

APPENDIX 5.5:

ASSESSMENT OF OWESG CRITERIA

Introduction

1. The Highland Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (OWESG) (2017) lists ten landscape and visual criteria the Council will use as a framework for assessing proposals. The Council's scoping response requires that these 10 criteria form part of the Applicant's own assessment of the Proposed Development. The 10 criteria have been a consideration in the assessment of the Proposed Development and Table 1.1 in this Technical Appendix describes the assessment of the Proposed Development against the 10 criteria in the OWESG.

Table 1.1: Assessment of OWESG Criteria

Criteria	Description	Measure	Assessment of the Proposed Development
Criterion 1	Relationship between Settlements/Key locations and wider landscape respected.	The extent to which the proposal contributes to perception of settlements or key locations being encircled by wind energy development.	There would be limited visibility of the Proposed Development from Fort Augustus as shown on Viewpoints 9 and 11. There would be no visibility from other settlements defined in the HWLDP although there would be visibility looking south from Dalchreichart and Dundreggan where Significant impacts are identified.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Turbines are not visually prominent in the majority of views within or from settlements/Key Locations or from the majority of its access routes.	There would be limited visibility from the A82, A87, A887 and B862. Significant impacts are identified on a short stretch of the A887.
Criterion 2	Key Gateway locations and routes are respected.	The extent to which the proposal reduces or detracts from the transitional experience of key Gateway Locations and routes.	The A887 corridor through Glen Moriston would be affected to a degree. The Proposed Development would be set back from the road and appear as a noticeable feature for a short stretch of the route at Dundreggan.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise detract from landscape characteristics which contribute the distinctive transitional experience found at key gateway locations and routes.	There would be views of the Proposed Development from a short section of the B862 where it would be seen as a minor addition to the existing operational development. Other gateways would not be affected and there would be

Criteria	Description	Measure	Assessment of the Proposed Development
			limited impacts on other routes as describes in the main LVIA.
Criterion 3	Valued natural and cultural landmarks are respected.	The extent to which the proposal affects the fabric and setting of valued natural and cultural landmarks.	There would be visibility of the Proposed Development from a small area of the Great Glen. Where visible it would not affect the scale or importance of the Great Glen and Loch Ness as a valued natural feature.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The development does not, by its presence, diminish the prominence of the landmark or disrupt its relationship to its setting.	Other notable cultural heritage features such as Fort Augustus Abbey, Urquhart Castle and the Caledonian Canal would not be affected due to separation distance to the Proposed Development.
Criterion 4	The amenity of key recreational routes and ways is respected.	The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of key recreational routes and ways (e.g. Core Paths, Munros and Corbetts, Long Distance Routes etc.).	There would be limited visibility of the Proposed Development from the Great Glen Way.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the visual appeal of key routes and ways.	There would be views from NCR 78 to the east of Fort Augustus although impacts would not be significant. Impacts on the South Loch Ness Trail to the east of Fort Augustus would not be significant. The Proposed Development would be visible from core paths situated at elevated locations with open views and would slightly increase the number of wind turbines visible but would not overwhelm views. The Proposed Development would be visible from Munros and Corbetts but would not notably increase the number of wind turbines already visible.
Criterion 5	The amenity of transport routes is respected	The extent to which the proposal affects the amenity of transport routes (tourist routes as well as rail, ferry routes and local road access).	The Proposed Development would be a noticeable feature in views from a short section of the A887 and a Significant impact is recorded for that short section of the route. The Proposed Development would not overwhelm or significantly detract from the overall visual appeal of the A887.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Wind Turbines or other infrastructure do not overwhelm or otherwise significantly detract from the	

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		visual appeal of transport routes.	Significant impacts are not identified for any other transport routes.
Criterion 6	The existing pattern of Wind Energy Development is respected.	The degree to which the proposal fits with the existing pattern of nearby wind energy development, considerations include: • Turbine height and proportions. • Density and spacing of turbines within developments. • Density and spacing of developments. • Typical relationship of development to the landscape. • Previously instituted mitigation measures. • Planning Authority stated aims for development of area.	The Proposed Development would be seen as an extension to operational Millennium Wind Farm. Most of the turbines would be situated on lower ground than the operational turbines. The height and spacing of turbines would be greater than the operational turbines which is unavoidable given the size of currently available turbines. However, the design of the array has sought to minimise the increase in horizontal and vertical extent of turbines by using a mix of tip heights and siting turbines away from the edge of the plateau. The resulting design overlaps with the operational turbines and appears within the same visual extents when viewed from different directions.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal contributes positively to existing pattern or objectives for development in the area.	
Criterion 7	The need for separation between developments and/ or clusters is respected	The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects the spaces between existing developments and/ or clusters	The Proposed Development would result in a slight increase in the number of wind turbines at the edge of an existing cluster of wind farms. The Proposed Development would not adversely affect the spacing between clusters of development.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal maintains appropriate and effective separation between developments and/ or clusters	
Criterion 8	The perception of landscape scale and distance is respected	The extent to which the proposal maintains or affects receptors' existing perception of landscape scale and distance.	The Proposed Development would be introduced into a large scale landscape and would be set back from adjacent broad straths and glens. The proposed turbines would be larger than operational turbines and there would be some adverse scale comparisons with localised landscape features. However, the perception of
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	The proposal maintains the apparent landscape scale and/or distance in the receptors' perception.	

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			landscape scale would not be significantly affected.
Criterion 9	Landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is respected.	The extent to which the landscape setting of nearby wind energy developments is affected by the proposal.	The design of the Proposed Development integrates with the operational turbines of Millennium Wind Farm through a combination of mixed tip heights and positioning of most of the proposed turbines on lower ground to the north-east. When viewed from the south or west the proposed turbines would mostly be seen behind the operational turbines with blade tips level or slightly above existing turbines. In views from the elevated locations to the north the proposed turbines would appear larger, slightly increasing the number of wind turbines visible but not increasing the prominence of existing turbines.
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Proposal relates well to the existing landscape setting and does not increase the perceived visual prominence of surrounding wind turbines.	
Criterion 10	Distinctiveness of Landscape character is respected.	The extent to which a proposal affects the distinction between neighbouring landscape character types, in areas where the variety of character is important to the appreciation of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would result in a slight increase in the number of wind turbines in LCT 220 Rugged Massif – Inverness adding to a cluster of operational wind farms. It would be seen adjacent to LCT 226 Wooded Glen – Inverness. The proposed turbines would introduce new features that provide a scale comparison with features on the upper slopes of the glen, although this would not change the perceived scale of the glen and the change from small, enclosed to large scale open spaces that characterise the valley floor and sides. The Proposed Development would also be visible from the adjacent LCT 225 Broad Steep Sided Glen. It would be set back from this LCT and be seen with a group of operational turbines in an area of open moorland and forest plantation. The proposed turbines would not alter the perception of the key
	Development should seek to achieve a threshold where:	Integrity and variety of Landscape Character Areas are maintained.	

Criteria	Description	Measure	Assessment of the Proposed Development
			characteristics of LCT 225 to a degree that would affect the distinction between the LCT and LCT 220.