

Glenvernoch Wind Farm Tourism Impact Assessment

A report to



October 2024



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1.

Executive Summary

Glenvernoch is a proposed wind farm development approximately seven km north west of Newton Stewart in Dumfries and Galloway. This report was commissioned by the developer, EnergieKontor, to assess any effects the development could have on the local tourism economy.

Research conducted by the Moffat Centre in 2008 examining the *potential* of onshore wind farms on tourism activity suggested there could be a limited impact on employment and economic activity as the number of wind farms increased. In the intervening time since this study, onshore wind farm developments have grown substantially in Scotland and any impacts on tourism would now be evident.

In 2021, BiGGAR Economics conducted research analysing the impact of 44 onshore wind farm developments in Scotland and trends in tourism employment in the local areas in which they are situated. This found no link between onshore wind farm development and tourism employment trends and showed that in some areas tourism employment had actually grown. This analysis was extended as part of this assessment, to incorporate four new wind farms that have become operational in Dumfries and Galloway since 2019. This supplementary work reinforced the conclusions of the previous analysis. Furthermore, public attitude surveys continue to show strong support for onshore wind farms.

The Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation highlights low productivity as an important challenge for the Scottish economy. The committed transition to a net zero economy represents a key opportunity for the country to boost productivity rates through the investment and creation of job opportunities in addition to creating new sustainable tourism opportunities. The development of Glenvernoch wind farm will contribute to achieving these aims.

The Galloway Forest Park and associated mountain bike activity connected to the 7Stanes mountain bike centres are central to the tourism proposition of the local area. The park lies within a few km of the proposed development.

Motivations for visiting the park were considered as part of this assessment. The conclusion reached was that overall, there is no reason to expect the proposed development to substantially affect visitor behaviour. While it is possible a small number of visitors with a particular aversion to wind farms may choose to avoid routes or accommodation with significant visibility of the site, any such effects are expected to be isolated and minor and there are sufficient alternatives within the local area to ensure this would not affect the tourism economy as a whole.

Furthermore, the most common attribute highlighted by accommodation providers in Newton Stewart was their town centre location, proximity to local facilities and ease of access to the surrounding area. These attributes will not be affected by the proposed development implying that any potential effects on visitor behaviour would be restricted to the local area around Newton Stewart rather than the town itself.

2.

Approach and Methodology

To assess the potential impact of Glenvernoch wind farm on tourism, this study uses a mixed methods approach including the examination of existing literature and analysis of publicly available data.

Glenvernoch is a wind farm (the proposed development) proposed for a site approximately seven km north west of Newton Stewart in Dumfries and Galloway. This report has been commissioned by the developer, EnergieKontor, to assess whether the development is likely to have any effect on the development on the local tourism economy.

While there is no evidence that wind farms have had a negative effect on Scottish tourism or on tourism in areas where wind farms have been developed, this does not guarantee future developments will not have no negative effects. This report has been therefore been commissioned to determine whether the development and operation of the Glenvernoch wind farm specifically is likely to have such effects.

2.1 Study Approach

Given the location of the proposed development and its proximity to the town of Newton Stewart, the assessment focuses on this area. The local tourism context was analysed with respect to the number of visitors to Dumfries and Galloway and how much of a draw Newton Stewart is for visitors to the region. The importance of tourism as a source of employment for the area was considered and compared with Scotland as a whole. This analysis was designed to provide insight on the importance of tourism for the local economy and the local area's role in the tourism proposition of the wider region and as a national tourist destination.

When assessing the impact of onshore wind farm developments on tourism it is common practice to consider three different types of tourism assets within a 15 km radius of the site:

- tourism assets that draw visitors to the area;
- accommodation providers where visitors can stay during their visit; and
- recreational walking trails and routes.

This is the approach that has been adopted for this assessment.

Whilst this approach may not encompass every asset the area has to offer it highlights the key attractions and provides a good basis for assessing whether the development and operation of Glenvernoch wind farm is likely to affect motivations for visiting Newton Stewart and the wider local area.

2.2 Study Methodology

A combination of research methods was used to complete this assessment. These included analysis of data from publicly available statistics on tourism activity and employment and web searches of local attractions, accommodation providers and recreational routes.

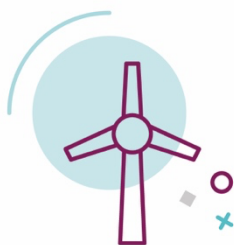
To assess effects on tourism and recreation assets, the features that make them distinctive and attractive were identified and assessed in terms of whether the development of the wind farm was likely to alter these features, and therefore motivations for visiting them.

For recreational assets, guidance provided by NatureScot on how to assess effects on recreational amenity has been followed. This takes into consideration several potential effects, including direct effect on facilities, such as limitation or restrictions on access, and effects on the intrinsic quality of the resources enjoyed by people.

The findings of this research are detailed in this report, which is structured as follows:

- section 3 summarises existing research on onshore wind farm developments and tourism and on public attitudes towards onshore wind farm developments;
- section 4 provides an overview of the economic and tourism policy context;
- section 5 outlines the local tourism economy within the vicinity of the proposed development and how important this is for tourism regionally and nationally;
- section 6 describes the tourism proposition of Newton Stewart and the surrounding area, including attractions, accommodation providers and recreational routes;
- section 7 provides an assessment of any potential impacts of Glenvernoch wind farm on tourism within the wider 15 km radius of the development, including Newton Stewart; and
- section 8 draws together the main conclusions of the report.

3.



Wind Farms and Tourism

Existing evidence suggests there is no link between onshore wind farm developments and tourism employment. It also shows public attitudes towards development are overwhelmingly supportive.

The relationship between wind farm development and tourism has been the subject of several studies. If impacts arising from onshore wind farms, such as landscape character or visual impacts, lead to changes in visitor behaviour or spending, it would be expected that there would be evidence of such changes in other areas where there has been onshore wind farm development. This section of the report looks at existing evidence on the topic in addition to evidence on public attitudes towards wind farm developments in Scotland and the UK.

3.1 The Economic Impacts of Wind Farms on Scottish Tourism

A widely quoted, although now dated, study on the economic effects of wind farms on tourism is a study by the Moffat Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University published in 2008¹.

The study considered what could happen, based on surveys of tourists' perceptions. It found that, although there may be minor effects on tourism providers and a small number of visitors may decide not to visit Scotland in the future, the overall effect on tourism expenditure and employment would be very limited.

Since this study was completed, wind farms have become much more common in Scotland, and any negative effects they may have had on the tourism economy would now be apparent.

3.2 Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland

3.2.1 Evidence from 44 Wind Farms

In 2021, BiGGAR Economics produced a report² analysing the relationship between the construction of onshore wind farms and tourism employment.

Nationally, the report found that, between 2009 and 2019 Scotland experienced a substantial increase in onshore wind energy (with the number of turbines increasing from 1,082 in 2009 to 3,772 in 2019) and that over the same period employment in

¹ Moffat Centre (2008), The Economic Impact of Wind Farms on Scottish Tourism

² BiGGAR Economics (2021), Wind Farms & Tourism Trends in Scotland: Evidence from 44 Wind Farms

tourism-related sectors increased by 20%. At the local level, the analysis also showed the authorities with the largest increase on onshore wind energy also experienced increases in tourism employment equal to, or greater than other areas.

The report included case studies of 44 onshore wind farms constructed between 2009 and 2019. This included an updated analysis of 28 wind farms included in a previous report³ constructed prior to 2015, and 16 additional wind farms constructed between 2015 and 2019. The study reported on changes in tourism-related employment in the small areas within 15km of each wind farm. Of the 28 wind farms previously analysed, the surrounding local areas of 18 experienced an increase in tourism employment above the Scottish average in the years following the construction. Of the 16 local areas surrounding the additional 16 onshore wind farms, 11 experienced increases in tourism employment which outperformed the Scottish average. These results suggested that tourism employment in local areas across Scotland changed independently of wind farms located in the area.

The report concluded there was no pattern or evidence to suggest the development of onshore wind farms has had negative effects on the tourism economies of Scotland, individual local authorities or the areas surrounding wind farms.

3.2.2 Evidence from Recent Local Wind Farm Developments

Since 2019 a further four Wind Farms have become operational in Dumfries and Galloway: Solwaybank Wind Farm, Crossdykes Wind Farm, Windy Rig Wind Farm, and Sandy Knowe Wind Farm. Whilst the operational dates vary, it is likely that impacts on tourism, if there were any, would have begun during construction and already started to have an influence on tourism employment.

Table 3.1 shows how tourism employment in the local areas around each of the sites changed from 2020 to 2022. Both absolute numbers of tourism employment and the proportion of total local employment have increased around all wind farms in this time period. Although this time period coincides with Covid, the trends are broadly consistent across Dumfries and Galloway and Scotland.

Table 3-1 Tourism Related Employment Near Four Recent Local Wind Farms

Wind Farm	Operational	Local Area Tourism Employment (as % of all local employment)		
		2020	2021	2022
Solwaybank	Nov 2020	220 (10.2%)	200 (11.7%)	230 (13.6%)
Crossdykes	June 2021	270 (9.5%)	310 (10.2%)	300 (9.5%)
Windy Rig	Oct 2021	220 (15.2%)	175 (12.2%)	365 (24.5%)
Sandy Knowe	Feb 2023	145 (5.9%)	95 (3.8%)	260 (10.3%)

Source: ONS (2024), Business Register and Employment Survey: open access 2024

³ BiGGAR Economics (2017), Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland

This supplementary analysis supports the conclusions from the earlier analysis and suggests there is no reason to expect the development of onshore wind farms to have a negative effect on the tourism economy in the surrounding local area.

3.3 Public Attitudes Towards Onshore Wind Farms

The proposition that wind farms could have an adverse impact on the tourism economy supposes that some tourists do not like wind farms and so could change their tourism behaviour to avoid experiencing them. Public attitudes to wind farm development are therefore relevant to a tourism impact assessment.

An opinion poll commissioned by RenewableUK in 2021⁴ found that there is strong support for onshore wind in Scotland and for the development of more wind farms. The poll found that 70% of people in Scotland supported renewable energy projects, with this figure rising to 74% if they lived within five miles of an existing wind turbine. Support for repowering wind farms is also high, with support in the south of Scotland highest at 78%. This suggests that public opinion of onshore wind farms in Scotland, and in the south of Scotland specifically, are overwhelmingly supportive.

A more recent 2024 opinion poll⁵, conducted by Opinium Research, commissioned by RenewableUK, also highlights concerns about onshore wind not going ahead. In that UK-wide poll of over 10,000 adults, 61% of people indicated they would feel frustrated if a renewable energy project that most of the community supported were blocked by a small number of objectors.

The UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) also produce quarterly statistics tracking public attitudes towards energy infrastructure. In its winter 2021 findings, 86% of the public supported renewable energy projects. Support for onshore wind projects specifically stood at 80%.⁶

⁴ RenewableUK (2021). 'Poll shows majority of people in Scotland want planning system to enable more onshore wind farms.' Available at: <https://www.renewableuk.com/news/583064/Poll-shows-majority-of-people-in-Scotland-want-planning-system-to-enable-more-onshore-wind-farms-.htm>

⁵ RenewableUK (2024). 'Polling shows most people feel frustrated when renewable energy projects are blocked.' Available at: <https://www.renewableuk.com/news/679361/Polling-shows-most-people-feel-frustrated-when-renewable-energy-projects-are-blocked.htm>

⁶ BEIS (2022). Public Attitudes Tracker: Energy Infrastructure and Energy Sources. Winter 2021, UK.

4.

Strategic Context

National and regional strategies emphasise the need for Scotland's economy, including the tourism sector, to embrace the opportunities created by the country's transition to Net Zero.

4.1 National Strategy for Economic Transformation

In March 2022, the Scottish Government published Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation⁷, setting out the Scottish Government's priorities for the economy and the actions required to ensure opportunities to achieve a wellbeing economy are maximised over the next decade.

The strategy outlines the vision for the economy that by 2032, Scotland will be a nation of entrepreneurs and innovators, with considerably boosted productivity and a focus on opportunities which will transform the economy. As Scotland is currently below average in terms of productivity, the strategy emphasises the need to address barriers to productivity across the economy.

The transition to net zero is highlighted as a significant opportunity for Scotland to deliver positive employment, revenue and community benefits, increasing productivity in the economy and addressing poverty and regional inequalities.

The just transition which the Scottish Government aims to achieve will mean investment to develop the existing strengths of the country, such as the provision of higher education and the energy sector. For Scotland to improve productivity across the economy and ensure the whole country benefits, existing sectors will be encouraged to embrace the opportunities that a net zero economy presents.

The economic strategy highlights the challenges faced by the tourism sector in particular as a result of Covid-related restrictions since 2020. As the sector recovers, the remaining net zero targets should provide the ambition to drive action and innovation which will improve the future productivity of the historically low productivity sector. In 2019, GVA per head of employment in sustainable tourism was £20,121 in Scotland⁸, while average GVA per job filled across the entire Scottish economy was £54,662.⁹ The strategy notes that the industry can address this low productivity while recovering from the pandemic by embracing the chance to establish Scotland as a leader in sustainable and eco-tourism.

⁷ Scottish Government (2022), Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation

⁸ Scottish Government (2022), Growth Sector Statistics

⁹ ONS (2021), Subregional Productivity: labour productivity indices by UK ITL2 and ITL3 subregions



4.2 Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future

In March 2020, just before the implementation of Covid-19 restrictions across the UK, the Scottish Tourism Alliance, a group of stakeholders in Scotland's tourism sector launched a strategy outlining the vision for the sector to 2030.¹⁰ The strategy highlights that Scotland's tourism sector has the potential to be a positive force for sustainability, responsibility, innovation and technology. Tourism provides jobs and the ability to enrich communities and enable investment, collaboration and partnership. The mission laid out in the strategy, to grow the value and positively enhance the benefits of tourism across Scotland by delivering the very best for visitors, businesses, people, communities and the environment, will be delivered in line with four key priorities:

- **Passionate people:** attracting, developing and retaining a skilled, committed, diverse and valued workforce;
- **Thriving places:** creating and developing a sustainable destination together;
- **Memorable experiences:** providing the best, authentic and memorable experiences; and
- **Diverse businesses:** building business resilience, sustainability and profitability.

The strategy highlights that, for Scotland's tourism economy to thrive, sustainability must be incorporated into its growth and development. By delivering a 21st century vision through sustainable tourism practices across the sector, the tourism industry can meet changing tourism trends and improve productivity in the sector.

Since Scotland Outlook 2030 was published, Covid-19 and related restrictions have posed increased challenges to the sector. However, the aims outlined in the strategy remain the sector's priorities and the Scottish Government's long-term goals for the tourism sector. In 2021, the Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Programme was introduced by the Scottish Government.¹¹ Proposals on how to use funding were developed by the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG) to accelerate recovery in the short term, and to provide the foundation for a sustainable recovery in the tourism sector, putting the country on track to achieve the ambitions outlined in Scotland Outlook 2030.

4.3 South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy

In September 2021, the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership published a Regional Economic Strategy¹², outlining the aims of the organisations for the South of Scotland, including:

¹⁰ Scottish Tourism Alliance (2020), Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible tourism for a sustainable future

¹¹ VisitScotland (2021), Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Programme

¹² South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (2021), South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy

- supporting fairer, more meaningful work;
- creating affordable, desirable and energy-efficient homes and widening choice;
- improving the health and welfare of those who are most disadvantaged within the region;
- building the capability and capacity of social enterprises and the Third Sector;
- investing in social infrastructure and education to enhance life prospects;
- putting the environment and sustainability at the forefront of the region's growing economy;
- protecting, enhancing and enjoying the region's abundant natural capital; cultural and heritage assets and vibrant arts and festivals backdrop; and
- building wealth which benefits the local economy, communities and people

The ten-year strategy outlines the vision of the South of Scotland being a region which is 'green, fair, and flourishing'. As part of its aim to become a green economy leader, the partners will work to support piloted approaches to land use and natural capital; encourage a growing circular economy enabling local green jobs; and support enhanced, future-proofed energy networks and zero carbon technologies.

The strategy highlights the partners' priorities of growing and diversifying the economy, in part through building upon the region's sectoral strength in the generation of renewable energy. The strategy also sets the priority of utilising the economic opportunities presented by the transition to net zero, noting that the region is well placed to develop renewable heat and power to support Scotland's net-zero targets and create green jobs.

4.4 South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy

As part of the South of Scotland's Regional Economic Strategy it was agreed that all key agencies in the region would develop and agree a single Responsible Tourism Strategy for the South of Scotland¹³.

The strategy was launched in 2024 and its core aims are to grow tourism spend in the South of Scotland by £1 billion and support a further 6,000 jobs in the sector by 2034. The strategy will promote the region as a 'rural escape' for the 14 million people within four hours' travel time, as well as emphasising the appeal of the South of Scotland as an unmissable 'go-to' rather than 'go-through' destination. It also aims to grow the number of higher-spending, longer-staying international visitors holidaying in the South of Scotland.

An initial 3 year Action Plan (2024-27) commits public bodies to work together with businesses, enterprises and communities. The actions include developing the area as a year-round destination, encouraging adoption of the "Scotland Starts Here" branding and showcasing destinations such as Dark Sky attractions and Burns

¹³ South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (2024), South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy 2024-2034

tourism. Actions include developing the visitor experience by facilitating collaboration between businesses to make it easier for visitors to find and book joined up experiences, and encouraging new events and festivals.

Regarding the development of walking infrastructure the Action Plan highlights working collectively to develop and support the paths network, recognising the 'hero' routes and locations and agreeing priority areas for improvement. With reference to cycling, the Action Plan highlights the creation of more safe spaces to ride and open access to additional path networks across the South of Scotland to provide visitors of all cycling abilities safe, enjoyable and memorable experiences. Also of interest is the proposal for active management of the region's motorhome offering, and the creation of a region-wide motorhome experience that covers expectations of campervan users, waste management and details on locations where users can/cannot park.

4.5 Strategic Context Summary

National and regional strategies highlight the requirement for a just transition to net zero in Scotland. A just transition which invests in Scotland's existing strengths as well as creating new opportunities will allow Scotland to improve productivity across the economy and create a wellbeing economy which tackles poverty and regional inequalities. The tourism industry in Scotland is a historically low productivity sector which faced challenges as a result of Covid-19. The need for recovery creates the opportunity to grow sustainability in the way the industry recovers, improving productivity in the sector and creating opportunities for the country to become a world leader in sustainable tourism.

The development of Glenvernoch wind farm can contribute to achieving outcomes identified in each of these strategies. Notably the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy has several ambitions to which the development of the wind farm could contribute.



5.

Local Tourism Economy

The largest settlement area to the proposed development is Newton Stewart, which is a gateway town to the Galloway Forest Park.

Newton Stewart is a rural town in Dumfries and Galloway in the south of Scotland. In 2021 the town had a total population of 5,459¹⁴, accounting for 3.7% of the population of Dumfries and Galloway. This section examines the importance of tourism to the town and the surrounding local area within the context of the tourism economy of Dumfries and Galloway and Scotland as a whole.

5.1 Visitor Numbers

In 2022, there were 3.1 million visits to Dumfries and Galloway, of which 2.6 million were day trips by residents from across the UK. This accounted for 3.3% of all tourism (excluding the Orkneys and Outer Hebrides) in Scotland.¹⁵

According to an online survey in 2023¹⁶, 13% of the overnight visitors to Dumfries and Galloway were from Scotland, 74% were from the rest of the UK, 4% were from the rest of Europe. The remaining 9% were long haul visitors. The vast majority (92%) of visitors were either older independent travellers or retired people. On average those who came to Dumfries and Galloway stayed a little over 9 nights in Scotland, of which almost 4 nights were in Dumfries and Galloway.

To give context to these visitor numbers, the average number of visitors per year to Dumfries and Galloway between 2017 and 2019 was higher prior to COVID, at 6.5 million. This accounted for 4.2% of all tourism in Scotland at the time.¹⁷ Although this partly reflects a change in methodology, this pattern of reduced visitor numbers is similar across Scotland.

The total spending of international and domestic visitors to Dumfries and Galloway amounted to £234 million in 2022, which amounts to approximately £75 per visitor. This is less than the average of nearly £96 spent per visitor in Scotland.

The most popular attractions and activities for visitors to Dumfries and Galloway include shopping (47%), a country park or garden (44%), a castle or fort (35%), a historic house, palace, stately home (33%), and a museum or art gallery (29%). As

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2022). *Langholm and Eskdale*. Available at: <https://statistics.gov.scot/atlas/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fid%2Fstatistical-geography%2FS01007519>

¹⁵ Visit Scotland Key Statistics 2022. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/dumfries-galloway>

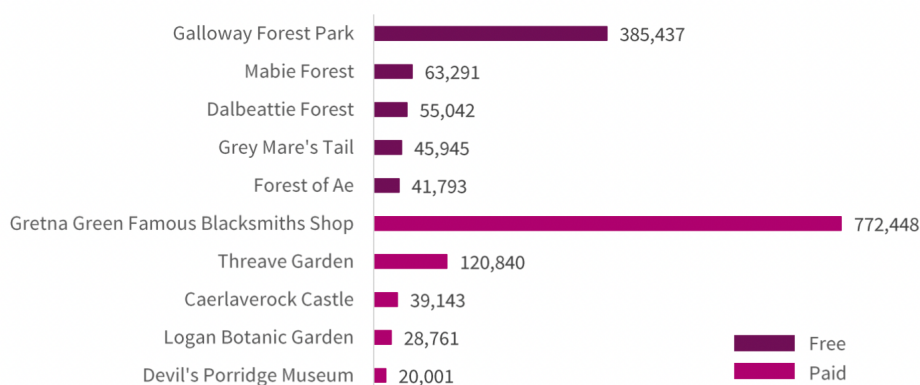
¹⁶ Visit Scotland Visitor Survey (2023). Local Area Factsheet: Dumfries and Galloway

¹⁷ Visit Scotland Insight Department (2021). Dumfries and Galloway Factsheet 2019

detailed in section 6, there are several attractions that fall under these classifications that attract visitors to the area.

The latest publicly available data on visits to attractions comes from 2019, as shown in Figure 5.1. Whilst most of these attractions are not near the proposed site, Galloway Forest Park, the most visited free tourist site, is within a few kilometres.

Figure 5-1 Top Five Free and Paid Visitor Attractions in Dumfries and Galloway, 2019



Source: Visit Scotland Insight Department (2021). Dumfries and Galloway Factsheet 2019.

5.2 The Sustainable Tourism Sector

Tourism generates economic activity through visitor expenditure across various sub-sectors of the economy. In 2015 the Scottish Government defined the sector using a various standard industrial classification (SIC) codes¹⁸. This definition includes 14 sub-sectors including accommodation, food services, and attractions. As residents also spend money in some of these sub-sectors and tourists also spend money in other sectors (such as retail and transport) that are not included in the definition this measure is imperfect. However, it is the definition favoured by government statisticians and provides a reasonable estimate of tourism related activity.

Using this definition official statistics¹⁹ show the sustainable tourism sector generated a total of £93.7 million GVA in Dumfries and Galloway in 2021, accounting for 2.8% of the total generated by the sector across Scotland that year.²⁰

5.3 Sustainable Tourism Employment

There were 160 people employed in the sustainable tourism sector in Newton Stewart in 2022, accounting for 10.2% of total employment in the town. Of this total, 80 people (50.0%) were accounted for by employment in hotels and similar

¹⁸ Defined by the Scottish Government as SIC codes: 55.1, 55.2, 55.3, 56.1, 56.3, 79.12, 79.9, 91.02, 91.03, 91.04, 93.11, 93.199, 93.21 and 93.29.

¹⁹ Scottish Government (2022). Growth Sector Statistics.

²⁰ Scottish Government (2022). Growth Sector Statistics.



accommodation. Restaurants and mobile food services, which will also be supported by residents, employed a further 70 people, accounting for 43.8% of all tourism-related employment in Newton Stewart.

Newton Stewart lies just to the south of Galloway Forest Park and is one of the main gateways to the park. Newton Stewart is also 11 kilometres from Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town. As such Newton Stewart offers a useful base for visitors to explore the local area.

Newton Stewart's tourism-related employment suggests a higher than average number of people staying overnight in the area, as well as use of local restaurants and cafes. However, there is limited employment across other areas of the tourism sector. As such, trends in tourism related employment in the area suggest tourists may use Newton Stewart as a base to get away to relax and to explore the local area, which includes the national park.

The 15km area around the proposed development, which includes parts of South Ayrshire²¹, have similar trends in tourism related employment. In total 300 people are employed in sustainable tourism in this wider area, accounting for 10.0% of total employment. The majority of tourism-related employment in the wider area is in accommodation services, which employs 200 people. This represents 66.7% of all tourism related employment in the 15km area and a larger than average share of total employment. This suggests the wider area serves as an attractive place for visitors to relax in and around the park.

On the whole, there is a similar share of tourism-related employment in Newton Stewart (10.2%) and the local 15km area (10.0%), as there is in Dumfries and Galloway (10.1%) and across Scotland (8.7%). However, in the context of Dumfries and Galloway, the local area accounts for a small share of total employment in the tourism sector. Of the 6,740 people employed in tourism related sectors across Dumfries and Galloway, the local area accounts for just 4.5%

²¹ Areas included in the local area: S0101007502: Machar North - 01, S0101007505: Machar North - 04, S0101007513: Newton Stewart - 01, S0101007514: Newton Stewart - 02, S0101007515: Newton Stewart - 03, S0101007516: Newton Stewart - 04, S0101007517: Newton Stewart - 05, S0101007518: Newton Stewart - 06, S0101007519: Newton Stewart - 07, S01012418: Carrick South - 02, S01012419: Carrick South - 03.



Table 5-1 Tourism Related Employment, 2022

	Newton Stewart	Local Area	Dumfries & Galloway	Scotland
Hotels and similar accommodation	80	90	1,750	50,000
Holiday and other short stay accommodation	0	60	300	5,000
Camping parks	0	50	400	3,500
Restaurants and mobile food service activities	50	60	2,500	100,000
Beverage serving activities	20	20	1,000	34,000
Tour operator activities	0	0	10	1,500
Other reservation service and related activities	0	0	0	300
Museum activities	0	0	100	4,000
Operation of historical sites and buildings	0	0	100	2,500
Botanical and zoological gardens and nature reserves	0	0	30	2,250
Operation of sports facilities	10	10	350	15,000
Other sports activities	0	10	75	5,000
Activities of amusement parks and theme parks	0	0	0	700
Other Amusement and recreation activities	0	0	125	4,500
Total Employment	160	300	6,740	228,250
Share of Total Employment	10.2%	10.0%	10.1%	8.7%

Source: ONS (2024), Business Register and Employment Survey: open access 2024

6. Newton Stewart's Tourism Proposition

Newton Stewart is surrounded by the Galloway hills and with a variety of accommodation options available provides a convenient base from which to explore the wider local area.

Newton Stewart is a rural town on the banks of the River Cree located approximately 7km south of the proposed development. This section provides an overview of the tourism assets, accommodation providers and recreational routes on offer to visitors to the town and the surrounding local area.



6.1 Tourism Assets

Desk based searches of the VisitScotland and the Newton Stewart websites identified eight tourism assets in and around Newton Stewart that are relevant to this assessment.

6.1.1 The Museum Newton Stewart

Housed in the former St John's Church in the centre of town, the Museum describes the natural and social history of Galloway. It displays exhibits such as local photography, costumes and fabrics and its different sections include the nursery, tradesman's tools, the dairy, the kitchen and the smithy. The museum is staffed by volunteers and is open in the afternoons from May until the end of October. There is parking, a gift shop and garden.

6.1.2 Newton Stewart Golf Club

The 18-hole Newton Stewart Golf Course can be found a few minutes walk from the town centre. Established in 1896, the golf course provides visitors with scenic views towards Cairnsmore and Wigtown Bay. The course is set out to cater to all golfing abilities, and the club and clubhouse welcomes visitors.

6.1.3 7Stanes Mountain Biking

Located north east of the Proposed Development, the 7Stanes are a series of world-class mountain biking centres spanning Southern Scotland with award winning trails offering unique mountain biking to thrill seeking riders from across the UK and beyond. Their routes cater to beginners, families, and experts and provide opportunities for practicing skills and techniques.



6.1.4 Bruce's Stone

Burce's Stone is a popular tourist site and a recommended starting point for the Merrick hill, the highest mountain in southern Scotland. The granite boulder commemorates the victory by Robert the Bruce over the English army in 1307 during the Scottish Wars of Independence.

6.1.5 Merrick Leisure Centre

Located in the centre of Newton Stewart, Merrick Leisure Centre has a 25m swimming pool with spa and sauna, a fitness room and sports hall offering badminton, tennis and football facilities. The leisure centre is open daily, and visitors can also book exercise classes.

6.1.6 Crafty Distillery

On the southern edge of Newton Stewart the Crafty Distillery offers tours and tastings from the gin and whisky distillery.

6.1.7 Glentrool Hive

Located on the outskirts of the Galloway Forest Park the Glentrool Hive is in the village of Glentrool, approximately four km from the proposed development. It is a multipurpose community centre run by the community. The Hive incorporates a gallery, craft shop and community garden; mountain bike hire and creative workshops are also available. The Hive hosts various events including a weekend in September celebrating the connection with the Galloway Forest, which includes forest bathing, a dark skies tour and wild swimming.

6.1.8 Galloway Forest Park

Galloway Forest Park offers numerous opportunities to explore and enjoy the outdoors, all within a few miles of Newton Stewart. Ten forests make up the Galloway Forest Park and the two biggest visitor hubs at Kirroughtree and Glentrool are easily accessible from Newton Stewart. Visitor centres, cafes, wildlife watching, fishing, walking, cycling and stargazing are all on offer. The forest park offers a range of visitor attractions and is home to two of the renowned **7stanes mountain bike trail centres** that provide a range of trails for novice and experienced riders.

In 2009 Galloway Forest Park became an **International Dark Sky Park** for its rare stargazing conditions. Due to its remoteness, on a clear night, over 7,000 stars and planets are visible to the naked eye. Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers run tours and educate people on the night sky.

Kirroughtree Visitor Centre located approximately four km east of Newton Stewart and 11km south east of the proposed development, provides a café, bike shop and base for walking the woodland trails or cycling the mountain bike trails and forest roads. Visitors can enjoy bird and squirrel watching from the Wild Watch Hide. Scenic parts of the National Cycle Route 7 wind through the forest at Kirroughtree, linking Kirroughtree to Glentrool.

Glentrool Visitor Centre located approximately 14km north of Newton Stewart and three km north east of the proposed development the Glentrool visitor centre is at

the heart of the Galloway Forest Park. It provides a café and base for walking, cycling and wildlife watching. Bruce's Stone, overlooking the site of the Battle of Glen Trool is a monument to Robert the Bruce's long campaign that included several battles in the vicinity of Newton Stewart.

Galloway Red Deer Range was established by Forestry and Land Scotland to provide visitors with the chance to watch red deer up close in a natural environment. The Red Deer Range is located within the forest park approximately half way between Newton Stewart and New Galloway on the A712 (Queen's Way) and provides free car parking. There is a viewing area and hide which is open all year with free entry. Moorland and woodland birds also gather at the feeding station at the hide and birds of prey can often be seen overhead.

Galloway Wild Goat Park is 10km north east of Newton Stewart along the A712 and approximately 13km east of the proposed development. The Goat Park provides a natural environment for the hairy, long-horned British primitive goats. Around 50 of the goats live in an enclosure on site whilst several hundred live in the surrounding hills and can be seen from the Red Deer Range.

The town of Newton Stewart also has several local attractions that add to the town centre offer. These include:

- Galloway Heathers Garden Centre: specialising in heather, and Elmlea Plants specialising in herbaceous perennials and grasses;
- the Old Bakery Gallery: providing viewing of artwork;
- the Vaults Arts Centre: hosting a year round programme of live music, arts and cultural events; and
- the Newton Stewart Cinema: a community-owned facility showing films and providing a venue for live acts.



6.2 Accommodation

As the proposition to visitors to Newton Stewart may be slightly different to the proposition presented to visitors to the wider area, this assessment identifies two groups of visitor accommodation providers. A group of providers within Newton Stewart and group outwith the town but within 15km of the proposed development.

6.2.1 Accommodation in Newton Stewart

A total of 28 accommodation providers were identified in Newton Stewart including:

- 7 hotels and B&Bs;
- 18 self-catered lodges/cottages;
- 1 hostel; and
- 2 caravan and campsites.

The seven hotels and B&Bs identified were located approximately seven km from the proposed development. Many hotels and B&Bs in the area market themselves based

on their proximity to the town centre and the small shops the town is known for. They highlight the busy market town as a central location for a wide variety of activities, and welcome walkers and cyclists to the nearby Galloway Forest Park. Some highlight the proximity of the Newton Stewart Golf Club with some arranging tailor-made golf, shooting and fishing breaks.

The Hotels and B&Bs identified in Newton Stewart include:

- Creebridge House Hotel;
- the Blackhorse Hotel;
- the Bruce Hotel;
- the Crown Hotel;
- Stables Guest house;
- Corbsie Villa B&B; and
- Machmore Castle.

The search also identified 18 self-catering properties in Newton Stewart, around seven km from the proposed development.

Many market their location within the Galloway hills as a base from which to explore Dumfries and Galloway, promoting easy access to forest walks, golfing, cycling and fishing. Providers mention the River Cree running through the town and the access to numerous small shops and restaurants in Newton Stewart. They also highlight the opportunity to view Dark Skies, and access to the coast with its numerous beaches 20-60 minutes drive away. Many mention the 7stanes mountain bike network accessible within five minutes drive of the town with some providing bike racks and bike storage. Providers also market themselves based on the ability to view local wildlife and take part in ranger led walks to see the red deer and wild goats

The self-catering accommodation identified in Newton Stewart includes:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▪ Galloway Holiday Cottage; | ▪ Cairnsmore; |
| ▪ Holmpark Holiday Cottages; | ▪ Creebank; |
| ▪ Otter Cottage Holidays; | ▪ Victoria Appartment |
| ▪ Ailsa Cottage; | ▪ The Toll House; |
| ▪ Old School House; | ▪ Kirroughtree Steading; |
| ▪ Appletree Cottage; | ▪ Peppy; |
| ▪ Creeview Cottage; | ▪ Stone Cottage; |
| ▪ Hilltop – East Wing; | ▪ Riverside; and |
| ▪ Barnkirk Holidays; | ▪ Cottonmill Cottage. |

Two caravan parks and camping sites were identified in Newton Stewart seven km from the proposed development. **Barnkirk caravans** offer fixed caravans to rent and provides good access to the high street and local amenities. **Creebridge Caravan Park** is located 1.5km north east of Newton Stewart and just off of the A714 with capacity for fixed, self-catered, caravans along with touring caravans and a camping site. This provides visitors with a convenient base from which to enjoy the local area.



The **Newton Stewart Youth Hostel** is located in a woodland area five minutes from the town centre. It is marketed as a base for outdoor enthusiasts, families and wildlife watchers. Its website highlights opportunities for fishing, pony trekking, wildlife watching and hill walking within the Galloway Forest Park and along the coast. Promotional material for the hostel also mentions proximity to the UK's first Dark Sky Park and mountain biking challenges at 7 Stanes forests at Glentworth and Kirtcubbin. The Southern Upland Way is only ten km away and the hostel provides secure bike storage for those passing the hostel on Sustrans Cycle Route 7.

6.2.2 Accommodation in the Wider Local Area

A wider search for accommodation providers outwith Newton Stewart but located within 15km of the proposed development identified a further 39 providers. These providers included:

- 28 self-catered lodges/cottages; and
- 11 caravan and campsites.

The 28 self-catering properties were:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▪ Wallace apartment; | ▪ Gardeners Cottage; |
| ▪ Low Cordorcan; | ▪ Wellhouse Farm Cottages; |
| ▪ Penninghame West Lodge; | ▪ Barmharrow Holiday Pods; |
| ▪ Cabin in Galloway Forest; | ▪ Torwood Country Lodges; |
| ▪ Borgan Cottage; | ▪ Scotts Pods; |
| ▪ Silver ridge Houses; | ▪ Dark Sky Retreat; |
| ▪ The Coorie; | ▪ The Buchan; |
| ▪ Corrafeckloch Cottages; | ▪ White Laggan Bothy; |
| ▪ Annes Cottage; | ▪ Galloway Forest Cottages; |
| ▪ Waterside Newton Stewart; | ▪ Garlies Lodge; |
| ▪ Glenmalloch Lodge; | ▪ Baytree Holiday Lodge; |
| ▪ Brewery House; | ▪ Bambie Lodge; |
| ▪ Barnhill Farm Holiday Cottages; | ▪ The Dog House; and |
| ▪ Mochrum Park Holidays; | ▪ Frugaldom. |

The visitor proposition presented by many of these providers is that of an exciting country escape that provides an opportunity to re-connect with nature. A major selling point highlighted by several providers is the ability to view local wildlife and explore the hills surrounding. The proximity to the Southern Upland way and other local attractions including golfing, mountain biking, bird watching, and fishing, are also marketed.

The 11 caravan and campsites identified were:

- Glentool Camping and Caravan Site;
- Bamharrow Holiday pods;
- Su casa at the three lochs;
- The Herons Nest Caravan;
- The Forest View Resort;
- Hedgehogs Rest;
- Three Lochs Holiday Park;
- Corwar Dark Sky Glamping;
- Balloch O'Dee;
- Barrhill Holiday Park; and
- Queensland Holiday Park.

These providers offer a mix of fixed, static caravans, and plots for touring caravans and campers. Given the extensive recreational trails near the proposed development many market themselves for their proximity to those sites and the surrounding hills.

Glentool Camping and Caravan site highlights stargazing opportunities within the Dark Skies Park and the chance to see a wide range of wildlife from red deer, pine martens and otters to birds of prey including Golden Eagles, Red Kites and Ospreys. The site also highlights the 7Stanes mountain biking trails and the coast-to-coast Southern Upland Way which passes the site within a few hundred yards

6.3 Core Paths and Other Recreational Routes



Exploring the local area, whether by foot, bicycle or even horse back is an important activity for visitors to many parts of Scotland. It is therefore important for a tourism impact assessment to consider the routes visitors might use to do this. This assessment identified routes using two main sources.

The first source was the list of core paths maintained by Dumfries and Galloway Council (routes designated by local authorities under the terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003). The second was the Walkhighlands.com website, which is a widely used public access site that provides information about popular walking routes all over Scotland.

The closest core path to the proposed development is the Southern Upland Way, which passes within 360m of the nearest turbine²². The Southern Upland Way is also one of fourteen recreational routes identified within 15km of the proposed development. These routes are summarised in Table 6-1.

²² Scottish Government (2024) *Core Paths*. Accessed: <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/f69babe5-6ac7-4292-92ab-012fe82906b8/core-paths-scotland>

Table 6-1 Recreational Routes Within 15km of Proposed Site

Recreational Route	Description	Distance to Nearest Turbine (km)
Southern Upland Way sections 2 & 3	Section two of this route goes from Castle Kennedy to Bargrennan and section three goes from Bargrennan to Dalry.	1.5
Water of Minnoch Circuit, Glen Trool	This route takes in riverside sections, mixed woodland as well as open areas with mountain views. It incorporates a section of the Southern Upland Way, woodland paths and forestry tracks	1.5
Wood of Cree near Newton Stewart	This is the largest area of ancient woodland in Southern Scotland and is an RSPB nature reserve.	2.2
Water of Trool, Glen Trool	This circuit encompasses forests, woods and rivers beside Glen Trool passing a Martyrs Tomb where six Covenanters were killed.	5.0
Knockman Wood, Newton Street	This woodland walk visits a neolithic chambered cairn and outlines of medieval archaeological remains through a grassy path covered by lush mosses and lichens.	5.2
Loch Trool Trail, Glen Trool	One of the trails within the Galloway Forest park, this route goes around Loch Trool, which was once the scene of a battle involving Robert the Bruce.	7.0
Riverside Walk, Newton Stewart	This route goes along the banks of the River Cree.	7.5
Curleywee and Lamachan Hill, Glen Trool	This route goes through the Galloway Hills and passes a Giant Axe Head sculpture, one of the 7 Stanes.	9.0
Merrick via Loch Valley, from Glen Trool	A circular route around Merrick near Robert the Bruce's stone.	9.2
Kirroughtree Forest Walks, near Newton Stewart	A group of three waymarked routes for walkers, giving views of Cairnsmore of Fleet through tree cover with glimpses of the Cree Estuary.	10.2
The Merrick, from Loch Trool	This is the highest summit in Southern Scotland and provides a panorama of the Galloway Forest.	12.0



Recreational Route	Description	Distance to Nearest Turbine (km)
Murray's Monument, near Newton Stewart	This short walk lies in the heart of the Galloway Forest park. It climbs the obelisk of the Murray Monument before returning through the woods past a waterfall.	12.6
Cairnsmore of Fleet, near Newton Stewart	The Cairnsmore of Fleet is the most southerly two thousand foot hill in Scotland and a magnificent viewpoint for the Cree Estuary and the Solway. Just before reaching the summit cairns a giant block of stone stands as a memorial to airmen who have lost their lives in the nine airplanes which have crashed into the Cairnsmore.	13.2
Milfore from Black Loch	Millfore climbs two thousand feet and offers views over its neighbours and Loch Dee.	13.2

7. Tourism Impact Assessment

None of the tourism assets identified in this assessment is expected to be affected by the proposed Glenvernoch wind farm and any effects on individual accommodation providers would be minor and would not affect the local tourism economy as a whole.

Despite existing evidence suggesting there is no link between onshore wind farm developments and tourism employment, it is still important to consider whether the proposed Glenvernoch wind farm could lead to changes in the behaviour of visitors to the local area.



7.1 Newton Stewart's Tourism Economy

One of the most important drivers of the tourism economy in and around Newton Stewart is the Galloway Forest Park. Visitors to the park will be motivated by various factors. One will be the desire to spend time outdoors enjoying the natural environment. Others are likely to include a desire to participate in a specific recreational activity (walking, cycling, wild swimming, etc.), to see some of the species that inhabit the park (e.g. red deer or wild goats) or to look at the stars.

It is also noteworthy that Dumfries and Galloway has been identified as the preferred location for Scotland's proposed new national park. If proposals for the park proceed, in time this could become an important part of the visitor proposition for the local area.

7.1.1 Spending Time Outdoors

It is likely that an important part of the motivation for many visitors to the park will be a simple desire to spend time outdoors, experiencing the natural environment. The proposed development will not change the availability of opportunities to do this but it is possible it could affect the experience of visitors with a particular aversion to wind farms if views from the park were significantly affected. It is however important to note that, as highlighted in section 3.3, public attitudes toward wind farms are generally favourable so the number of such people is likely to be small.

It is also important to note that the ZTV commissioned by the developer suggests many parts of the park will have no visibility of the proposed development. As the park covers a total area of some 300 square miles and contains 27 way marked trails it is reasonable to conclude there are sufficient options available to enable visitors with a particular aversion to wind farms to avoid views of turbines during their visit

should they so wish. For this reason it is very unlikely that the proposed development would have an effect on the overall number of people visiting the park.

7.1.2 Forest Based Recreational Activities

The Galloway Forest Park offers opportunities for visitors to participate in a wide range of nature-based activities, from walking and cycling to wild swimming and horse riding. It is reasonable to conclude the primary motivation for many visitors to the park will be a desire to engage in these activities. Providing opportunities to engage in these activities are not restricted by the proposed development there would therefore be no reason to expect a change in visitor behaviour.

Opportunities to participate in outdoor recreational activities will be determined largely by the availability of suitable routes and the availability of facilities such as car parking, toilets and catering. The proposed development would not have an impact on existing visitor facilities in and around the park and potential effects on recreational routes are considered in section 7.4.

7.1.3 Wildlife Watching

Galloway Forest Park incorporates two visitor centres dedicated to the conservation of native species: red deer and wild goats. The primary motivation of visitors to both sites is likely to be a desire to observe and interact with these animals. As there is no evidence to suggest either species has a particular aversion to wind farms, there is no reason to expect that the behaviour of the animals to change should the proposed development proceed. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that this element of the park's visitor proposition would be unaffected.

7.1.4 Stargazing

Galloway Forest Park's status as an International Dark Sky Park has enabled the park to market the area as one of the best places in the UK for star gazing and it is likely this will be an important motivation for some visitors to the park.

It is beyond the scope of this assessment to consider the potential effects on light levels in the local area. However, the scale of the park is such that even if the proposed development were to have a significant effect on light levels there would be alternative locations nearby with no visibility of the proposed development that would ensure the visitor experience would not be affected.

7.1.5 New National Park

Scottish Ministers have proposed that a new National Park should be established in Galloway, with the potential area extending to parts of Dumfries and to East and South Ayrshire. At the time of writing consultation on the boundary of the park was ongoing but initial proposals suggest the proposed development could fall within the park.

At the time of writing the new national park had not yet been formally designated so was not yet part of the local tourism proposition. However, the characteristics of the region that have led to it being identified as the preferred location for the new park

are likely to be similar to the characteristics of the existing Galloway Forest Park and as such do not present any reason for concern.

7.2 Attractions



The tourist attractions identified earlier in this report suggest that the main factors drawing visitors to Newton Stewart are the town's historic past, independent high street while the main draws for visitors to the surrounding area are likely to be the recreational opportunities presented by Galloway Forest Park. While some of these attractions appear to be primarily targeted at visitors, some are also likely to be regularly visited by locals.

7.2.1 Town Centre Attractions

Both the **Museum at Newton Stewart** and **Merrick Leisure Centre** are in the centre of Newton Stewart. This means the context for visits to either attraction is an urban environment and visitors will have no expectation of a natural or unspoilt landscape as part of their experience. Both assets are also indoor attractions so even though the proposed development may be theoretically visible from the town centre, it is very unlikely visitors would be aware of this while using them.

Although the Merrick Leisure Centre is open to visitors it is likely that the main market for the attraction is local. Visitors are likely to be a more important market segment for the museum however it is notable that the attraction is open on afternoons only between May and October. This suggests that tourism activity is seasonal in Newton Stewart and centred on the summer months.

7.2.2 Attractions on the Urban Periphery

The Newton Stewart Golf Club is on the outskirts of the town and is open to both resident members and visitors. While the Club's website says club facilities are open to visitors, the club is not on the main visitor route between England and Scotland and information for visitors is not prominently displayed on the Club's website, suggesting visitors are not an important target audience.

Although it is likely the location and setting of the course are an important draw for some users, it is reasonable to assume the primary motivation for visiting will be to play golf. The course is within the theoretical zone of visibility for up to 13 turbines, which implies the experience of some visitors could be affected however even if this were the case it would not affect the primary motivation for visiting the attraction. As such it is very unlikely visitor numbers would change as a result.

The **Crafty Distillery** is also located on the outskirts of Newton Stewart. As with some of the more central attractions, this asset is an indoor attraction so it is unlikely that visitors would be aware of the proposed development during their visit, even though the site has theoretical visibility of up to 13 turbines.

It is also reasonable to assume that the primary motivation for visiting this site will be an interest in the distilling process and perhaps a desire to purchase gin or whisky

made on-site. This motivation would not be affected by the presence of a wind farm nearby so it is very unlikely that visitor behaviour would be affected.

7.2.3 Bruce's Stone

Bruce's Stone is a granite boulder around 8km from the proposed development that commemorates Robert the Bruce and the Battle of Trool in 1307. The boulder is a short stroll from a car park and offers views over the loch to the hills beyond.

The primary motivation for most visitors is likely to be its historic associations with Robert the Bruce. This will not be altered by the proposed development. While views of the surrounding countryside are likely to be part of the visitor experience, one of the pictures featured on the visitor page about the attraction on the Forest and Land Scotland website appears to show a group of wind turbines in the distance. This suggests that views of turbines are already part of the visitor experience at this attraction. For these reasons there is no reason to expect the behaviour of visitors to this site to change because of the proposed development.

7.2.4 7Stanes Mountain Biking

The **7Stanes** are a group of world-class mountain biking centres spanning Southern Scotland that provide routes catering to all abilities. The centres are an important visitor attraction and a distinctive part of the area's visitor proposition.

Whether as part of a family adventure or a more serious test of skill the primary motivation for people visiting the 7Stanes will be to go mountain biking. The location of the trails means that many parts of the 7Stanes routes would have theoretical visibility of up to 13 turbines. However, it is reasonable to expect that the primary focus of most visitors to this attraction will be staying on their bike and navigating the trail safely rather than looking at the view. It is therefore very unlikely that the proposed development would have a effect on the experience of many users and therefore no reason to expect visitor behaviour to change.

7.2.5 Glentrool Hive

The **Glentrool Hive** is a multipurpose community centre located around 2.5km north east of the proposed development that incorporates a gallery, craft shop and community garden. The Hive also provides mountain bike hire and creative workshops. The centre is closely associated with the Galloway Forest Park, which is likely to be the primary driver for most visitors.

Section 7.1 of this assessment considered the potential effect of the proposed development on Galloway Forest Park and concluded that there is no reason to expect a change in visitor behaviour as a result. As such it is very unlikely that visitor numbers or expenditure at the Glentrool Hive would change if the proposed development were to proceed.



7.3 Accommodation in Newton Stewart

A high-level review of the marketing information available on-line about the accommodation providers identified within Newton Stewart suggests there are several common themes within the information used to market accommodation to visitors. These factors include:

- proximity to town centre facilities and amenities;
- providing a convenient base for exploring the surrounding local area;
- immediate surroundings and on-site amenities;
- access to sporting and recreational activities; and
- views of surrounding countryside.

7.3.1 Proximity to Town Centre Facilities and Amenities

The selling point most frequently referred to by accommodation providers within Newton Stewart was the convenience of being located close to the town and the easy access to facilities, such as shops and restaurants this provides.

The **Creebridge House Hotel** website for example highlights the hotel's proximity to the "busy market town of Newton Stewart" and easy access to nearby supermarkets, cinema, museum, leisure centre and shops. Similarly, **Machermore Castle** advertises the fact it is within walking distance of the town via a private path while the **Bruce Hotel** emphasises its central location as an advantage.

The location of accommodation providers will not change due to the development of a wind farm in the local area so current access to facilities and amenities will not be affected. There is therefore no reason to expect the proposed development to have an effect on this aspect of the marketing proposition.

7.3.2 A Base for Exploring the Local Area

Another locational advantage referred to by some providers was the convenience of Newton Stewart as a base from which to explore the local area, particularly the Galloway Forest Park. The **Stables Guest House** for example explicitly markets itself as a "gateway to the Galloway hills" and a base for exploring the area while **Corsbie Villa** offers to provide visitors with packed lunches, suggesting those intending on exploring the wider area may be an important target market.

Section 7.1 considered the potential effect of the proposed development on visitor numbers to Galloway Forest Park and concluded there was no reason to expect a change in visitor behaviour. As such there is no reason to expect this element of the visitor proposition for these accommodation providers to be affected.

7.3.3 Immediate Surroundings and On-site Amenities

Several of the accommodation providers identified highlighted aspects of their immediate surroundings as important selling points. The **Creebridge House Hotel** website for example emphasises the tranquillity of the hotel's surroundings and setting within three acres of gardens and woodland while the **Machermore Castle**

website highlights the hotel's setting within a 22 acre estate on a river bank as a particular highlight. Several self-catering providers, including **Creebank**, the **Toll House**, **Stone Cottage** and **Riverside** explicitly highlight river views as a benefit while the **Newton Stewart Hostel** emphasises the quiet woodland setting as an advantage.

A small number of providers also highlighted specific on-site amenities as part of their proposition to visitors. The **Old School House** website for example mentions a hot tub while the **Toll House** provides visitors with barbeque facilities.

Neither the characteristics of the garden grounds and immediate surroundings of visitor accommodation in Newton Stewart nor the nature of on-site facilities will change because of the proposed development so there is no reason to expect this aspect of the visitor proposition to be affected.

7.3.4 Availability of Sporting and Recreational Pursuits

Online information about several of the accommodation providers identified highlighted opportunities to participate in various sporting or recreational pursuits as part of their visitor proposition. **Machermore Castle** for example offers visitors fishing and kayaking, the **Blackhorse Hotel** highlights deer stalking, trout and salmon fishing and the **Crown Hotel** website highlights the hotel's proximity to the 7Stanes mountain bike trails and Galloway Forest Park.

The proposed development will not affect people's ability to participate in recreational activities so would have no effect on this dimension of the visitor proposition for these attractions.

7.3.5 Views of the Surrounding Countryside

Views of the surrounding countryside appeared to be an important element of the marketing proposition for a small number of accommodation providers in Newton Stewart. However, as might be expected given the location of these providers, this was a less important factor for this group of providers as a whole.

One exception to this is **Barnkirk Holidays**, which incorporates both a caravan site and a self-catering cottage. Located a short distance from Newton Stewart this provider explicitly highlights "all round countryside views" as an important part of its proposition to visitors. If these views were to be significantly affected then the experience of some visitors might be affected.

The ZTV suggests this accommodation provider may have theoretical visibility of up to 13 turbines. This implies it is possible the experience of some guests could be affected to some extent.

The evidence discussed in section 3 shows that in general, public attitudes to wind farms are favourable so it is reasonable to expect the number of visitors with a very strong aversion to wind farms (who would be most likely to be affected) would be small. It is also important to note that this provider highlights several factors likely attract visitors including the convenience of the location and onsite facilities. These factors would be unaffected by the proposed development so even amongst the

small number of visitors who might have a strong aversion to wind farms, there would be other advantages of staying at this provider that would mitigate any perceived detrimental effect on the views from the site. This implies the overall effect on visitor behaviour is likely to be negligible.

It is also important to note that this provider is only one of 13 similar providers in the local area so there would be alternative options available to visitors with a particular aversion to wind farms. This means even if there were to be an effect on the behaviour of visitors to this provider there would be no effect on the local tourism sector as a whole.

7.3.6 Accommodation in the Wider Local Area

Views of the surrounding countryside are likely to be a more important feature of the visitor proposition for accommodation providers outwith Newton Stewart than they are for providers within the town.

The review of local accommodation providers identified two particular clusters of accommodation in the wider area. One of these is centred around Glen Trool, immediately to the north east of the proposed development and another between six and eight km to the south west around the small settlement of Balminnoch. There is also a small string of accommodation providers dotted along the A714 approximately 14km from the proposed development around the small settlement of Barrhill.

The ZTV suggests that each of these three clusters is located around a small settlement from which there would be limited visibility of the proposed development. While the position of individual providers within the settlements mean it is possible some of the providers may have some visibility of the site there is no reason to believe that the proposed development would affect the whole cluster.

It is likely that an important market for the cluster of accommodation providers around Glen Trool is likely to be visitors walking the Southern Upland Way (which passes through Bargrennan) close to the northern boundary of the proposed development. The impact of the proposed development on this route is considered in section 7.4.1.

The remaining accommodation providers are distributed throughout the surrounding area and are not part of a discernible cluster. A small number of these are located very close to the proposed development site. **Borgan Cottage** for example is located around one km to the east of the proposed development site, **Waterside** is located around 3.5 km to the west and **Penninghame Estate**, which has at least two self-catering properties available to rent, is located around 6km to the south. Each of these providers is likely to have visibility of up to 13 turbines.

For these accommodation providers it is possible that visibility of the proposed development could affect the experience of visitors with a particular aversion to wind farms. However, as discussed elsewhere in this assessment, the number of visitors

with such strong views is likely to be small given the generally high levels of public support for wind farms.

As there are other accommodation options available nearby from which visibility would be limited, it should be possible for visitors with a strong aversion to wind farms to find alternative accommodation in the wider area from which the proposed development would not be visible. This means any changes arising would only affect a small number of individual providers and would have no effect on the overall number of visitors staying in the local area.



7.4 Recreational Routes

Section 6.3 of this report identified 14 recreational routes within 15km of the proposed development site. These routes are an important part of the tourism infrastructure of the local area so if the proposed development were to result in fewer people using them this could have implications for the local visitor economy.

This could occur if the proposed development were to prevent or restrict access to one or more of the routes either temporarily or permanently or if it were to alter important characteristics of the routes that drive people's motivation for using them to a sufficient degree that they would be deterred from visiting the area.

None of the routes identified in section 6.3 pass through the proposed development site so there is no reason to expect that the proposed development would restrict access to the routes in any way. The potential for the proposed development to affect drive people's motivation for using each of the routes is considered below.

7.4.1 Long Distance Routes

Of the routes identified the one that passes closest to the proposed development is the **Southern Upland Way**, a 344 km, cross country route consisting of 12 individual sections. The second section of the route is between Castle Kennedy and Bargrennan, which is around 1.5km to the north of the proposed development. The third section goes from Bargrennan to St John's Town of Dalry. The area to the north of the proposed development is therefore an important intersection for this route, which may explain the small cluster of visitor accommodation nearby.

It is likely that many of the visitors walking this route do so for the challenge of completing the coast-to-coast route. This means even though some visitors may have an aversion to wind farms, the presence of the proposed development would be unlikely to deter them in this purpose. As these visitors are likely to be an important market for the nearby accommodation providers it is reasonable to conclude the proposed development would be unlikely to have an effect on the number of visitors choosing to stay in these businesses.

There are however likely to be some visitors who walk this route with no intention of completing the whole route and these visitors could include people with a strong aversion to wind farms. However, there are ample alternative walking routes in the

local area so it would be possible for these visitors to avoid the proposed development should they choose. There is therefore no reason to expect a change in the overall number of visitors to the local area.

7.4.2 Woodland Walks

Another route located adjacent to the north eastern boundary of the proposed development site is the Water of **Minnoch circuit in Glen Trool**. This is a 11km route that follows forestry tracks, woodland paths and incorporates mixed woodlands as well as “mountain views”.

The essential character of this route is a low-level woodland walk, as such it is reasonable to assume that views of the proposed development would be obscured to some degree by trees and vegetation. The description of the route provided on the WalkHighlands website also refers to views toward Lamaxhan Hill, however this lies to the north east of the route in the opposite direction to the proposed development. For these reasons it is unlikely that visitors would be deterred from using the route by the proposed development.

It is possible there could be a small minority of visitors who are sufficiently opposed to wind farms that they would change their behaviour and choose not to use this route. However, this assessment has identified other routes with similar woodland characteristics within the local area but further from the proposed development that could provide a suitable alternative (for example, **Kirroughtree Forest Walks** or the **Murray’s Monument** route near Newton Stewart). As such there is no reason to expect the proposed development to have an impact on overall visitor numbers.

Other walks near the proposed development site with similar low-level/woodland characteristics include the **Wood of Cree** and **Knockman Wood** near Newton Stewart. The first of these routes is the largest area of ancient woodland in southern Scotland and the site of an RSPB nature reserve, the other takes in a neolithic chambered cairn. These features are likely to be an important part of the reason visitors chose these routes but would be affected by the proposed development. There is therefore no reason to expect the number of visitors using the routes to change.

Kirroughtree Forest has three way marked routes for walkers around 10km to the south east of the proposed development while the routes up **Curleywee and Lamachan Hill** are located around 9km to the north east. The ZTV commissioned for the site suggests visibility of the proposed development from these routes is likely to be very limited. In addition, Published information about the Kirroughtree Forest routes also suggests an important feature of the routes are the views toward the Cree Estuary, which lies in the opposite direction to the proposed development. It is therefore very unlikely the proposed development would affect the behaviour of visitors using these routes.

7.4.3 Glen Trool

Both the **Water of Trool** and the **Loch Trool Trail** are circular routes to the north east of the proposed development. As such visitors using the routes would be walking

toward the proposed development for around half of their trip, limiting the effect the proposed development would have on their experience.

Both routes incorporate substantial sections of low level woodland, which might be expected to obscure views of the proposed development. For these reasons it is unlikely the experience of visitors using these routes would be affected.

7.4.4 Sites of Historic and Special Interest

A number of the routes identified incorporate important historic features. The **Water of Trool** route for example passes a martyrs tomb while the route to **Merrick via Loch Valley** takes in Robert the Bruce's stone. Historic features such as these are likely to be an important part of the motivation for visitors using these routes but would not be affected by the proposed development. As such it is reasonable to conclude the proposed development would not deter visitors from using them.

The route to **Murray's Monument** is a short walk up a steep hill to a 19th century obelisk around 13km to the east of the proposed development. Online descriptions of the route suggest one of the main reasons for using the route is to see the "commanding views" available from the summit, however the ZTV suggests the route is unlikely to have visibility of the proposed development. As such there is no reason to expect an effect on visitor behaviour.

7.4.5 Prominent Hills

Three of the routes identified in section 6.3 incorporate prominent local hills.

The **Merrick from Loch Trool** for example is noteworthy for being the highest summit in southern Scotland. It is likely this feature, which would not be affected by the proposed development, is a key part to visitor motivations for using the route.

Information available online about the route suggests another important feature of the route are the panoramic views over the Galloway Forest. However, this is located to the north and east of the route, away from the proposed development so it is very unlikely the behaviour of visitors using the route would be affected.

The **Cairnsmore of Fleet** route also features a prominent local hill (the most southerly 2,000 foot hill in Scotland). As with the Merrick from Loch Trool route discussed above it is likely that this characteristic (which would not be affected by the proposed development) is important to many visitors' decision to use the route.

Information available online about this route highlights the views available from the route, however the views highlighted are of the Cree Estuary and the Solway Firth, both of which are located in the opposite direction to the proposed development.

The route up **Milfore from Black Loch** is around 13km to the east of the proposed development site. The ZTV commissioned by the developer suggests there is unlikely to be any visibility of the proposed site from the route. Information published online suggests a key feature of the route are the views toward Loch Dee from the summit. Loch Dee is located to the north of the route and north east of the proposed



development so visitors looking toward the loch from the summit would not be looking toward the proposed development. This implies it is very unlikely the proposed development would affect the behaviour of visitors using this route.

7.4.6 Short Routes Near Newton Stewart

One of the routes identified in section 6.3 is the short route through Newton Stewart along the banks of the River Cree. This route is around 7km from the nearest turbine and the ZTV suggests it could have visibility of up to 13 turbines, however the route is essentially urban in character so visitors will have no expectation of views over open countryside and as such would be very unlikely to be deterred from using it by the proposed development.

7.5 Tourism Development

The development of the proposed site will involve creating tracks to connect the site to the road network and access the turbines. Elsewhere similar access tracks have been used to provide access to the countryside for recreational users. In some places this has involved the provision of interpretation materials such as signage and way marked routes and facilities such as public car parking. If a similar approach were to be taken at the Glenvernoch site this would provide an additional tourism and recreation resource in the area.

8.

Conclusion

The development of Glenvernoch wind farm is not expected to have an adverse effect on the behaviour of visitors to the local area or on the local economy.

Based on research into the tourism economy of Newton Stewart and the surrounding local area this assessment found the development of the proposed Glenvernoch wind farm is not expected to lead to negative effects on the local tourism economy.

Galloway Forest Park, the most visited free tourist site in Dumfries and Galloway and one of the most popular tourist attractions in the region, lies within a few kilometres of the proposed site. It provides opportunities for both locals and visitors to participate in a range of outdoor activities including walking and cycling. Linked to this are the 7Stanes, a series of popular and well-known mountain bike centres spanning southern Scotland. These assets are central to the tourism proposition of the local area.

This assessment has considered visitor motivations for visiting the park and the 7Stanes and concluded there is no reason to expect the proposed development to affect visitor motivations. While it is possible a small number of visitors with a particular aversion to wind farms may choose to avoid routes or accommodation with visibility of the site, any such effects are expected to be minor and there are sufficient alternatives within the local area to ensure this would not affect the tourism economy as a whole.

The most common attribute highlighted by accommodation providers in Newton Stewart was their town centre location and proximity to local facilities. Several providers also marketed themselves as a good base from which to explore the local area. These attributes will not be affected by the proposed development so there is no reason to expect the behaviour of visitors staying at these providers to change. This implies that any potential effects on visitor behaviour would be restricted to the local area around Newton Stewart and would be very unlikely to affect the tourism economy of the town itself.

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