibility. The ZTVs show visibility of Kirkton Energy Park would become increasingly limited and fragmented, associated with areas of higher ground. The increased separation from the proposed development would also reduce the relative size of the proposed wind turbines and the existing wind farms in the Causeymire group are more prominent.

The proposed development would also be reversible. The effects of the proposed development would be long term. However, they would be reversed following the decommissioning of Kirkton Energy Park. An integral part of the proposed development is also the removal of the commercial forestry in the northern part of the site, with this area being restored to peatland. Commercial forestry is a notable detracting element in views from the WLA and its removal would be a positive change that could continue beyond the operational life of the wind farm.

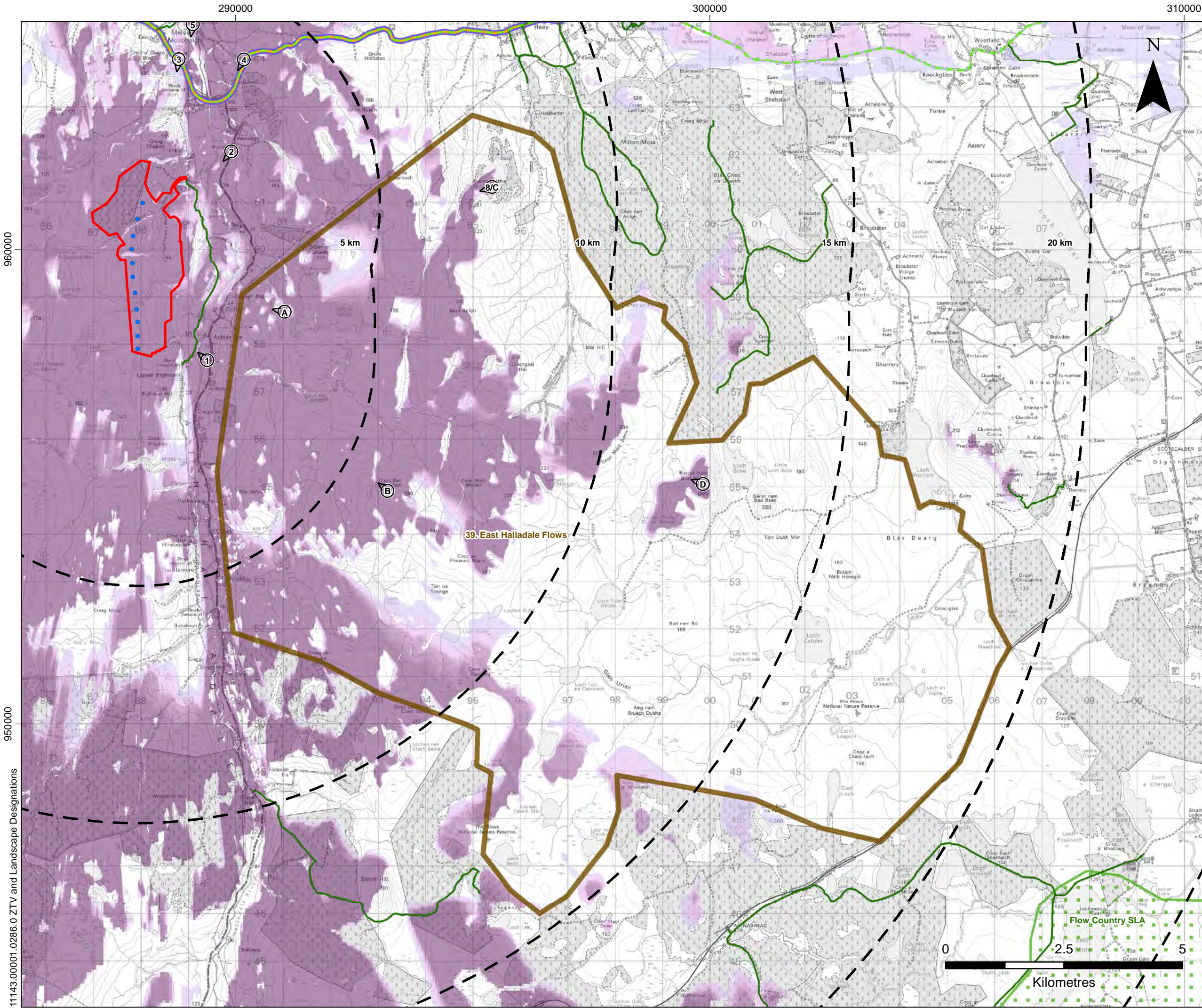
Kirkton Energy Park would add new, tall vertical structures close to the western edge of the WLA that would be clearly visible from parts of the WLA and further erode some aspects of its key attributes/qualities. It would reinforce the pattern of wind farm development in the landscape surrounding the WLA, contributing to the way such development surrounds the WLA to the west, north and east, forming visible and prominent structures. It would also add to the generally settled pattern and foci to the north of the WLA. However, it would be contributing to a pattern of development that forms an established part of the baseline rather than adding distinctly different structures. Whilst it would result in significant effects on parts of the WLA, these would relate to areas up to between 8km and 10km. It is also notable that views to the south would be unaffected by the proposed development, with these being the directions in which a sense of wildness is most strongly expressed.

Overall, Kirkton Energy Park would not fundamentally alter the key attributes and qualities and the East Halladale Flows, when considered in relation to the overall WLA and its baseline context.

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## FIGURES





**LEGEND**

- Application Boundary
- Proposed Turbine
- Proposed Turbines 5 km - 25 km Buffers
- Special Landscape Area (SLA)
- East Halladale Flows Wild Land
- On Road Cycle Route
- Corepath
- North Coast 500 Scenic Route
- North and West Highlands Scenic Route

**Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**  
**Kirkton Energy Park: Bare Earth**  
**Blade Tip 149.9 m \***

- High : 11 Turbines Visible
- Low : 1 Turbine Visible

\* Note on ZTV production on Figure 7.2b

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**KIRKTON ENERGY PARK - EIA**  
**APPENDIX - WILD LAND AREA**

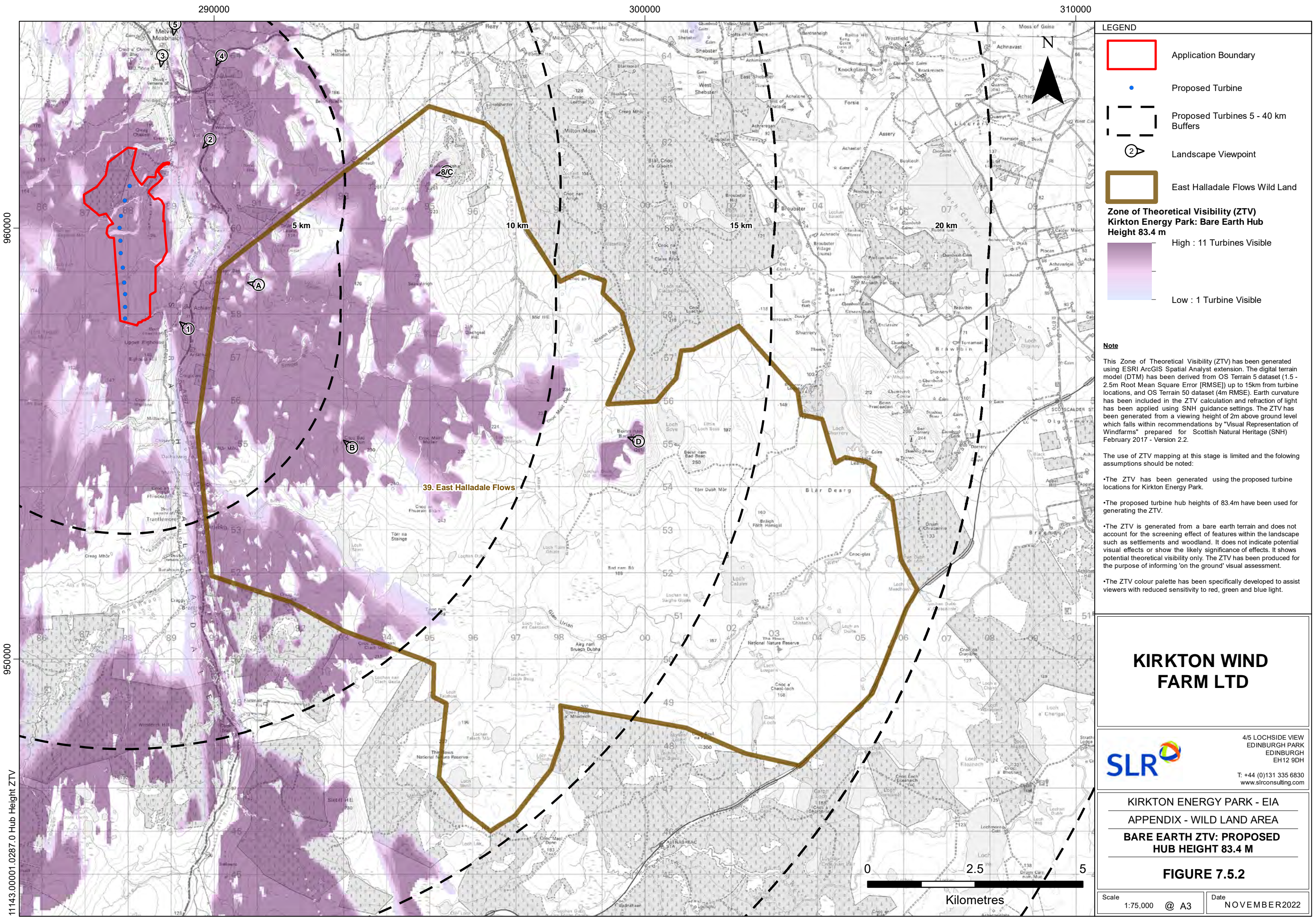
**ZTV: BLADE TIP WITH LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS**

**FIGURE 7.5.1**

Scale 1:75,000 @ A3

Date NOVEMBER 2022





**LEGEND**

- Application Boundary
- Proposed Turbine
- Proposed Turbines 5 - 40 km Buffers
- Landscape Viewpoint
- East Halladale Flows Wild Land
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**  
Kirkton Energy Park: Bare Earth Hub Height 83.4 m
- High : 11 Turbines Visible
- Low : 1 Turbine Visible

**Note**

This Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been generated using ESRI ArcGIS Spatial Analyst extension. The digital terrain model (DTM) has been derived from OS Terrain 5 dataset (1.5 - 2.5m Root Mean Square Error [RMSE]) up to 15km from turbine locations, and OS Terrain 50 dataset (4m RMSE). Earth curvature has been included in the ZTV calculation and refraction of light has been applied using SNH guidance settings. The ZTV has been generated from a viewing height of 2m above ground level which falls within recommendations by "Visual Representation of Windfarms" prepared for Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) February 2017 - Version 2.2.

The use of ZTV mapping at this stage is limited and the following assumptions should be noted:

- The ZTV has been generated using the proposed turbine locations for Kirkton Energy Park.
- The proposed turbine hub heights of 83.4m have been used for generating the ZTV.
- The ZTV is generated from a bare earth terrain and does not account for the screening effect of features within the landscape such as settlements and woodland. It does not indicate potential visual effects or show the likely significance of effects. It shows potential theoretical visibility only. The ZTV has been produced for the purpose of informing 'on the ground' visual assessment.
- The ZTV colour palette has been specifically developed to assist viewers with reduced sensitivity to red, green and blue light.

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**KIRKTON ENERGY PARK - EIA**  
**APPENDIX - WILD LAND AREA**  
**BARE EARTH ZTV: PROPOSED HUB HEIGHT 83.4 M**

**FIGURE 7.5.2**

Scale 1:75,000 @ A3 Date NOVEMBER 2022









### Annex 1 – Viewpoint Observations

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPA	Loch na Caorach	291030, 958679	3.1km	An awe-inspiring simplicity of landscape at the broad scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis, ‘wide skies’ and few foci	<p>Awe inspiring - yes</p> <p>Simplicity of landscape – to some degree, although complexity resulting from combination of distant summits and sea, as well as visibility of LCT 144 Coastal Crofts and Small Farms.</p> <p>Strong horizontal emphasis – yes, although horizontal horizon interrupted by summits to the south and west.</p> <p>Big skies – yes</p> <p>Few foci – no, multiple foci within views to the west and north, including settlement of Melvich, coastal edge and sea, geometric blocks of forestry and Strathy North Wind Farm (which will be extended by the consented Strathy Wood and Strathy South developments); close distance foci of lochans.</p> <p>Overall – strongly to moderately expressed.</p>	<p>Proposed turbines would comprise large, prominent vertical structures with blade movement clearly apparent due to relative proximity of Kirkton Energy Park. The proposed development would also increase the horizontal angle occupied by turbines, with Kirkton Energy Park appearing slightly overlapping with, and to the north of, Strathy and at closer proximity and introducing an additional focus that would break the nearby horizon to the west.</p> <p>There is a degree of containment resulting from the local landform.</p>

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPA	Loch na Caorach			A remote, discrete interior, with limited access and a strong sense of solitude	<p>Remote –to some degree, on the edge of the WLA with clear visual connections to settled coastline to the north. Perception of remoteness to the south.</p> <p>Discrete – no, there are clear visual connections to surrounding landscape outwith the WLA.</p> <p>Limited access – yes, although a track from Strath Halladale does assist access.</p> <p>Strong sense of solitude – to some degree, but sense of remoteness influenced by clear evidence of human activity (settlement, forestry and wind farms). Deer fencing near Lochan Dubh also erodes perception of being away from human activity.</p> <p>Overall – moderately expressed.</p>	Kirkton Energy Park would be at close proximity and occupy a key part of the view westward. This would reduce the sense of remoteness and solitude due to the addition of wind turbines in close proximity, but this would be in the context of baseline features/elements in the landscape that already affect these qualities.
VPA	Loch na Caorach			A rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape's simple composition at the broad scale	<p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline</p> <p>Overall – strongly expressed</p>	No change to the attribute/quality would occur.

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPA	Loch na Caorach			A remarkably open landscape with extensive visibility, meaning tall or high features in the distance are clearly visible	WLA quality is expressed in the baseline, with Strathy North Wind Farm visible and which will be extended by the consented Strathy Wood and Strathy South developments.  Overall – strongly expressed	Kirkton Energy Park turbines would comprise tall vertical structures in close distance views to the west. Turbines would extend above the horizon and increase the extent of the view occupied by wind turbines.
VPB	Cnoc Bad Mhairtein	293203, 954908	6.1km	An awe-inspiring simplicity of landscape at the broad scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis, ‘wide skies’ and few foci	Awe inspiring - yes  Simplicity of landscape – to some degree, although complexity resulting from combination of distant summits and sea  Strong horizontal emphasis – yes, although horizontal horizon interrupted by summits to the south and west  Big skies – yes  Few foci – no, multiple foci within views to the west and north, including settlement of Melvich, coastal edge and sea, geometric blocks of forestry and Strathy North Wind Farm (which will be extended by the consented Strathy Wood and Strathy South developments)  Overall – strongly to moderately expressed	Proposed turbines would comprise prominent vertical structures due to relative proximity of Kirkton Energy Park. The proposed development would also increase the horizontal angle occupied by turbines, with Kirkton Energy Park being seen to the right of the Strathy Wind Farms and introducing an additional focus that would break the nearby horizon to the west.

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPB	Cnoc Bad Mhairtein			A remote, discrete interior, with limited access and a strong sense of solitude	<p>Remote – to some degree, near the edge of the WLA with visibility of the settled coastline to the north. Perception of remoteness to the south.</p> <p>Discrete – no, there are clear visual connections to surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Limited access – yes.</p> <p>Strong sense of solitude – to some degree, but clear evidence of human activity (settlement, forestry and wind farms).</p> <p>Overall – moderately expressed.</p>	Kirkton Energy Park would not alter the limited access to the WLA. It would be seen in the context of other wind farms and evidence of human activity that form part of the baseline surrounding landscape, with the proposed turbines in closer proximity to the western edge of the WLA.
VPB	Cnoc Bad Mhairtein			A rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape's simple composition at the broad scale	<p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline.</p> <p>Overall – strongly expressed.</p>	No change to the attribute/quality would occur.
VPB	Cnoc Bad Mhairtein			A remarkably open landscape with extensive visibility, meaning tall or high features in the distance are clearly visible	<p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline, but influenced by presence of wind turbines to east and west</p> <p>Overall – strongly to moderately expressed</p>	Proposed turbines would comprise prominent vertical structures due to relative proximity of Kirkton Energy Park. They would appear larger than the baseline wind turbines due to their proximity. The proposed development would also increase the extent of the view occupied by wind turbines.

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPC	Beinn Ràtha	295405, 961311	7.4km	An awe-inspiring simplicity of landscape at the broad scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis, ‘wide skies’ and few foci	<p>Awe inspiring – yes.</p> <p>Simplicity of landscape – to some degree, although complexity resulting from combination of distant summits and sea, as well as geometric blocks of forestry and clear felling.</p> <p>Strong horizontal emphasis – yes, although horizontal horizon interrupted by summits to the south and west.</p> <p>Big skies – yes.</p> <p>Few foci – no, multiple foci within views to the west and north, including the settlement of Melvich, coastal edge and sea, geometric blocks of forestry and wind farms. Strathy North Wind Farm, which will be extended by the consented Strathy Wood and Strathy South developments, is clearly visible to the south west. The consented Limekiln Wind Farm development will comprise very prominent elements in close distance views to the east, primarily due to the proximity of the wind turbines.</p> <p>Overall – moderately/weakly expressed, particularly in context of consented Limekiln Wind Farm.</p>	There are multiple foci that already influence this WLA quality. Kirkton Energy Park would contribute to these but with relatively limited change to the baseline context.

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPC	Beinn Ràtha			A remote, discrete interior, with limited access and a strong sense of solitude	<p>Remote – to some degree, on the edge of the WLA with clear visual connections to the settled coastline to the north. Perception of remoteness to the south.</p> <p>Discrete – no, there are clear visual connections to surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Limited access – yes, although relatively close to nearby track heading south from Reay.</p> <p>Strong sense of solitude – to some degree, but sense of remoteness influenced by clear evidence of human activity (settlement, forestry, pylon line and nearby wind farms).</p> <p>Overall – moderate/weakly expressed particularly in context of consented Limekiln Wind Farm.</p>	There would be some influence on the sense of remoteness and solitude due to the addition of the proposed development, but this would be in the context of other wind farms and human development already apparent in the baseline landscape.
VPC	Beinn Ràtha			A rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape's simple composition at the broad scale	<p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline</p> <p>Overall – strongly expressed</p>	No change to the attribute/quality would occur.

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPC	Beinn Ràtha			A remarkably open landscape with extensive visibility, meaning tall or high features in the distance are clearly visible	WLA quality is expressed in the baseline although tall structures (pylons and wind turbines) already influence views from this location, which will be further affected by the consented Limekiln development. The blocks of commercial forestry also interrupt the flow of simple moorland around the edges of the WLA.  Overall – moderately/weakly expressed.	Whilst this quality is expressed, baseline wind farms (existing and consented) already affect it.  Whilst the proposed turbines would comprise prominent vertical structures, the perception of their size would be reduced by the proximity and prominence of Limekiln Wind Farm.
VPD	Beinn nam Bad Mor	299850, 955053	12.3km	An awe-inspiring simplicity of landscape at the broad scale, with a strong horizontal emphasis, ‘wide skies’ and few foci	Awe inspiring – yes.  Simplicity of landscape – to some degree, although complexity resulting from combination of elements beyond the WLA, including a range of elements such as distant summits and sea.  Strong horizontal emphasis – yes, although horizontal horizon interrupted by summits beyond the WLA, to the south and west.  Big skies – yes.  Few foci – no, multiple foci within views to the west and north, including coastal edge and sea, Orkney, geometric blocks of forestry, Dounreay and existing/consented wind farms. Strathy North Wind Farm is visible to the west, and will be extended by the consented Strathy Wood and Strathy South developments to the south west, while Limekiln, Baillie and developments at Forss lie to the north.  Overall – strongly to moderately expressed.	There are multiple foci that already influence this WLA quality.  The change attributable to Kirkton Energy Park would be limited by the baseline context, predominately due to the relative prominence of the consented Limekiln Wind Farm, as well as Strathy Wind Farms to the west/south west affecting the baseline landscape.



VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPD	Beinn nam Bad Mor			A remote, discrete interior, with limited access and a strong sense of solitude	<p>Remote – yes.</p> <p>Discrete – no, there are clear visual connections to surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Limited access – yes, although a track from Shurrery to the east assists access to the lower slopes of Beinn nam Bad Mor.</p> <p>Strong sense of solitude – to some degree, but sense of remoteness influenced by clear evidence of human activity (settlement, forestry and wind farms).</p> <p>Overall – moderately expressed.</p>	There would be some influence on remoteness and solitude due to the addition of wind turbines, but this would be in the context of similar features/elements in the baseline landscape that already affect these qualities. Kirkton Energy Park would extend the view occupied by wind turbines, with these located to the right of Strathy North Wind Farm.
VPD	Beinn nam Bad Mor			A rugged and complex pattern of hidden burns, lochans and pools at the local level, despite the landscape's simple composition at the broad scale	<p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline.</p> <p>Overall – strongly expressed.</p>	No change to the attribute/quality would occur.

VP	Viewpoint Location	Grid Ref	Distance to nearest proposed turbine	Key WLA Attribute/ Quality	Strength of Expression Baseline – Viewpoint Observations	Potential Changes Associated with Kirkton Energy Park – Viewpoint Observations
VPD	Beinn nam Bad Mor			A remarkably open landscape with extensive visibility, meaning tall or high features in the distance are clearly visible	<p>WLA quality is expressed in the baseline although tall structures (pylons and wind turbines) already influence views from this location. The blocks of commercial forestry also interrupt the flow of simple moorland around the edges of the WLA.</p> <p>Overall – strongly to moderately expressed</p>	Kirkton Energy Park would be located outside the WLA, in a location where the view is already influenced by wind turbines. The proposed development would also be located away from the open expansive landscape to the south, where tall structures are currently absent.

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