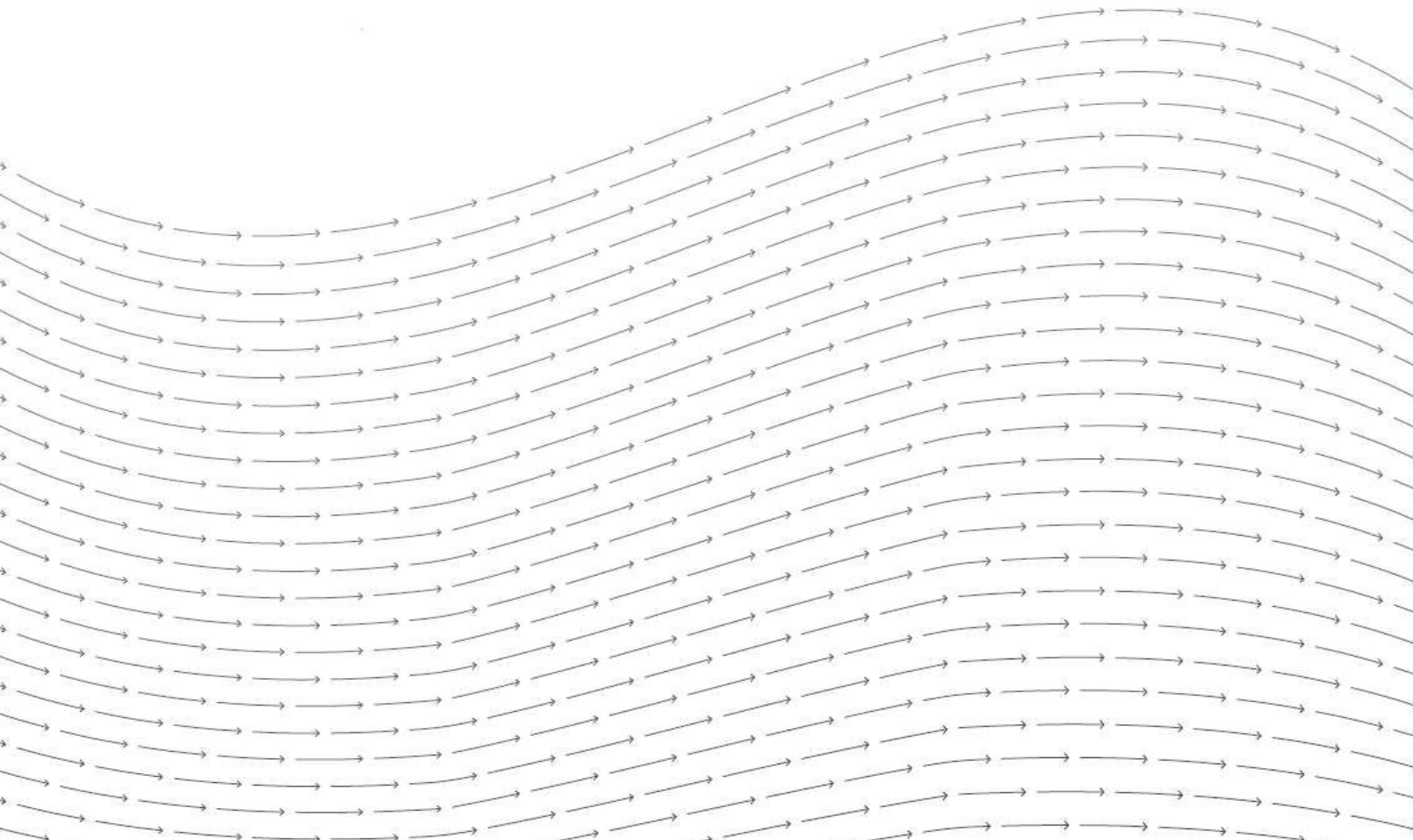


Bunloinn Wind Farm

Environmental Impact Assessment Report Non-Technical Summary

February 2022



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1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

- 1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report has been prepared by Energiekontor UK Ltd (hereinafter referred to as 'the Applicant') to accompany an application for consent to construct and operate the Bunloinn Wind Farm (hereinafter referred to as 'the proposed development'). The site is located approximately 14.5km north-west of Invergarry and 13km south-west of the hamlet of Dalchreichart. The site is within the administrative boundary of the Highland Council (THC) as shown in Figure 1.1.
- 1.2 As the proposed development has a generating capacity in excess of 50 MW, consent is required from Scottish Ministers under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (hereafter referred to as 'the Act'), in consultation with relevant statutory consultees including THC. In addition, a request is being made by the Applicant that planning permission is deemed to be granted under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended.
- 1.3 The application for consent is accompanied by an EIA Report which presents the findings of the EIA undertaken in accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('the Regulations') (as amended). The EIA Report includes a description of the proposed development, the location of the proposed development, and its design evolution; presents information on the identification and assessment of the likely significant environmental effects; and, where adverse effects are identified, measures to avoid, reduce, or remedy such effects are described.
- 1.4 The aim of the NTS is to summarise the content and main findings of the EIA Report in a clear and concise manner to assist the public in understanding what the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Development are likely to be. The full EIA Report (Volumes 1 to 5) provides a more detailed description of the proposed development and the findings of the EIA process.

The Applicant – Energiekontor UK Ltd

- 1.5 Energiekontor UK Ltd is a renewable energy development company, active in the UK since 1999.
- 1.6 It develops and operates small to medium-sized onshore wind and solar farms throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. At present, including the proposed development it has 22 wind farm sites either consented or at application stage within Scotland. The company operates seven existing wind farms in the UK. Energiekontor also has several other wind energy projects at various stages of the development process throughout the UK.
- 1.7 Energiekontor UK Ltd is part of the Energiekontor Group. The parent company, Energiekontor AG, was established in 1990 in Bremerhaven in Northern Germany. It has since grown to become one of the leading wind energy companies in Europe and is active in Germany, France, Portugal, the USA and the UK. The company has obtained consent

for and built over 120 onshore wind farms in Europe and commenced construction of the first 'no-subsidy' wind farm in the UK, Withernwick II in East Riding, Yorkshire.

Contacts for Further Information and Consultation

- 1.8 Following the introduction of the Electricity Works (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 on the 24th of April 2020, the amendment has allowed a temporary relaxation to the requirement to provide hardcopies of the EIAR for public inspection. These measures were extended on 6th September 2021 by the Scottish Government to cover the period to 31st March 2022.
- 1.9 Copies of the full EIA Report and its associated standalone documents can be found on the Energy Consents Unit website by searching for Bunloinn Wind Farm. In addition, updates including a link to the case file are provided at the following web address: <https://www.energiekontor.co.uk/our-projects/bunloinn>
- 1.10 Alternatively, the Project Manager can be contacted for copies, as appropriate. There is no charge for provision of electronic documents or hard copies of the Non-Technical Summary on request.
- 1.11 Full printed copies can also be requested. Due to the size and cost of printed documents, charges for these are as follows:
- Volume 1 – Main Text: £50
 - Volume 2 - Figures: £300
 - Volume 3 – NatureScot Visualisations: £500
 - Volume 4 – Technical Appendices: £150
 - Volume 5 – THC Visualisations: £500
- 1.12 Requests should be made to Lauren Mallon, Project Manager, Energiekontor UK Ltd, lauren.mallon@energiekontor.com
- 1.13 Any representations to the application may be submitted:
- via the Energy Consents Unit website at: www.energyconsents.scot/Register.aspx;
 - by email to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit mailbox at representations@gov.scot; or
 - by post to the Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, 4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU.

2 EIA METHODOLOGY

2.1 EIA is a process that identifies the potential environmental impacts (both beneficial and adverse) of a proposed development and proposes mitigation to avoid, reduce and offset any potential significant adverse environmental impacts.

2.2 The main activities in the EIA process can be summarised as follows:

- Definition of the project to be assessed;
- Description of the 'baseline' environment (i.e. the conditions that are likely to prevail at the commencement of the project);
- Definition of the scope of the assessment;
- Scoping and consultation with interested parties;
- Optimisation of the Proposed Development based on the consultation process;
- Prediction of the likely impacts of the Proposed Development;
- Evaluation of these impacts in terms of their potential significance;
- Description of the nature and effectiveness of measures / design evolution which could be adopted in order to mitigate significant adverse impacts;
- Identification of residual impacts;
- Submission of the EIAR and publicity.

Approach to Technical Studies Undertaken

2.3 The EIA studies commenced at an early stage in the evolution of the application proposal.

2.4 At the outset, with the objective of avoiding or minimising potential environmental impacts, the findings of these baseline environmental studies played an important role in the design evolution of the Proposed Development. These studies defined the environmental sensitivities and constraints associated with the Proposed Development, the Site, and its surroundings.

2.5 The technical EIA studies have been undertaken in accordance with relevant guidelines and procedures.

2.6 The majority of assessments involved consultations with statutory and non-statutory bodies, desk-based research, site inspections and surveys, impact prediction and input of mitigation to the design, where appropriate.

2.7 The content and conclusions of the EIAR, which includes a clear, reasoned description of any potential adverse or beneficial impacts of the Proposed Development, are based on a comprehensive assessment undertaken with all information available at the time of writing.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The Site is located approximately 14.5km north-west of Invergarry and 13km south-west of the hamlet of Dalchreichart. The Site covers an area of approximately 1,836.1 hectares (ha) and comprises rolling open moorland with occasional rocky outcrops and areas of commercial forestry.
- 3.2 The Site is characterised by an undulating landform and is enclosed by higher topography to the south of Loch Cluanie and north of Loch Loyne. The Corbett, Beinn Loinne, is contained within the Site marking the highest point (at 775m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)) while the hill summits of Meall Odhar (462m AOD), Meall Coire na Creadha (561m AOD) and Creag na Nathrach (514m AOD) also lie within the Site boundary.
- 3.3 The surrounding area is sparsely populated with the nearest settlements being Invergarry, Inchlaggan (approximately 6km from the Site)and Dalchreichart. The A87 trunk road lies adjacent to the north of the Site and then travels south with access to the proposed to be taken from the A87 via a new designed access.
- 3.4 The Site is situated between Loch Cluanie to the north and Loch Loyne to the south. Several watercourses, including Allt Coire na Creadha, Allt na Doire Moire and Allt na h-Aire and lochans are found across the Site, and typically drain north, east, and south into the surrounding lochs. The River Moriston and River Loyne also lie adjacent to the Site.
- 3.5 The Site is bound to the south-east by the operational Beinneun Wind Farm and its Extension (25 turbines, 133.5m to tip and 7 turbines, 136m to tip respectively), the Millennium Wind Farm (26 turbines, 115m to tip) and the consented Millennium South Wind Farm (10 turbines, 132m to tip). Additional surrounding wind farms include the operational Bhlariadh Wind Farm (32 turbines at 135m to tip) and Corrimony Wind Farm (5 turbines, 100m to tip) which lie to the north-east
- 3.6 The proposed development is illustrated on Figure 3.1 and shown in more detail on Figures 3.2a and 3.2b. The development will consist of the following principal components:
- 10 turbines;
 - Associated turbine compound areas including foundations and hardstanding areas for erecting cranes at each turbine location;
 - On-site tracks connecting each turbine;
 - A new access junction from the A87;
 - Car parking facilities;
 - An upgraded existing forestry track;
 - An energy storage compound to store batteries with a 5MW capacity which would be within the construction compound footprint;
 - Underground cables linking the turbines to the substation, typically placed along internal access tracks;

- Up to three borrow pits for the extraction of stone on-site (indicated on Figure 3.1, 3.2a and 3.2b as borrow pit search areas);
- A temporary construction compound including provision for onsite concrete batching;
- On-site substation to provide a tee-in connection to the 132kV Fort Augustus-Skye overhead line;
- Forestry felling and restocking as proposed within Chapter 14: Forestry; and
- Habitat Management provisions as proposed within Technical Appendix 8.5 within Volume 4 of this EIA Report.

4 DESIGN EVOLUTION

- 4.1 Design evolution is an important component of wind farm design. The overall design layout principle of the proposed development has been to achieve a coherent and compact design, which minimises direct and indirect adverse effects on the local and wider landscape, while balancing commercial considerations and maximising energy production.
- 4.2 A key reason for the selection of this site was due to topographical screening, which limits visual impact predominately to the north and a portion of the north-west. The site is located in a topographic 'bowl' which provides good wind conditions from a prevailing south-south-westerly direction. The site was also subject to an initial GIS sifting exercise which set out broad constraints and provided a clear picture of those matters which should be considered in the design of the proposed development. Constraints noted as potentially relevant to the site included
- Scheduled Monuments;
 - Gardens and Designed Landscapes;
 - Listed Buildings;
 - Conservation Areas;
 - Special Protection Areas;
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
 - Special Areas of Conservation ;
 - Ancient Woodland Inventory;
 - Carbon Rich Soils and Peatland;
 - Areas of Panoramic Quality;
 - National Scenic Areas;
 - Core Paths;
 - SPP Spatial Framework for Wind Energy;
 - The pattern of settlement and distribution of residential properties in the vicinity of the site; and
 - A 50m buffer applied to all watercourses located within the Site boundary.
- 4.3 The design process took place over a number of months and the proposed development has been progressively revised and refined during this time. The final design of the proposed development has been produced as a result of environmental surveys, design and pre-application meetings with statutory stakeholders and the findings of the EIAR.
- 4.4 A total of five design iterations were developed before the final iteration was reached resulting in a layout which is simple in composition, restrained in size and takes into account the constraints associated with the Site. The layout iterations are set out below:

First Iteration

- 4.5 The first iteration consisted of 22 turbines wind turbines of up to 230m in height to blade tip. The turbines were placed within in a 'developable area' which was defined through the avoidance of onsite constraints and consideration of topography across the Site.
- 4.6 The layout presented a desktop review of the potential maximum number of turbines. The placement of turbines avoided areas of high topography and utilised the flatter area of the site between the two hill summits. A 50m buffer was applied to all plotted watercourses and turbines were placed outwith this buffer to avoid potential hydrological impacts.
- 4.7 However, four turbines in particular were found to be too dominant in the landscape. Specifically, Turbine 14, 17, 21 and 22. The placement of these turbines increased views towards Wild Land Area 24: Central Highlands to the north due to reduced screening from the ridge of Beinn Loinne and protruded the horizon line due to the placement of turbines further up the slopes of Meall Odhar. Turbines around Meall Odhar would also present issues during construction due to the topography and gradient of slopes resulting in significant earth works and an increase in materials needed.
- 4.8 As turbines are becoming larger via current technology availability, efficiency and economics, this layout was deemed too visible and not viable from a landscape and construction perspective. However, by producing this layout, this allowed an understanding of unsuitable locations for turbine placement.

Second Iteration

- 4.9 The second iteration comprised 18 wind turbines with varying tip heights of 200m and 230m with six turbines at the taller tip height of 230m and the remaining 12 at 200m. Taller turbines were placed on lower elevations within the interior of the Site due to higher topography enclosing the middle section of the site. This allowed for more efficiency in wind resource and to account for vast differences in elevation across the Site.
- 4.10 This layout was the basis for the Scoping Opinion sought from ECU in July 2021 and was presented via an online exhibition which ran from the 17th of September to the 24th of September 2021.
- 4.11 For reasons set out above, turbines were removed from the slopes of Meall Odhar and the easternmost part of the site. The view was taken that the natural topographical screening afforded by slopes to the north and partially the south should ultimately define the developable area. The placement of turbines used the tightest spacing possible in order to understand what a maximum potential layout may look like whilst taking cognisance of the areas where turbines could not be placed following analysis of the previous 22 turbine layout described above.
- 4.12 The layout maintained the buffers around watercourses and took account of ecological and ornithological onsite constraints. Following the survey works undertaken, namely Phase 1 Habitat and NVC, within the site boundary, the layout was amended to avoid sensitive habitats such as blanket bog, where possible.

Third Iteration

- 4.13 The third iteration comprised 12 wind turbines and was presented through an online exhibition between the 15th and 29th of November 2021. The third iteration of the proposed development was based on the feedback received as part of the scoping process and the pre-application meeting held with NS, SEPA, THC and the relevant internal departments. This layout was also presented to both THC and NS at a design meeting on the 8th of November 2021. Following feedback from consultees during the pre-application meeting, the visual composition of the second iteration was found to be cluttered and visually intrusive to key trunk roads, namely the A87 and A887 despite broadly being within the developable area. This was largely attributed to the number and positioning of the turbines.
- 4.14 During this stage of the design process, a different candidate turbine was applied. Following comments raised during the pre-application meeting, the proportions of the turbines and their scale within the landscape were taken into consideration. The candidate turbine taken forward for assessment has shorter hubs height for turbines and a longer blade length than the previous model selected. This has meant that, rather than appearing taller, the reduced hub height has allowed the turbines to sit lower within the landscape whilst still retaining the original tip heights proposed within the initial iterations of the scheme. Additionally, further assessment of wind speeds on site were found to be lower than anticipated. As such, the candidate turbine was selected on its suitability for the Site.
- 4.15 Due to the change in candidate turbine, an increase in spacing resulted in a reduction in the number of turbines. Further refinements were then made to the layout and eastern turbines within the second iteration were found to present less than optimum visibility from the A87, A887 and Tomchrasky. Due to the nature of the topography across the site, turbines were then placed on lower elevations and drawn further into the interior of the site. This maximised topographical screening and further reduced the visual impact, leading to the deletion of six turbines and rectified comments made by consultees on the cluttered appearance of the scheme and allowed.
- 4.16 Turbines were also repositioned due to ornithological constraints and also resulted in the removal of T4 from the Scoping layout (second iteration).
- 4.17 Turbine height at this stage was retained at a mix of 230m (T3, 7, 8, 10 and 11) and 200m (T1,2,4,5,6,9 and 12) following the topographic logic that the middle of the site may be able to accommodate larger turbines and to retain the composition. In the case of T10 and T11, while these turbines were on the westernmost extents of the Site, the position of these turbines at a lower altitude from T12 and northwards of T9 meant a height of 230m evened out the composition from key design viewpoints.
- 4.18 Following Phase 1 peat results, areas >1m in depth were avoided. This meant that a large section of the centre of the site was unsuitable for development due to peat depth and proximity to watercourses.

Fourth Iteration

- 4.19 The fourth iteration of the proposed development consisted of 10 turbines with varying tip heights of 200m and 230m. A total of four turbines were 200m while six turbines were 230m. Following on from the design meeting held with statutory consultees to discuss the third iteration of the layout, further work was carried out to optimise the design using key viewpoints along the A87 and A887.
- 4.20 From discussion with NS and THC, it was felt that some turbines were still dominant within the landscape, in particular T1 (within the 12 turbine layout) which had been placed on flatter ground and was not screened by the slopes of Meall Odhar. As a result, this turbine often appeared as an outlier from certain viewpoints and protruded the horizon line. The fourth iteration of the design has seen the removal of this turbine to maximise visual screening through the use of topography and allowed the contraction of the turbine envelope.
- 4.21 Following this, the decision to delete a further turbine was taken. This ultimately resulted in a 10 turbine layout which resulted in a cohesive scheme with a reduced lateral spread. As a result of the movement of turbines, the positions were cross-checked against interpolated peat depth, and depths of above 1m were avoided for turbine locations. The appropriate distance from watercourses was also maintained.

Final Iteration

- 4.22 The fifth iteration represents the culmination of specialist input on LVIA, ecology, ornithology, hydrology, peat and other matters. Following identification of significant ornithological constraints relating to golden eagle, turbine positions had to be moved to create a corridor of approximately 850m. This resulted in the retention of connectivity to the favoured foraging grounds located across the Beinn Loinne ridge, situated north of the turbine envelope. The most notable changes in turbine positions can be seen in the movement of T7,8,9 and 10 which maintained a suitable distance from golden eagle territory.
- 4.23 This layout was developed in consultation with Dr Alan Fielding, a leading golden eagle expert, who provided advice on the creation of the corridor and placement of turbines. While ornithological constraints influenced the final design of the wind farm, the layout was also designed in a sensitive manner from the key viewpoints along the A887 and A87 and continuing to take cognisance of advice from both the Highland Council and NatureScot following the design meeting held on the 8th November 2021. The spacing of some turbines were further reduced to retain 10 turbines.
- 4.24 As a result of the iterative design process, the effects of the proposed development have been minimised

5 RENEWABLE ENERGY AND PLANNING POLICY

Introduction

- 5.1 The EIA Report is framed by the renewable energy and policy framework formed by a range of legislation, policy and guidance at UK, Scottish and regional level.
- 5.2 Relevant policy includes the following documents which together form the Development Plan for the consideration of this application at local authority level:
- The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012);
 - The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (2015); and
 - Onshore Wind Energy: Supplementary Guidance (2016) with addendum (2017).
- 5.3 The key mechanism for the determination of planning applications in Scotland is the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). Section 25 of this Act states:
- 'Where, in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'*
- 5.4 Whilst the Development Plan is the starting point for the decision making process, it must be considered in the context of both the policy hierarchy (governed by Scottish Government policy) which in turn is informed by the wider suite of Scottish, UK and international policy and law relating to renewable energy development. This includes emerging and adopted national policy, such as the National Planning Framework 3, the draft National Planning Framework 4 and Scottish Planning Policy.
- 5.5 The EIA Report is underpinned by other Scottish Renewable Energy Policy and Legislation, including the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the more recent Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, as well as the Scottish Government's Energy Strategy, Onshore Wind Policy Statement, updated Energy Strategy Position Statement.
- 5.6 There are also several recent policy reports, papers and strategy positions which are relevant, which can be explored within Chapter 5 of the EIA Report, or the separate Planning Statement.
- 5.7 All policy and legislation relevant to individual environmental topics (e.g. policy and legislation regarding cultural heritage) can be found within individual subject chapters.
- 5.8 To maintain the impartiality of the EIAR, the chapter does not assess whether the proposed development would comply with the identified policies. A separate Planning Statement which assesses the conformity of the proposed development with the Development Plan and other material considerations has been submitted as a separate document in support of the planning application.

6 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

Introduction

- 6.1 The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with GLVIA 3 best practice guidance by chartered landscape architects at Wood Group UK Limited. The assessment process has encompassed the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the proposed development.
- 6.2 The proposed turbines and much of the associated infrastructure would be located on the south and south-east facing slopes of the Beinn Loinne hills as the landform falls across Meall Coire na Creadha towards the smaller pronounced hill forms of Meall Odhar (462m AOD) and Creag na Nathrach (514m AOD). To the south and east of Loch Loyne the landform rises again towards Druim na h-Achlaise (540m AOD) in the south and towards Meall Dubh (788m AOD) and associated hills in the west. Visibility within 10km is therefore limited by the Beinn Loinne hills to the north and west and further contained by Meall Odhar and Creag na Nathrach. To the south and east, visibility is indicated on the low-lying topography of Loch Loyne and the facing hillslopes to the south and west of the loch and along the western part of Glen Morriston. Although the hills to the south of Loch Loyne partially screen theoretical views along Glen Garry which runs parallel to Loch Loyne, visibility is limited to the elevated hills to the south of Glen Garry. In addition, lower lying hills and moorland plateaus at the north-western end of Glen Morriston (near the confluence with the River Doe) allow longer range visibility to the north-east, subject to areas of coniferous and mixed forestry which limit the potential for visibility and numbers of likely visual receptors or people in these directions.
- 6.3 Further afield beyond approximately 10km, visibility is mostly limited to the north-east and south undulating plateau to the north of Glen Morriston and along Glen Morriston itself. In other directions, visibility is limited to the upper slopes and hilltops, mainly to the south, south-west and south-east and experienced as part of a much wider panorama and 360° views.
- 6.4 Essentially the Site is located in an area with potential for wind farm development, which is made more suitable by the existing landscape character, forestry and landform of the area. These factors act to reduce the sensitivity of the Site and limit both the visibility and numbers of people close to the Site who might otherwise view the proposed turbines.

Mitigation

- 6.5 The design of the proposed development has been reviewed against SNH's guidance *Siting and Designing Windfarms in the Landscape*, Version 3a, 2017 and has taken note of the advice contained within the *SNH Landscape Character Assessment*, 2019, the relevant policies of the *HwLDP*, *Moray Inner Firth LDP* and *THC's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance*. As a result, the proposed development has been designed to

reduce landscape, visual and cumulative effects and to reflect¹ the landscape characteristics and Special Landscape Qualities of the site location and its wider area which includes WLAs, SLAs and NSAs, including consideration of the appropriate scale, form, pattern and construction materials, as well as the potential cumulative effect of other wind farm developments.

- 6.6 The proposed development has been designed to balance technical and project requirements with a need to safeguard the environment and satisfactorily accommodate the proposed development within its landscape setting.
- 6.7 All of the mitigation related to landscape, visual and cumulative effects is 'built-in' or embedded into the design of the proposed development with the exception of detailed reinstatement proposals for the borrow pits and a Landscape Plan for site access which would be provided as part of the construction phase of the development to integrate these features into their landscape setting. A Lighting Strategy for the aviation warning lights has been provided and assessed in EIAR Volume 4 Technical Appendix 6.3 and 6.5.
- 6.8 The 'simple' turbine layout for example is more suitable to the underlying landform and simpler landscape character of the *Rugged Massif* LCT and accords with general SNH guidance *Siting and Designing Windfarms in the Landscape*, Version 3a, 2017 for wind farm development to be simple, balanced and cohesive as well as being located within large-scale, broad and simple landscape character types. The proposed turbines have been cohesively located, slightly lower down within the landscape to benefit from intervening screening by Meall Odhar (462m AOD) to the east and Beinn Loinne (789m AOD) to the west and limit the visibility of the proposed turbines as well as reducing the horizontal and vertical extent of the proposed development from key views and particularly when perceived from the A87 and A887 and views from some surrounding key summits. The scale of the turbines can be accommodated in this location, creating a simple, cohesive, balanced and clear design and visual composition that, to a reasonable degree, minimises excessive 'turbine clutter' in the form of uneven gaps / overlaps and outlying turbines.
- 6.9 Cumulatively, the nearby existing wind farms of Beinneun and Millennium are located at a higher elevation appearing higher up within the hills. In most views, the existing wind farms appear visually separate from the proposed development, and although the existing turbines are a smaller scale, the proposed development tends to benefit from more landform screening which mitigates this difference to some extent.
- 6.10 Notwithstanding that the proposed development fits with the baseline group of Beinneun and Millennium wind farms, this visual separation allows the proposed development to be perceived as a separate wind farm such that differences in turbine height, scale and rotation speed can be appreciated as distinctly separate, allowing both the existing / consented wind farms and the proposed development to be reasonably accommodated in the views.

¹ The HwLDP Policy 61 advises that New developments should be designed to 'reflect' the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed.

Significant Landscape, Visual and Cumulative Effects

- 6.11 Significant landscape effects are restricted to an area of *Rugged Massif* LCT and *Rocky Moorland – Lochaber* LCT, and a small area of the *Wooded Glen – Inverness* LCT (Glen Moriston unit) due to the proposed Site entrance and access track during the construction phase only. Significant visual effects are restricted to the views from short sections of the A87 and A887 two recreational routes, four Munro's and four Corbetts. The proposed turbines have been cohesively located, slightly lower down within the landscape between two landforms, to benefit from intervening screening and limit the visibility of the proposed turbines as well as reducing the horizontal and vertical extent of the proposed development from key views and particularly when perceived from the A87 and A887, and views from some surrounding elevated areas.
- 6.12 There would be no significant effects on the Glen Affric NSA (or any other NSAs and WLAs within the study area) and no significant effects on other locally designated landscapes (SLAs), or their Special Landscape Qualities and integrity.
- 6.13 Equally there would be no significant effects on any WLAs or their wild land qualities. There would also be no significant visual effects on views from any settlements and no significant effects would result from the proposed aviation warning lights, due to the proposed Lighting Strategy which limits the number of turbines to be lit.

7 CULTURAL HERITAGE

Introduction

- 7.1 This EIA chapter has considered the potential likely significant effects on archaeology and built heritage interests, which may arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development. This chapter identifies any historic features recorded within the Site and makes an assessment of the potential for previously unrecorded archaeological remains to be present, through examination of desk-based sources and a site walkover.

Baseline

- 7.2 The Site consists of moorland with occasional rocky outcrops and areas of commercial forestry. There are four Historic Environment Record (HER) entries within the Site boundary including an enclosure, a lodge, and two dams. Numerous further HER entries are located within 5km of the Site boundary and relate in the main to historic settlements, agriculture and transportation. Within the 15km Study Area There are three Category A Listed Buildings, 23 Category B Listed Buildings and 21 Category C Listed Buildings. There are 14 scheduled monuments within the 15km study area, the closest of which to the Site is Fort Augustus-Bernera Military Road, 1890m W of Ceannacroc Lodge (SM11484), located around 1km north of the Site boundary.

Construction Effects

- 7.3 There is the possibility that unknown buried archaeological remains could be present. Following the completion of construction no further groundworks would be undertaken and as a consequence, any residual effect arising from the construction of the Proposed development in relation to direct effects on cultural heritage assets of low sensitivity within the site would be of no more than minor/negligible significance (not significant in EIA terms).

Operation Effects

- 7.4 Operational effects may occur through change to the setting of the Fort Augustus-Bernera Military Road, 1890m W of Ceannacroc Lodge (SM11484), in that the proposed development would represent perceptible additions to views south and south-west from the eastern portion of the scheduled monument. The magnitude of change is assessed as minor, which for an asset of high sensitivity would result in a moderate effect which would be not significant. No significant cumulative effects arising through change to setting were identified.

Decommissioning Effects

- 7.5 No direct impacts during the decommissioning phase are anticipated, and operational effects on the settings of heritage assets would cease following the decommissioning of the wind farm and the removal of the turbines.

Mitigation

- 7.6 The proposed development has been designed to avoid known heritage assets and those identified by the baseline study. While the initial baseline assessment and subsequent walkover survey have not identified any on-site archaeological remains, there is a general potential, albeit low, for as yet unrecorded archaeological remains to be present within the Site. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will be agreed with The Highland Council to allow for the identification and recording of archaeological features within the Site boundary which would otherwise be affected by the proposed scheme.

Overall Effects

- 7.7 Impacts affecting the settings of heritage assets in the surrounding landscape would give rise to effects that are of minor/negligible, minor, moderate/minor or moderate significance, and not significant in EIA terms. Indirect effects on the setting of the identified designated assets would cease following the decommissioning of the wind farm and the removal of the turbines.

8 ECOLOGY

Introduction

- 8.1 The non-avian ecology chapter considers the potential impacts of the proposed wind farm on habitats, and terrestrial and freshwater species. The approach to this assessment is based on the wind farm guidance provided by NatureScot and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland.

Baseline

- 8.2 The following habitats of Local conservation importance are identified as undergoing potentially significant loss (≥ 1 % of the habitat/community extent within the Developable Area):
- Marshy/marshy grassland;
 - Heath; and
 - Blanket bog.
- 8.3 Protected species survey work has confirmed the presence of four protected mammal species/groups within the protected species survey area: namely water vole, otter, pine marten and bats. There are four water vole burrow clusters in the developable area. No otter places of rest were recorded, but there is evidence of commuting/foraging otter. No pine marten dens were recorded but there is limited evidence of the presence of this species (droppings).

Assessment

- 8.4 Construction impacts are predicted to be habitat loss, disturbance to protected species, potential pollution from construction materials and collision with site traffic. The potential collision with site traffic also exists during the operational phase, albeit at a much lower level, as vehicle movement will comprise of operational maintenance work only at this time. Decommissioning impacts are considered to be similar to construction impacts. Even in the absence of mitigation there were no impacts identified with the potential to be significant beyond a local level, meaning no significant effects have been identified on the regional populations of any ecological receptors.

Mitigation and Residual Effects

- 8.5 Assessment of effects of development related impacts on ecological receptors and subsequent mitigation has been undertaken iteratively throughout the design stages of the development. As a result, the primary aim of avoidance has been maintained so that limited mitigation is required. Furthermore, considerable efforts have been made to provide Biodiversity Net Gain in consultation with NatureScot. This focuses on the restoration of blanket bog habitat and its important store of carbon.

- 8.6 As a result of the avoidance of features, and adoption of simple mitigation measures where this has not been possible, there are no residual, negative significant impacts on any of the Important Ecological Features from the development either in isolation, or in combination with other projects. Furthermore, there is positive, net gain to biodiversity associated with the peatland restoration.

9 ORNITHOLOGY

Introduction

- 9.1 The ornithology chapter considers the potential impacts of the proposed wind farm on birds. The approach to this assessment is based on the wind farm guidance provided by NatureScot and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland.

Baseline

- 9.2 Baseline ornithological conditions have been established through desk-studies, consultation and field surveys. Designated sites, habitats and species were considered. Key species recorded within baseline survey area included breeding raptors (golden eagle, white-tailed eagle, merlin, peregrine and red kite); breeding waders (notably greenshank, dunlin and golden plover); black grouse; and breeding common scoter and black-throated diver associated with the nearby West Inverness-shire Lochs Special Protected Area (SPA). Following flight activity surveys collision modelling was undertaken for golden eagle and greenshank. GET modelling was also undertaken for golden eagle and a theoretical flight modelling exercise has been undertaken to assess the potential for effects on common scoter.

Assessment

- 9.3 Assessment of impacts and their mitigation has been undertaken iteratively throughout the design stages of the development. Site design has evolved continuously over the survey and assessment stages of the project, with desk study and field survey results highlighting key areas of sensitivity for ornithological receptors. The GET modelling was used to minimise the loss of golden eagle foraging habitat. As a result, the primary aim of avoidance has been maintained so that limited mitigation is required. The assessment also includes a Habitats Regulations Appraisal in respect of the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA.
- 9.4 Construction impacts are predicted to be habitat loss and disturbance to ornithological receptors. During operation of the wind farm there is also the potential for disturbance, which is predicted to be at a lower level than during the construction phase. There is also the potential for collision with turbines during the operational phase. Decommissioning impacts are considered to be similar to construction impacts.

Mitigation and Residual Effects

- 9.5 Even in the absence of mitigation there were no significant effects on birds identified either on consideration of the development in isolation, or in combination with other nearby wind farm projects as part of the cumulative assessment. Nonetheless, a Breeding Bird Protection Plan and Outline Habitat Management Plan will be adopted following consent, which will include measures to safeguard and, where possible, enhance habitat for birds. As a result of the avoidance of features, and adoption of design mitigation measures there are no residual, negative significant impacts on birds

10 GEOLOGY, HYDROLOGY AND PEAT

Introduction

- 10.1 This chapter considers the potential effects of the proposed development on Geology, Hydrology and Peat.
- 10.2 Consultation relevant to the assessment was undertaken with the Highland Council (THC) NatureScot and SEPA who commented on aspects of methodology, sources of information, scope of assessment and cumulative development. SEPA has also provided advice on design aspects of the proposed development.

Baseline

- 10.3 There are no geological SSSIs or Geological Conservation Review sites within the study area. The British Geological Survey digital geology mapping indicates that bedrock within the site boundary is comprised of igneous (volcanic) rock. This is generally classified as having limited to no groundwater potential.
- 10.4 Peat probe surveys were undertaken in 2021 and 2022. Overall, of the 1,043 peat probes advanced during all of the peat surveys, peat depth was recorded as less than 50cm at 581 probe locations (55.7%), defined as peaty or organo-mineral soils. At 347 (33.2%), peat probes were recorded at between 51cm to 100cm depth. Peat depths over 100cm were recorded at 115 probe locations (11%).
- 10.5 Part of the site is identified as being within an area of Class 2 Peat based on the SNH Carbon and Peatlands Map. The ground conditions within the area identified as Class 2 peat were noted to comprise saturated peaty soils due to surface water runoff from nearby hills, with the peaty soils becoming inundated and forming wet flush, dominated by sphagnum, rushes and heather. Extensive historical erosion persists across this low-lying plateau and isolated, open-ended basins scattered elsewhere, from which the peat has been almost wholly eroded.
- 10.6 Watercourses within and in proximity to the redline boundary are shown on Figure 10.6. The principal watercourse which flows generally west to east is the Allt Coire na Creadha. It rises on the lower slopes of Beinn Loine and is formed through a number of tributaries which flow through the development area. It extends for approximately 3.5km before discharging into Loch Loyne.
- 10.7 There are two watercourses, Allt na Doire Moire and Allt na h'Aire, which flow in a generally northerly direction from Carn na h-Ulach into the River Moriston.
- 10.8 The River Loyne is located approximately 115m to the east of the proposed access junction, on the far side of the A87. This flows in a generally south-westerly direction into Loch Loyne. There are various un-named watercourses which flow from the existing access track into the River Loyne.

Mitigation

- 10.9 A number of mitigation measures have been committed to in the assessment to ensure protection of peatland and watercourses. No significant potential effects on hydrological, geological and peat receptors have been predicted when taking account of mitigation by design and embedded mitigation.

Overall Effects

- 10.10 As a result of the mitigation measures set out above, all residual effects on hydrological, geological and peat receptors are assessed as being negligible or minor, and not significant.

11 SOCIO-ECONOMICS AND TOURISM

Introduction

- 11.1 This chapter of the EIA Report assesses the likely significant effects of Bunloinn Wind Farm (hereafter known as the 'proposed development') with respect to Socio-Economics, Land Use, and Tourism and Recreation.

Baseline

- 11.2 The baseline has been established determine the existing socio-economic characteristics of the site and its receptors, in terms of employment and economy, and tourism and recreation. Scotland's renewables sector has a turnover of 2.8 billion, and 6,440 FTE employment. A higher number of the Highland's population of working age are economically active, compared to Scotland as a whole. Being a popular tourist destination, the Highlands has a higher percentage of employment in accommodation and food service industries than Scotland and England as a whole, and gross weekly pay in the Highlands is lower. It is estimated that 600 jobs are supported by the renewables sector in the Highlands, giving an estimated GVA of £15m.
- 11.3 The significance of tourism and recreation is greater in the Highlands than Scotland as a whole, and tourism expenditure supports a number of local jobs. Whilst there are a number of major tourist attractions in the Highlands, they are out with the 15km study area identified. Studies have found the impact of wind farms on tourism and recreation to be small, and opposition to renewable energy found to be very low.

Construction and Decommissioning Effects

- 11.4 The proposed development would result in spend of between £14.2m and £74.9m in the Highland Council area during the construction phase, with 103-186 FTE direct jobs created. An additional 128-230 FTE jobs would be supported within the existing economy. The construction and decommissioning effects on employment and economy and land use are found to be minor, beneficial, and not significant. Land use effects would not be significant, only minimal and temporary disruption would occur during construction and decommissioning.
- 11.5 In terms of tourism and recreation, the temporary effects of construction and decommissioning have been scoped out.

Operational Effects

- 11.6 There would be no change to land use during the operational phase. In terms of employment and economy, the proposed development would contribute between £1.18m and £4.6m per year to the local economy and provide between 22.9 and 90.6 direct FTE jobs.

- 11.7 Assessment of effects on tourism and recreation at receptors were considered negative, the Cape Wrath Trail and Eve's Road core path being not significant, effects upon Gleann Cia-gig drive Road Heritage Path being moderate and potentially significant, and users of the Four Munros and four Corbetts, would experience significant adverse effects.

Community Benefit Funding

- 11.8 In order to ensure that local communities share the socio-economic benefits which would be generated from the proposed development, an annual index linked payment of £5,000 per MW community benefit over the lifetime of the project - £11.7M during the 35 year operational period.

Overall effects

- 11.9 The assessments presented in this chapter demonstrate that the proposed development would result in a possible significant effect on recreational/tourism users of Four Munros (Creag a' Mhaim, Gairich, Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach); and Four Corbetts (Beinn Loinne, Meall Dubh, Geal Charn and Meall na h-Eilde) as well as significant negative effects on recreational/tourism users of the Gleann Cia-aig Drive Road Heritage Path; and The Cape Wrath Trail (Great Glen option), but that there would be no other significant adverse effects from the proposals.
- 11.10 The proposed development would lead to beneficial economic effects, but these are not expected to be significant.

12 NOISE

Introduction

- 12.1 Chapter 12 addresses the potential effects of construction, operational and decommissioning noise on noise sensitive receptors nearby.

Baseline

- 12.2 The predicted noise from the Proposed Development is 21 dB at the nearest receptor, 14 dB below the 35 dB threshold below which ETSU-R-97 and the Institute of Acoustics' Good Practice Guide allow a simplified procedure that does not require background noise measurement.

Construction effects

- 12.3 Construction noise is assessed against a daytime noise limit of 65 dB(A), based on Table E.1 of BS 5228-1. The highest predicted noise level at any receptor, during forestry and track preparation activities, is 59.8 dB(A). This is below the 65 dB(A) threshold and would only approach that level for a short period.

Operation effects

- 12.4 Operational noise from the proposed development is predicted to reach a maximum of 21 dB(A) at the nearest receptor, 14 dB below the simplified 35 dB(A) limit.
- 12.5 If any neighbouring wind farms were noisy enough to approach the 35 dB(A) limit, the Proposed Development's contribution to the cumulative noise would be negligible by comparison. Therefore, there is no need to model cumulative noise in detail.

Decommissioning effects

- 12.6 Decommissioning is expected to be no noisier than construction.

Mitigation

- 12.7 Construction will be scheduled, unless otherwise agreed, from Monday to Friday 07:00 to 19:00 and Saturday 07:00 to 13:00. Unattended plant equipment will be kept to a minimum.

Overall effects

- 12.8 Construction noise will be audible at receptors for a short period, but at acceptable levels. Operational noise is predicted to be extremely low.

13 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

- 13.1 The transport and access elements of the site have been considered in detail in Chapter 13.

Baseline

- 13.2 The Proposed Development would take access from an new access to the north of the site from the A87. The turbine blades will be delivered from Kyle of Lochalsh harbour to the north-west of the site, while all other turbine components will be delivered from Corpach port to the south.
- 13.3 The Study Area therefore comprises:
- the A87 between the Kyle of Lochalsh Port and the site entrance;
 - the A887 between the A87 junction and Tomchrasky;
 - the A87 between the site entrance and the A82 junction;
 - the A82 between A87 junction and roundabout junction with the A830; and
 - the A830 between roundabout junction with the A82 and Corpach Port.

Construction Effects

- 13.4 The proposed development would lead to a temporary increase in traffic volumes on the study road network during the construction phase. Traffic volumes would decrease considerably outside the peak period of construction.
- 13.5 The maximum traffic impact associated with construction is predicted to occur in Month 8 of the programme. The greatest impact would occur at the site access where an additional 124 trips (39 Cars & Lights and 85 HGVs) are included to the network.
- 13.6 No road capacity issues are expected on any of the roads within the study area due to the additional construction traffic movements associated with the proposed development as background traffic movements are low, the links are of a reasonable standard and appropriate mitigation is proposed.
- 13.7 The assessment of significance suggests traffic flows interacting with the Core Path Network are considered significant effects, prior to the application of mitigation measures. The construction effects on the Kyle of Lochalsh, Invergarry, Spean Bridge, Fort Williams and Corpach residents are considered mainly Slight and not significant as there are located in the vicinity of a trunk road which is designed to accommodate HGV and higher traffic flows. Reduced speed limits are in place through these locations.
- 13.8 HGV traffic movements will increase by over 30% along the A87, near the site access (34.76% based on the ATC traffic flows and 75.78% based on the DfT traffic flows which

have both been assessed for robustness). While the increase in flows is statistically significant, it is generally caused by relatively low total flows along this road link which will see an additional 85 HGV journeys per day. This represents a total of approximately seven journeys every hour which is not considered significant in terms of overall traffic flows. The A87 also forms part of the trunk road network and as such has been constructed to accommodate significant HGV composition.

Operational and Decommissioning Effects

- 13.9 The effects of the operational and decommissioning phases have been scoped out of the assessment.
- 13.10 Traffic levels during the operational phase of proposed development would be one or two vehicles per week for maintenance purposes. Traffic levels during the decommissioning of the proposed development are expected to be lower than during the construction phase as some elements could be left in situ and others broken up on-site.

Mitigation

- 13.11 Various mitigation measures will be adopted and are contained within Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).
- 13.12 The movement of AIL traffic would require small scale and temporary remedial works at a number of locations along identified delivery route which is presented in Appendix 13.1.
- 13.13 AIL mitigation works can be designed to be temporary in nature to enable restoration to their original condition (if required by The Highland Council).
- 13.14 It is proposed that a revised RSR will be undertaken for the blade delivery vehicles post consent and secured through a planning condition once the commercial turbine supply contract has been signed.

Overall Effects

- 13.15 During the construction phase, no significant effects are predicted following the application of the proposed mitigation measures. No long term, adverse effects will occur as a result of the proposed development.

14 FORESTRY

Introduction

- 14.1 This chapter addresses the responses to the Scoping Opinion, in particular to those of Scottish Forestry, the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulations. The significant relevant policy is the Scottish Government's policy on Control of Woodland Removal.

Baseline

- 14.2 The forestry study area within the proposed development consists of a single privately owned forest consisting of unplanted ground, native woodland and 581 ha coniferous plantation.

Construction Effects

- 14.3 The proposed development requires felling of some 14.73 ha for permanent infrastructure with a further 10.21 ha of management felling. The permanent infrastructure felling is permanent woodland loss and will be mitigated through compensatory planting within the Site. Temporary felling will be replanted in situ. No woodlands listed in the Ancient Woodland Inventory are effected by the development.

Operation Effects

- 14.4 The remainder of the forest areas will continue to be maintained, felled and replanted in accordance with approved forest plans. On this basis, there would be no operational effects on forestry or woodland

Decommissioning Effects

- 14.5 At the time of decommissioning, any previously forested areas designated as restoration may be replanted with trees in keeping with the Proposed Development's decommissioning plan.

Mitigation

- 14.6 Compensatory planting is calculated in accordance with the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal. compensatory planting arrangements shall be provided for at least 14.73 ha of woodland. Some 27.93 ha have been identified on Site as potential new planting areas however this is subject to further environmental surveys to determine suitability.

Overall Effects

- 14.7 The residual construction effects on forestry are a reduction of planted ground within the single forest unit, in total by 14.73 ha. However, when considering the proposed mitigation

measures, including compensatory planting, the overall magnitude of impact would be negligible and therefore not significant.

15 OTHER ISSUES

Introduction

15.1 This chapter considers potential effects and features which have been scoped out of full assessment but raise pertinent points for the proposed development or link to other areas of assessment contained within this Volume. The topics covered are:

- Aviation Lighting, which includes a summary of the approach taken and layout agreed with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA);
- Results of the carbon calculator exercise to understand and report on the carbon payback of the proposed development, and;
- Telecommunications.

Aviation Lighting

15.2 To fulfil all MoD and Civil Aviation Authority specifications for aviation lighting, the site must be fitted with infra-red and visible aviation lights. As such, of the 10 turbines that make up the proposed development, nine will be fitted with MoD compliant infra-red lighting (which is invisible to the naked eye and so does not have any impact on the surrounding environment), while six will be fitted with visible aviation lighting.

15.3 Visible aviation lights are only operated at their maximum brightness when visibility is less than 5km in all directions, such as during thick mist or heavy rain. In all other conditions, which account for approximately 95% of the time, visible aviation lights are operated at 200cd, or 10% of their maximum brightness. This means that maximum brightness is only required for approximately 5% of the time.

Telecommunications

15.4 Telecommunication links across the Site were investigated as part of initial constraint investigations. Two telecommunications links were identified within the Site boundary, located in the north-east. The direction of the links then travel north-west and north-east, outwith the Site boundary.

15.5 The closest turbine lies approximately 1.7km to the south of the two telecommunication links.

15.6 Given the distance between the links and the turbine envelope, it is considered that the turbines are located suitably outwith the telecoms links and therefore will not result in any effects upon these assets.

Carbon Calculator

15.7 The assessment used the Scottish Government's Carbon Calculator for wind farms on peat to estimate the benefit of displacing conventionally generated electricity in the grid compared to the predicted direct and indirect emissions of carbon resulting from the

construction and operation of the Proposed Development over its lifetime, including losses of stored carbon from felled forestry and affected peatland.

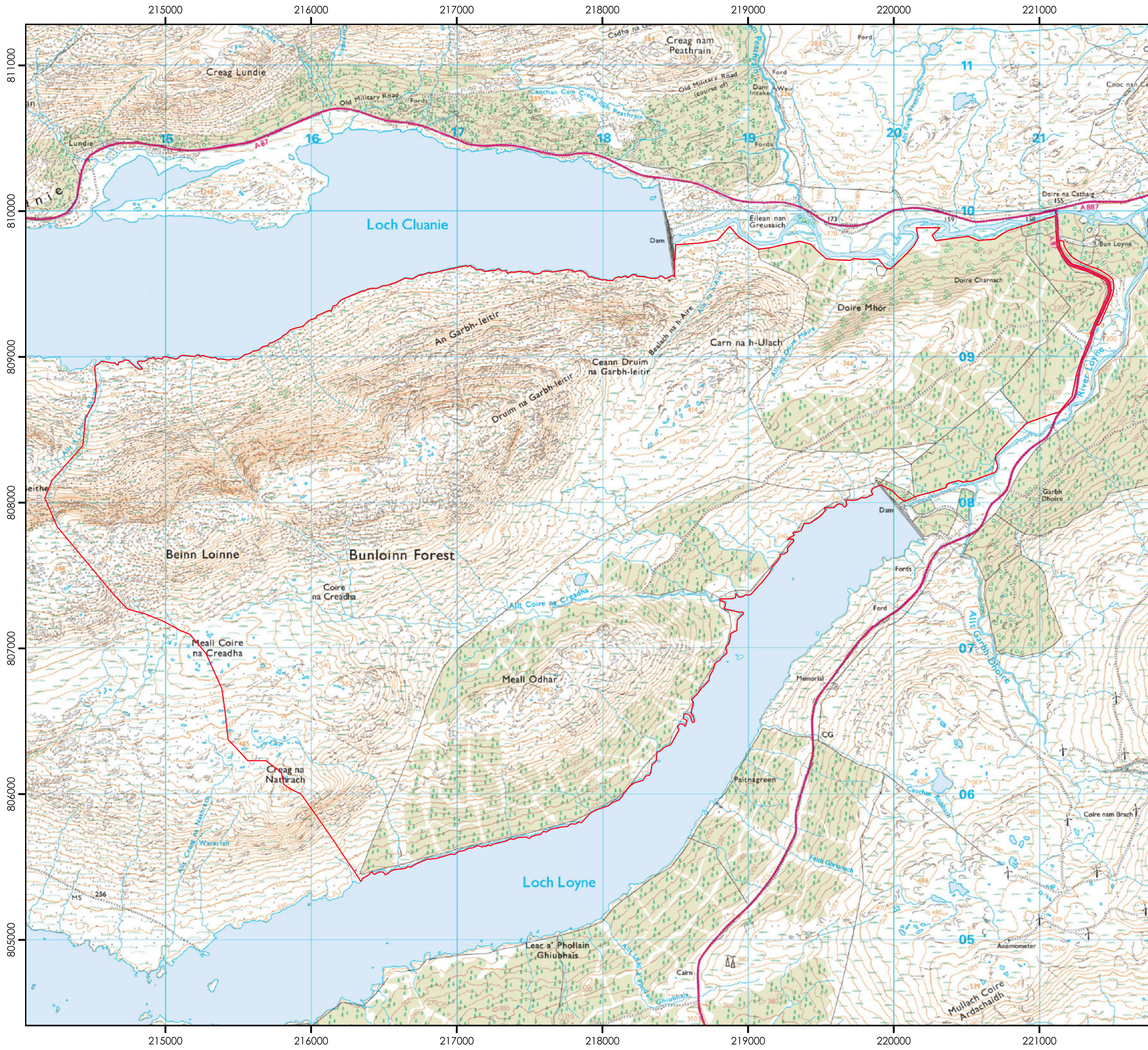
- 15.8 The results of the Carbon Calculator for the Proposed Development show that the Proposed Development is estimated to produce annual carbon savings in the region 50,287 tonnes of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) per year.
- 15.9 The estimated payback time of the Proposed Development, using the Scottish Government Carbon Calculator, is estimated at 3 years, with a minimum/maximum range of 2.3 to 4.3 years. As a result, the proposed development is evaluated to have an overall beneficial effect on climate change mitigation.

Mitigation

- 15.10 Following implementation of mitigation through design and best practice as well as the mitigation measures identified above, it is considered that there would be no significant effects on aviation, telecommunications and climate change.

16 SUMMARY

- 16.1 This NTS has summarised the impacts and resultant effects arising as a result of the proposed development.
- 16.2 The EIA for the proposed development has been carried out in accordance with regulatory requirements and guidance on good practice. The proposed development has been designed following full baseline surveys and a range of technical and stakeholder inputs, including from the public. Design has aimed to minimise effects where possible.
- 16.3 As identified within the EIAR, potential significant effects are predicted in relation to landscape and visual amenity. In particular, significant landscape effects are restricted to an area of *Rugged Massif* LCT and *Rocky Moorland – Lochaber* LCT, and a small area of the *Wooded Glen – Inverness* LCT (Glen Moriston unit) due to the proposed Site entrance and access track during the construction phase only.
- 16.4 Significant visual effects are restricted to the views from short sections of the A87 and A887 two recreational routes, four Munro's and four Corbetts. The proposed turbines have been cohesively located, slightly lower down within the landscape between two landforms, to benefit from intervening screening and limit the visibility of the proposed turbines as well as reducing the horizontal and vertical extent of the proposed development from key views and particularly when perceived from the A87 and A887, and views from some surrounding elevated areas.
- 16.5 With the use of mitigation as described in detail within the EIA Report and respective technical chapters, it is not considered likely that significant effects would occur in relation to any other environmental discipline.



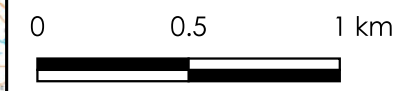
Bunloinn Wind Farm

Office England: 4330 Park Approach Leeds LS15 8GB	Office North Scotland: 44 Elliot Street Glasgow G3 8DZ	Office South Scotland: 31 Dewar Place Lane Edinburgh EH3 8EF
T:+44 (0)113 204 4850	T:+44 (0)141 354 6544	T:+44 (0)131 600 0852

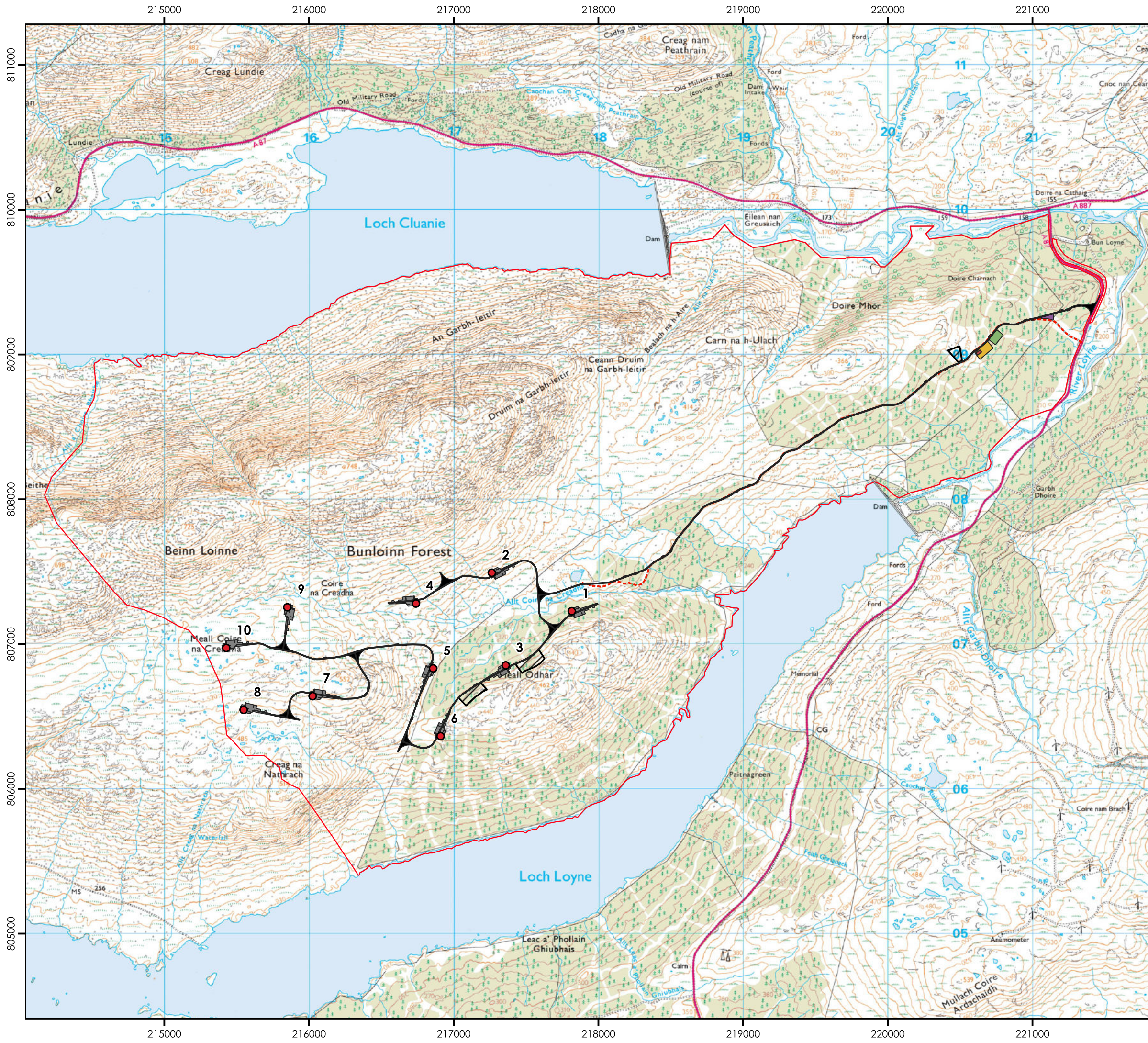
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Figure 1: Site Boundary

Key:
[Red outline] Site Boundary



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Bunloinn Wind Farm

Office England:
4330 Park Approach
Leeds
LS15 8GB
T:+44 (0)113 204 4850

Office North Scotland:
44 Elliot Street
Glasgow
G3 8DZ
T:+44 (0)141 354 6544

Office South Scotland:
31 Dewar Place Lane
Edinburgh
EH3 8EF
T:+44 (0)131 600 0852

www.energiekontor.co.uk

Figure 2: Proposed Layout

Key:

- Site Boundary
- Turbines
- Crane Pads
- Existing Forestry Track
- Onsite Tracks
- Turning Heads
- Borrow Pit Search Areas
- Substation
- Battery Storage
- Construction Compound
- Car Parking Area
- Passing Place

0 0.5 1 km



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ENERGIEKONTOR UK LTD

SCOTLAND
44 Elliot Street
GLASGOW
G3 8DZ
T: +44 (0)141 354 6544

ENGLAND
4330 Park Approach
Thorpe Park
LEEDS
LS15 8GB
T: +44 (0)113 204 4850

info@energiekontor.co.uk
www.energiekontor.co.uk