

# NEW DEER 2 BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Field New Deer Limited

March 2025

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### **Document history**

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## 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Stephenson Halliday was commissioned in February 2025 to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the proposed construction and operation of a 400 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure, access and ancillary works (the Proposed Development) on behalf of Field New Deer Ltd ('Field').
- 1.1.2 The Proposed Development principally comprises the construction and operation of a BESS with a generation capacity of up to 400 megawatts (MW). The Proposed Development would charge and discharge from the electricity transmission network via the adjacent proposed Greens (New Deer 2) substation. The Proposed Development would have an operational life of 30 years, after which the Site would be restored to its former use.
- 1.1.3 Effects on landscape character arising from the Proposed Development would affect only the host landscape character area. Initially Minor Adverse effects on character of the Undulating Agricultural Heartland Character Type (LCT 20) would be restricted to the Site and immediate surroundings with effects reducing to Minor/Negligible Adverse effects at year 10 of operation. During the 24-month construction period, effects would arise within the land where the Proposed Development would be situated and the immediate extents within 1.5 km. Effects beyond this LCT would be Negligible.
- 1.1.4 Visual effects would occur within a short distance of the Proposed Development on a limited number of receptor groups to the north, south and west. Potential visibility would be restricted by localised landform within 1 km west and between 1 km and 2 km southeast and pockets of forestry to the northeast and east. During construction, visual effects on residents immediately south and north of the Site construction would be Moderate Adverse. However, landscape mitigation measures including earth screening bunds and native woodland planting would screen most views of the proposed battery storage infrastructure and effects would reduce from Moderate/Minor initially to Minor to Minor/Negligible at year 10 of operation. Intervisibility from the wider area would be restricted by topography and vegetation with visual effects reducing markedly with increasing distance beyond 1.2 km. Effects on other visual receptors to the east and northeast would be Minor Negligible and Negligible respectively.
- 1.1.5 Cumulative landscape effects would be limited to the host LCT and would be Minor Adverse. The addition of the Proposed Development would increase the presence of electrical storage and distribution infrastructure within the Agricultural Heartland LCT. Established landscape mitigation would reduce the influence of additional change in the landscape.
- 1.1.6 Cumulative visual effects would be Moderate/Minor Adverse for those visual receptor groups within 1.5 km to the north and south of the Site from where the addition of the Proposed Development would result in some limited cumulative change due to the increase in the presence of electrical infrastructure on the skyline. This would particularly be the case from more elevated vantage points, particularly where the Greens (New Deer 2) Substation and the Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV overhead line would appear in combination with the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.7 A full summary of effects is provided in Table 7.3.



## 2 INTRODUCTION

## 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 This LVA forms part of a suite of documents supporting the application for the Proposed Development. The LVA defines the existing landscape and visual baseline environments; assesses their sensitivity to change; describes the key landscape and visual related aspects of the Proposed Development; and describes the nature of the anticipated changes and assesses the effects arising during construction, operation and decommissioning.
- 2.1.2 The LVA considers the potential effects upon:
  - landscape fabric;
  - landscape character;
  - the special qualities of any landscape designations; and
  - visual receptors including residential, transport and recreational receptors.
- 2.1.3 The LVA has been undertaken in accordance with published best practice; namely the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition), Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013 (GLVIA3) and associated technical guidance notes published by the Landscape Institute (referenced as appropriate in Appendix 1).
- 2.1.4 Although linked, landscape and visual effects are considered separately. Landscape effects derive from changes in the landscape fabric, which may result in changes to the character, whereas visual effects are the effect of these changes as experienced by people (visual receptors). Effects on the setting of any heritage assets are dealt with as part of a separate Archaeological Desk-based Assessment submitted as part of the application.

### 2.2 The Site and Proposals

2.2.1 Figure 1 shows the Proposed Development within its local landscape context and full details of the Proposed Development are contained in the Planning, Design and Access Statement. The Site comprises recently planted forestry from 165m AOD to 169m AOD. The Proposed Development principally comprises a battery energy storage system with a generation capacity of 400 MW of electricity, which will charge and discharge from the adjacent proposed Greens (New Deer 2) substation. The Proposed Development would have a total fenced development footprint of approximately 9.4 ha set within the 129 ha planning boundary. The field containing the above ground BESS infrastructure is approximately 33 ha in size and, for the purposes of this assessment, is hereto referred to as 'the Site'.

### 2.3 Competence

2.3.1 This report along with the design and mitigation of the Proposed Development has been prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Stephenson Halliday.



- 2.3.2 The Practice is a Landscape Institute and IEMA registered practice and all work is prepared and reviewed internally by senior highly experienced landscape planners with Public Inquiry experience.
- 2.3.3 To inform the assessment, a Site visit was made by the Stephenson Halliday assessment team during March 2025 to various locations within the study area including, but not restricted to, representative viewpoints.

### 2.4 Stakeholder Consultation

2.4.1 Aberdeenshire Council was consulted in relation to the scope of the assessment; the selection of viewpoints; the methodology; and the extent of the LVA study area via email with the Planning Officer on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The approach takes into account all issues raised in the pre-application advice and previous experience of similar projects. The key responses are detailed below in Table 2.1: Summary of Stakeholder Consultation.

Consultee	Issue	How this is addressed
Aberdeenshire Council 13.02.2025	Email sent by Stephenson Halliday to Aberdeenshire Council on 13.02.2025 sets out the approach to the LVA. Key issues covered: 3km Study area supported by ZTVs, the approach to the landscape assessment and consideration of five representative viewpoint locations supported by Type 1 Annotated Photographs from each.	Aberdeenshire Council response (5.02.2025) acknowledged the approach to the LVA is satisfactory. Following Site surveys, the LVA includes an additional viewpoint on more elevated ground west of the Howe of Teuchar to represent the full range of views from residential receptors to the west of the Site.
	Cumulative assessment of relevant schemes within 3km	In relation to the cumulative appraisal Aberdeenshire strongly encouraged the LVA "to also consider those applications which are live applications (undetermined), or have been through the screening and scoping process should also be included and not just consented developments. In particular as this proposal would connect to the proposed New Deer Substation this would have to be included. It may be beneficial to include an area larger than the 3km proposed to provide an informed assessment of the cumulative impact in the local area given the wider energy development and proposed infrastructure." The LVA considered cumulative schemes out to 5km. Following the cumulative schemes that are most relevant to this LVA have been included within the assessment of effects set out in Section 7.6. Where cumulative schemes have been

#### Table 2.1 Summary of Stakeholder Consultation



excluded the reasons for doing so have been detailed in the assessment.

## 2.5 Study Area

2.5.1 It is accepted practice in landscape and visual assessment that the extent of the study area for a development proposal is broadly defined by its visual envelope. In this case a study area of 3 km has been used (as shown by Figure 1). This study area is adequate to identify all non-negligible effects on landscape and visual receptors given the generally low height of the majority of the Proposed Development components, topography and the presence of existing forestry within the immediate vicinity of the Site.

### 2.6 Report Structure and Terminology

- 2.6.1 This report is structured as set out in the table of contents. Supporting appendices have been prepared that supplement the sections regarding methodology and baseline. The appendices are important to the assessment and should be read alongside this report.
- 2.6.2 Key terms used within the assessment are described in Section 3 and Appendix 1 which set out the methodology. A glossary is provided within Annex 1 of Appendix 1.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 This section provides a summary of the methodology adopted for the LVA. Full details of the assessment methodology, including assessment criteria, are provided in Appendix 1.
- 3.1.2 In accordance with GLVIA3, the level of landscape and visual effects is determined by considering, in tandem, the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors (landscape elements, landscape character areas, landscape designations and groups of people who may be affected by changes in visual amenity) and the magnitude of effect arising from the Proposed Development.

### 3.2 Cumulative Assessment

3.2.1 Cumulative assessment relates to the assessment of the effects of more than one development. The approach to cumulative assessment is set out within Appendix 1.

### 3.3 Distances

3.3.1 Where distances are given in the assessment, these are approximate distances between the nearest part of the BESS Site and the nearest part of the receptor in question, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

## 3.4 Visual Aids

3.4.1 The method of visualisation selected has been informed by '*Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note 06/19* (Landscape Institute 2019). The Visuals method is set out in Appendix 2. Annotated photographs of the existing views are shown in Appendix 5.



## 4 PLANNING POLICY

## 4.1 National Planning Policy

- 4.1.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 (published February 2023) sets out land use policy guidance in relation to development in Scotland and plans for infrastructure investment. This requires inter alia effective protection of the environment and use of natural and cultural assets, including the importance of landscapes to Scotland's identity.
- 4.1.2 In developing new projects, Policy 11 recognises the distinctive landscapes and the need for project design and mitigation to demonstrate how significant impacts are addressed including:
- 4.1.3 "...significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable" (NPF4, Policy 11- Section e, ii).

## 4.2 Local Planning Policy

- 4.2.1 The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 and sets out the spatial planning policies relating to development and land-use within Aberdeenshire Council. The current local planning policies are relevant to the Site and landscape and visual matters:
  - Policy C2 Renewable Energy;
  - Policy E2 Landscape;
  - Policy E3 Forestry and Woodland; and
  - Policy HE2 Protecting Historic, Cultural and Conservation Areas.

### 4.3 Local Guidance

- 4.3.1 The following guidance documents have been used to inform this appraisal:
  - Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, Appendix 13 Landscape Areas; and
  - Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. Aberdeenshire Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## 5 BASELINE

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 An overview of the baseline study results is provided in this section with the full baseline description of the individual landscape and visual receptors being provided alongside the assessment in Section 7 for ease of reference.



- 5.1.2 This section provides a review of the key local baseline studies and guidance documents and identifies those landscape and visual receptors which merit detailed consideration in the assessment of effects, and those which are not taken forward for further assessment as effects "have been judged unlikely to occur or so insignificant that it is not essential to consider them further" (GLVIA3, para. 3.19).
- 5.1.3 Both this baseline section and the effects section describe landscape character and visual receptors before considering designated areas as it is common for designations to encompass both character and visual considerations within their special qualities or purposes of designation.

### 5.2 Local Guidance and Baseline Studies

- 5.2.1 The following guidance documents have been used to inform this appraisal:
  - Scottish Natural Heritage, 2019. Scottish Landscape Character Types Maps and Descriptions; and
  - Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas.

### 5.3 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Study

- 5.3.1 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study was generated based on the design of the Proposed Development. This is shown on Figure 2 and Figure 3 and indicates areas of potential visibility. The analysis was carried out using a topographic model and includes height estimates applied to forestry and buildings as visual barriers to provide a more realistic indication of potential visibility.
- 5.3.2 The ZTV study was used to aid the identification of those receptors that are likely to be most affected by the Proposed Development and those that do not require detailed consideration. It is noted that views from some areas shown as having potential visibility of the Proposed Development may be screened by taller forestry or localised landscape elements such as boundary walls and hedgerows.
- 5.3.3 The bare earth ZTV (Figure 2) illustrates that potential visibility is broadly limited to three broad areas within 3 km. Potential visibility of the battery storage units and transformers includes the more elevated slopes to the west of Howe of Teuchar and rising ground to the north and northeast of Hillend of Teuchar. There is another area of potential visibility from between 2.5 km and 3.5 km to the northeast at Balthangie across open farmland. Potential visibility to the southeast is limited to the transformers only.
- 5.3.4 The screening ZTV (Figure 3) illustrates the screening effects of medium scale blocks of forestry to the south north and east. Potential visibility is concentrated within 1 km on higher ground before falling away at lower elevations including most of the local road between Cuminestown and Howe of Teuchar. Beyond 1.0 km visibility is limited to several bands of elevated farmland to the west and east at about 135 mAOD. There are more limited pockets of visibility on elevated landform at the northwestern and northeastern edge of the study area.



5.3.5 Given the pattern of visibility shown by the ZTV, a 3 km study area is sufficient to consider landscape and visual effects.

### 5.4 Landscape Character

- 5.4.1 Figure 4 indicates that the Site coincides with Landscape Character Type (LCT) 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland.
- 5.4.2 This landscape is characterised by an extensive area of gently undulating farmland lying at the core of north-eastern Aberdeenshire. It merges gradually with the lower-lying character areas within the Coastal Agricultural Plain and different coastal farmland landscapes to the north and east. Its southern and western boundary is formed by the Farmed and Wooded River Valleys. A distinct higher ridge within the Farmed Rolling Ridges and Hills provides a more distinctive change along the south-eastern boundary near the Ythan Valley.

### 5.5 Visual Receptors

- 5.5.1 Visual receptors are "*the different groups of people who may experience views of the development*" (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 6.3). In order to identify those groups who may be significantly affected within the ZTV study, baseline desk study and Site visits have been used.
- 5.5.2 The different types of groups assessed within this report include local residents; people using key routes such as roads; cycle ways, people within accessible or recreational landscapes; people using public rights of way; or people visiting key viewpoints. In dealing with areas of settlement, public rights of way and local roads, receptors are grouped into areas where effects might be expected to be broadly similar, or areas which share particular factors in common. Representative viewpoints have been selected to aid the assessment of effects on visual receptors.

### **Baseline Visual Environment**

- 5.5.3 As shown on Figure 1, the Site is located approximately 1.5 km south of Cuminestown which is the nearest residential settlement. Local landform and blocks of commercial forestry restrict views towards the Site from the area immediately to the west. Recent clear felling operations at Wagglehill (Case ref: CB454147 and CB392331) have opened views of the Site from surrounding minor roads and dispersed residential properties to the north and south. The Site was recently replanted, and the typical height of the current forestry crop is less than 1.5 m.
- 5.5.4 The undulating nature of the landscape tends to limit views of the Site to more elevated slopes to the north and east. Uninterrupted views towards the Site can be gained from the north at the Hillend of Teuchar where there are several local trails, scattered residential properties and more recently constructed cabins/ pods for tourism.
- 5.5.5 The existing wood pole electricity line is a noticeable element that features on the skyline near to the Site. There are distant views of several rotating wind turbines from more elevated locations including the area immediately south of the Site.



### **Visual Receptor Groups**

- 5.5.6 The following visual receptor groups are located within the study area and are likely to experience visibility of the Proposed Development, as shown on the ZTV study on Figure 2 and Figure 3 and are considered further in Section 6. These receptor groups comprise of clusters and dispersed residential properties rather than recognisable settlements. These groups also include local roads and recreational users of the local landscape.
  - Residents within 0.8 km south;
  - Howe of Teuchar 1.5 km west;
  - Hillend of Teuchar 0.5 to 1.2 km north;
  - Residents between 1.5-2 km east; and
  - Residents between 2 km to 3 km south and southeast.
- 5.5.7 Other visual receptors, including settlement of Cuminestown and other dispersed residential areas would not experience visibility of the Proposed Development and are not considered for further assessment.

### **Nearby Residential Properties**

- 5.5.8 It is considered that effects would not reach the Residential Visual Amenity (RVA) Threshold described in LI Technical Guidance Note 02/19. However, several residential properties have been a consideration in design and mitigation of the Proposed Development.
- 5.5.9 Those residential properties adjacent to the Site and within a short distance of the Site boundary have been surveyed and mitigation has responded to reduce potential effects. All but one of these residential properties are considered within the corresponding visual groups identified above. There would be no view of the Site from the closest residential property (Boghead) immediately west of the Site due to intervening landform. Berryhill is located immediately south of the site but is considered in the visual receptor groups described above and detailed in Section 6.

### **Key Routes**

- 5.5.10 As shown on Figure 1, the following key routes coincide with the study area.
  - National Cycle Route 1 between Cuminestown and Maud (1.7 km north); and
  - B9170 (spanning from 1.7 km north to 2.5 km southeast). The ZTVs illustrate there would be very limited potential visibility from this route, which is reduced further taking into account intervening woodland shown on the screening ZTV. Considering this, effects on views from the B9170 would be no greater than negligible and are therefore not considered further.



## 5.6 Landscape Designations

5.6.1 The Site is not located within any landscape designations. The Devern Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA 04) is located approximately 8 km west of the Site and beyond the study area. Considering the distance to the Site and localised landform there would be no change to the special qualities or key characteristics associated with any local landscape designations.

## 6 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### 6.1 The Proposal

- 6.1.1 The Proposed Development principally comprises a BESS with a generation capacity of 400 MW of electricity, which will charge and discharge from the adjacent proposed Greens (New Deer 2) substation. The Proposed Development includes:
  - Battery storage units arranged into rows;
  - Medium-voltage (MV) skids and ancillary low-voltage (LV) equipment;
  - High-voltage (HV) grid transformers;
  - Air insulated switchgear;
  - A substation building comprising welfare facilities, a switch room and control room;
  - An underground 400 kV grid connection cable; and
  - Site-wide supporting infrastructure including cabling, access tracks, fencing, attenuation basins, and landscaping measures.
- 6.1.2 The proposed cable connection is contained within the public highway and an area of forestry to the east of the BESS Site. There would be very limited impression of landscape and visual change and this is not considered in detail.
- 6.1.3 Whilst the exact specifications are subject to detailed design, the principal components described form the basis of the planning application and provide sufficient information to allow environmental assessments and mitigation to be appropriately scoped.
- 6.1.4 The Proposed Development would have an operational life of 30 years, after which the Site would be restored to its former use.

## 6.2 Design Approach and Mitigation

6.2.1 The design approach is described in full within the submitted Planning Statement and drawings accompanying the application. This section of the appraisal considers how the Proposed Development aligns with guidance provided in respect of visual impact and landscape character; and measures specifically included within the design to mitigate landscape and visual effects.



- 6.2.2 The design takes into account the appropriate tree planting offsets required to accommodate the proposed 400 kV overhead line (ECU Scoping reference: ECU00005165 and not considered in this application) between the battery storage compound and the attenuation area.
- 6.2.3 Key mitigation measures are shown on Figure 5 and consist of:
  - Earth screening bunds are proposed along the western and southern boundary of the main battery storage and substation compounds. At 3.5m to 4.0m in height, this would restrict views of most of the proposed infrastructure from similar and lower elevations to the west and south.
  - Landscape planting would consist of native woodland planted on the earth screening bunds and the adjacent ground plane. Further woodland planting is proposed along the eastern and northern boundaries of the battery storage compound. A further linear band of woodland planting is proposed at the northern most part of the Site and would enclose the attenuation area. The southern boundary would be planted with a mixed hedgerow with trees. The attenuation area itself would be seeded with an appropriate wet meadow seed mix.
  - Areas of natural recolonisation would comprise of lowland heathland in the areas not planted with woodland or forestry. This includes the restored temporary laydown area and the western boundary of the Site. The largest area of lowland heathland restoration would occupy the corridor between the attenuation area and the northern boundary of the battery storage compound.
  - The area to the west of the battery storage compound and earth screening bunds would remain as forestry. The existing area would continue to establish.
  - The existing forestry access road and walking track will be diverted along the western boundary of the BESS Compound, and will be extended to provide recreational pedestrian connectivity to Bailey's Walk..

### 6.3 Construction

- 6.3.1 The construction phase is estimated to take up to two years. The majority of construction traffic would be limited to the initial 12 months of the construction period during the civils stage and equipment deliveries. Landscape works and Site restoration would be programmed and carried out as early as possible following construction to ensure landscape planting is given suitable time to establish, and any disturbed areas are returned to their predevelopment condition. Construction would involve the following key activities:
  - Site preparation and establishment activities, including vegetation removal and the erection of temporary fencing;
  - Earthworks and establishment of Site compound;
  - Construction of equipment platforms and foundations, including underground ducting and cabling;
  - Delivery and arrangement of equipment;



- Cabling and connection works between battery equipment, ancillary equipment and substation compound;
- Installation of underground cabling between substation compound and Greens substation;
- Testing and commissioning; and
- Landscape planting, earthworks and Site restoration.
- 6.3.2 The final construction sequencing and programme will be determined subject to detailed design following the appointment of a suitable construction contractor. Landscaping and Site restoration would be programmed and carried out as early as possible following construction to ensure landscape planting is given suitable time to establish, and any disturbed areas are returned to their pre-development condition.

## 7 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

### 7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This section sets out the effects that the Proposed Development would have on the landscape and visual receptors.
- 7.1.2 Construction effects would be short term over a period of approximately 24 months, involving the removal of forestry, movement of vehicles, localised excavations and the installation of the project components. Effects on landscape character and views during construction and decommissioning would be similar, Small in scale and Adverse.
- 7.1.3 Operational effects are assessed during year 1 when construction is complete but before mitigation planting is fully established. In time, the scale of change would very gradually reduce as planting along Site boundaries matures. During the early part of this period effects are likely to be at their greatest. Operational effects at year 10 are also considered once landscape mitigation measures would have established.
- 7.1.4 Construction and decommissioning effects are not separately identified except where likely to be notably different from effects during operation.

### 7.2 Effects on Site Fabric

- 7.2.1 Construction of the Proposed Development would result in the long-term loss of forestry. Vegetation clearance would include the removal of more recently planted forestry. Where parts of the Site would not be disturbed by construction or the operational footprint to the west of the main battery storage compound, plantation forestry would continue to establish.
- 7.2.2 At the battery storage compound and substation compound, the effects on the landscape fabric would primarily result from the loss of forestry land. Construction and operational Site traffic would require the upgrade of an existing access track and access to the main Site. The proposed earthworks and final levels would consist of developing a predominantly level area across the main battery storage compound with a slight gradient south to north leading to an attenuation pond at the northern extent of the Site. Local access routes through the Site



would be stopped up and rerouted west of the main battery storage compound to connect with the local route to the northwest.

- 7.2.3 There would be some tree removal along a short section of the proposed cable route within the working corridor, contained within the forestry to the east of the BESS Site. The wider working corridor would be replanted or left to naturally recolonise.
- 7.2.4 The proposed landscape mitigation set out in 6.2 comprises of boundary native woodland planting, lowland heathland / acid grassland natural recolonisation and hedgerow with tree boundary and grassland planting attenuation area. The introduction of mitigation planting would be a transition in land use from forestry to an area of native woodland and natural establishment of lowland heathland.

### 7.3 Viewpoint Analysis

- 7.3.1 Viewpoint analysis has been undertaken from a total of six viewpoints. The viewpoint locations are illustrated on Figures 1 to 4. The annotated photographs are contained in Appendix 5. The full viewpoint analysis is contained within Appendix 3: Viewpoint Analysis. The findings are summarised in Table 7.1.
- 7.3.2 Appendix 3 Viewpoint Analysis considers the nature and the scale of changes to character and views at each viewpoint location only. The sensitivity of receptors and wider extent of the effect (beyond the individual viewpoint location) and its duration are considered in the main body of the assessment text below, as part of the consideration of the magnitude and level of effects.

Viewpoint no.	Name	Distance/ direction	Scale of visual effect (at year 1 of operation)	Scale of landscape effect (at year 1 of operation)
1	Minor Road near Berryhill	0.3 km, south	Small	Small
2	Howe of Teuchar	0.9 km, southwest	Small/ Negligible	Negligible
3	Minor Road near Sunnyside Lodge	1.3 km, west	Small	Small/ Negligible
4	Hillend of Teuchar	1 km, north	Small	Small
5	Minor Road near Northburn	1.9 km, east	Small/ Negligible	Small/ Negligible
6	National Cycle Route 1 near Mid Balthangie	3.3 km, northeast	Negligible	Negligible

#### Table 7.1 Viewpoint analysis summary



### 7.4 Effects on Landscape Character

### LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland

- 7.4.1 A description of LCT 20 is briefly summarised below, along with further observations from site-based work. This LCT forms a broad low-lying plain bounded by the sea and the expansive sweeping moorland and flows landscape.
- 7.4.2 Key characteristics:
  - "Gently undulating, rolling landform of low hills and ridges, with broad shallow valleys.
  - Smoothly rounded terrain.
  - Large fields.
  - Occasional beech and thorn hedges, with stone dykes more common in parts.
  - Generally sparse woodland cover, with broadleaf trees concentrated in shelterbelts along ridges, and around farms. Larger coniferous forests occur in some areas, and estate policies and occasional beech shelterbelts also occur.
  - A well settled landscape with a number of small settlements including historic planned fermtouns, castles and designed landscapes.
  - Frequent, regularly dispersed medium-sized farms, with pockets of smaller farms and crofts.
  - Open, expansive character with views to landmark hills; the Culsh monument above New Deer is a key landmark feature"
- 7.4.3 As set out in Appendix 4, LCT 20 is judged to be of Medium/Low sensitivity. Undulating landform comprised of large to medium fields and blocks of forestry are of local value. National Cycle Network Route 1 and the network of local recreational routes including Bailey's Walk and Moss Side Public Footpath contribute to a localised area of higher value. The more notable ecological and cultural aspects of the wider LCT are located beyond the LVA study area. This landscape is judged to be of Community value. The extensive open nature of the landscape and simple pattern of medium to large scale fields and the Site location within forestry are more tolerant of change. Extensive views and the distinctive backdrop of Bennachie and the summit of Mither Tap from more elevated areas to the west are more susceptible to change. Overall, the susceptibility of LCT 20 to change from the Proposed Development is Medium/Low.
- 7.4.4 Construction activities including the movement of plant, earthworks within the Site, vegetation clearance, temporary compound/laydown area and the construction of Site infrastructure would result in a localised increase in uncharacteristic activity between the immediate context of the Site and within 1.5 km north and west from the Site boundary. However, undulating landform to the west and east would limit intervisibility and the impression of landscape change to more elevated areas of agricultural land. Construction activities would restrict access to an existing forestry track used informally for recreation. The



scale of change would be Small across a Limited extent of this LCT. This Short-term change would give rise to a Slight magnitude resulting in a **Minor Adverse** effect during construction.

- 7.4.5 At year 1 of operation, the Proposed Development would result in direct effects on the landscape of LCT 20. The introduction of the battery storage compound and substation compound with transformers would result in an increase in the presence of electrical storage infrastructure within a localised area of forestry. There would be some loss of forestry within the operational compounds and the area immediately north and east. The area to the west of the main battery compound would be retained as forestry and would have partly established by year 1 of operation and unlikely to be felled before landscape planting has established. A realigned local access route would be created between the western screening bund and forestry that will connect the local road at the Site entrance in the south to Bailey's Walk to the northwest. The combination of existing landform to the east of the Site and the earth screening bunds to the west and south would restrict the degree of change within the local landscape. There would be very limited perceptible change to the other key characteristics. Taking all of this into account, the scale of change would be Small across a Limited extent of this LCT. This Medium Term change would give rise to a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a Minor/Negligible Adverse effect at year 1 of operation.
- 7.4.6 At year 10 of operation, established mitigation planting would aid landscape integration of the battery storage units and substation infrastructure into local landscape. Long term effects on landscape character would result from the change in land use across part of the application Site within an area of forestry. Proposed native woodland would surround the main battery storage and substation compounds and areas of natural recolonisation together with established forestry and earth screening bunds would further restrict the degree of intervisibility of the proposed infrastructure within the local landscape. The native woodland planting would be sufficient to screen most BESS infrastructure and mitigation screening is not reliant on wider forestry within the Site which may later be felled. The scale of change would be Small at most over a Limited extent of this LCT. This Long Term change would lead to a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor/Negligible Adverse** effect at year 10 of operation.

## 7.5 Visual Effects

### **Visual Receptor Groups**

- 7.5.1 This appraisal focuses on effects on groups of visual receptors including local road users, cyclists and residents. Effects on private residential amenity are a separate matter, and as set out above do not merit detailed assessment in respect of the Proposed Development.
- 7.5.2 Local road users, cyclists and residents are considered to be of High/Medium sensitivity as they will have a high susceptibility to changes in the local environment and the views are of Community value.

### Residents within 0.8 km south

7.5.3 This receptor group includes residents and users of the local roads and recreational users of informal paths within 0.8 km south of the Site. Views extend across gently undulating landform comprised of plantation forestry at various stages of rotation and medium scale agricultural fields. Viewpoint 1illustrates views from this receptor group.



- 7.5.4 During the construction phase, earthworks, the movement of plant, and construction of the battery storage units and electrical infrastructure, would be apparent in close range views from a limited number of residents and recreational users of local roads and tracks. Intervening landform and forestry would screen views from most of this group. Vegetation clearance, the movement of plant, earthworks, construction of electrical infrastructure, in particular the substation and transformers, would occupy a notable part of the view north from the area immediately south of the Site. The scale of change would be Medium across a Limited extent and Short Term duration. This would result in a Moderate/Slight magnitude, resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** effect during construction.
- 7.5.5 At year 1 of operation the Proposed Development would be visible across a noticeable part of mid-range views north within a block of partly established forestry. The proposed earth screening bunds along the southern and southwestern boundary of the main battery storage and substation compounds would restrict views of the electrical infrastructure to the upper parts of the transformers and the roofline of the substation building. Most of the battery storage units would not be visible. The appearance of the bunds, and low-level height of the proposed infrastructure would be of limited contrast with the more open views across the landscape, but forestry to the west would have party established and help to integrate the Proposed Development into views north. The scale of change would be Small across a Limited extent of this group. This Long Term change would lead to a Slight magnitude resulting in a **Moderate/Minor Adverse** effect at most, at year 1 of operation.
- 7.5.6 At year 10 of operation, established landscape mitigation along the southern and southwestern bund would further reduce visibility of the battery compound and substation compound from this receptor group. Mitigation planting would comprise of boundary hedgerow with trees and native woodland on screening bunds which would effectively integrate the Proposed Development into the wider afforested landscape in part of the view. There would be some very limited visibility of the transformers above the earth screening bunds and beyond established boundary planting in winter months. The scale of change would be Small/Negligible across a Limited extent of this group. This Long Term change would lead to a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor Adverse** effect at most, at year 10 of operation.

### Howe of Teuchar 1.5 km west

- 7.5.7 This receptor group includes residents and users of the local roads and recreational users of informal paths within 1.5 km west of the Site. The outlook from this group varies subject to the relative elevation and localised vegetation. Lower elevation views consist of open fields, blocks of forestry, and pockets of vegetation, and are experienced from the residential properties concentrated along the minor road between Howe of Teuchar and Cuminestown as illustrated by Viewpoint 2. Views from the more elevated part of this group to the west between 1-1.5 km are expansive and the ground plane of the Site is visible as illustrated by Viewpoint 3.
- 7.5.8 During construction, earthworks, and the movement of taller plant associated with the construction of the battery storage units and substation infrastructure would be visible across a small part of the skyline to the east in an area of recently planted forestry beyond the residential property at Boghead. The degree of activities visible would vary subject to the outlook and elevation. Intervening landform would screen some ground level construction activities from views from lower elevations. There would be more open views from the more elevated areas and across the Site to the east. The movement of plant on the skyline would be visible across a wider horizontal extent on the skyline. Construction activities would be



more noticeable than the exiting levels of forestry operations and contrast with the rural qualities of views. The scale of change would be Medium/Small, at most, across a Localised extent of this group. This Short Term change would lead to a Slight magnitude resulting in a **Moderate/Minor Adverse** effect at most, during construction.

- 7.5.9 At year 1 of operation the Proposed Development would be visible across a small horizontal extent of the view. However, the proposed earth screening bunds would screen most of the battery storage compound. The transformers and roof level of the substation building and switch room would be perceptible on the skyline above the earth screening bunds. Intervening forestry to the west of the battery storage compound would have partly established. The scale of change would be Medium/Small across Localised extent of this group. This Medium Term change would lead to a Slight magnitude resulting in a **Moderate/Minor Adverse** effect at most, at year 1 of operation.
- 7.5.10 At year 10 of operation, established landscape mitigation planting along the western earth screening bund and forestry within the Site to the east would reduce the scale of change from this receptor group. There would be very limited visibility of the transformers beyond established intervening vegetation and earth screening bunds. The native woodland and forestry would visually integrate the Proposed Development with the adjacent forestry block to the immediate northeast of the Site. The overall change in visual composition would be Small/Negligible in scale across a Localised extent of this receptor group. This Long Term change would lead to a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor Adverse** effect at most, at year 10 of operation

### Hillend of Teuchar 0.5 to 1.2km north

- 7.5.11 This receptor group includes residential properties, visitors to tourist accommodation, recreational users of local trails and users of the local roads within 1.2 km north of the Site. Expansive and long-range views extend south towards the Site across several medium scale rolling fields towards a backcloth of forestry at varied stages of rotation and bands of shelterbelt on a gently undulating skyline. The outlook from the western and southern sections of Bailey's Walk is more enclosed by established shelterbelt vegetation. Views from the more recently constructed cabins are orientated north across a local waterbody ('Isas Pond'). More open views across the Site can be obtained from the eastern segment of Bailey's Walk and Moss Side Public Footpath as illustrated by Viewpoint 4.
- 7.5.12 During the construction phase, earthworks, the movement of plant and construction of the battery storage units and electrical infrastructure would be visible in long-range views south across a small but noticeable part of the recently planted block of forestry. Construction activities associated with electrical infrastructure would appear in contrast with the existing agricultural elements in views. Construction activities would form a more notable addition where they would be visible to their full extent on part of the expansive skyline. Overall, the scale of change is judged to be Medium across a Localised extent of this group. This Short Term Change would result in a Moderate/Slight magnitude resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** effect during construction.
- 7.5.13 At year 1 of operation, the Proposed Development would be a noticeable addition within an area of recently planted forestry across a small part of wide angle views south. Forestry to the west of the main battery storage Site would have partly established and would be taller than the proposed infrastructure. Earth screening bunds would partly restrict views from the southwestern most part of this receptor group along Bailey's Walk. Although limited in height, the introduction of electrical storage infrastructure on the skyline would appear at odds with



the more rural character of views experienced by this receptor group. Localised vegetation would filter and screen views of the Proposed Development from some receptors. Taking all of this into account the Proposed Development would result in a Medium/Small scale of change across a Localised extent. This Medium Term change would result in a Moderate/Slight magnitude resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** effect at year 1 of operation.

7.5.14 At year 10 of operation, established mitigation planting would heavily screen views of the proposed battery storage and substation infrastructure and reduce the scale of change. The combination of established woodland and forestry would notably reduce the visibility of electrical infrastructure. The degree of screening due to native woodland planting would be effective and not reliant on the adjacent block of forestry which would be eventually felled and replanted. Some taller elements, including the transformers, would be perceptible on the skyline, more so in winter months. The scale of change would be Small/Negligible across a Localised extent. This Long Term change would result in a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor Adverse** effect at year 10 of operation.

### Residents between 1.5-2 km east

- 7.5.15 This receptor group includes sparsely dispersed residents and users of the local roads and recreational users of informal paths within 1.5-2 km east of the Site. Open and expansive views from more elevated vantage points extend across undulating farmland and some blocks of forestry. Residential properties are typically cut into the hillside and enclosed by boundary vegetation which tends to restrict views. Viewpoint 5 Illustrates views from this receptor group.
- 7.5.16 Construction activities would be mostly screened by intervening landform. Some taller plant and the construction of substation infrastructure would be perceptible across a small part of the skyline to the west. The limited height of activities relative to the panoramic nature of views would result in an unobtrusive degree of change. The scale of change would be Small/Negligible across a Localised extent of this receptor group. This Short-term change would result in a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor Adverse** effect.
- 7.5.17 At year 1 of operation, the Proposed Development would be visible on the skyline across a small horizontal extent of views to the west. The top roofline of the battery storage units and transformers would be perceptible beyond intervening landform adjacent to taller established woodland to the southeast. The low level nature of the battery storage units would not be conspicuous in wide angle and panoramic views. The scale of change would be Small/Negligible across a Localised extent of this receptor group. This Short-term change would result in a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor Adverse** effect.
- 7.5.18 At year 10 of operation, established mitigation planting along the eastern Site boundary would mostly screen views of the roofline of battery storage units and associated buildings. The tallest part of the transformers would be barely perceptible on the skyline within wide-angle and panoramic views. The scale of change would be Negligible across a Localised extent. This Long Term change would result in a Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Minor/Negligible Adverse** effect at year 10 of operation.

#### Residents between 2km to 3km south and southeast

7.5.19 This receptor group includes residents and users of the local roads and recreational users of informal paths 2-3 km south of the Site near New Deer's Hill. There is a varied outlook that extends across undulating to gently rising agricultural fields with some blocks of forestry and operational turbines are visible on the skyline. As illustrated by the ZTVs, potential visibility is



limited to the construction and operational presence of the transformers. Actual visibility would be restricted further by localised landform and vegetation.

- 7.5.20 During construction, the scale of change would be Negligible across a very Limited extent. Short term change would result in Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Negligible Adverse** effect during construction.
- 7.5.21 At year 1 of operation, the tallest part of the electrical infrastructure would be perceptible on the skyline. The scale of change would be Negligible across a very Limited extent. This Medium Term change would result in Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Negligible Adverse** effect at year 1 of operation.
- 7.5.22 At year 10 of operation, the scale of change would remain Negligible across a very Limited extent. This Long Term change would result in Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Negligible Adverse** effect at year 10 of operation.

### **Key Routes**

### National Cycle Route 1:

- 7.5.23 As shown on Figure 1, this section of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1 follows a local road from Cumineston to Balthangie at the northwestern edge of the LVA study area. Sequential views from this route range from enclosed by roadside vegetation to more open and expansive views across the Undulating Agricultural Heartland landscape. Viewpoint 6 illustrates views from this key route. Views are of Community value and are typical of the local landscape. Susceptibility for users of NCN 1 is High/Medium where views of the landscape are a contributing factor, but not integral to the experience. Overall Sensitivity is High/Medium for this receptor group.
- 7.5.24 The ZTVs illustrate a limited area of visibility along this route, the screening ZTV shows potential visibility is restricted to a very short section of the route near Balthangie.
- 7.5.25 Construction operations would result in a slight change in fleeting views along a very small section of the route. The movement of plant and construction of transformers would be heavily screened by intervening line of trees across part of the background view along a very small section of this route at the northeastern extent of the study area as illustrated by Viewpoint 6. The scale of change would be Negligible across a very Limited extent of this route and Short-term duration. Together this would give rise to Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Negligible Adverse** effect at construction.
- 7.5.26 At year 1 of operation, the transformer would be barely perceptible on a very small part of the skyline adjacent to established forestry from a very limited section of this route. The battery storage compound would not be visible. Intervening vegetation would limit potential visibility to a very short section of the northeastern extent of the study area. The scale of change would be Negligible across a very Limited extent of this route and Medium Term in duration. Together this would give rise to a Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Negligible Adverse** effect at year 1 of operation.
- 7.5.27 At year 10 of operation, established mitigation planting would further restrict views of the proposed infrastructure. The scale of change would be Negligible across a very Limited extent and Long Term in duration. Together this would give rise to a Negligible magnitude resulting in a **Negligible Adverse** effect at year 10 of operation.



## 7.6 Cumulative Effects

- 7.6.1 The approach to cumulative assessment is set out in Appendix 1. Following consultation with Aberdeenshire Council, the cumulative study area has been extended to 5 km and shown on Figure 6. The cumulative scenarios are summarised below.
  - Scenario 1: the Proposed Development with operational development i.e. the effects of the Proposed Development compared to the current baseline as described in the main LVA.
  - Scenario 2: the Proposed Development with operational and consented development.
  - Scenario 3: the Proposed Development with operational and consented development and sites in planning and scoping for the purposes of this LVA.
- 7.6.2 Cumulative scenario 1 considers the Proposed Development with operational development i.e. the effects of the Proposed Development compared to the current baseline as described in the main LVA and is not repeated here.
- 7.6.3 There are two schemes related to underground cables with no operational footprint. These include the following:
  - MarramWind Offshore wind farm (ENQ/2023/0124); and
  - Stromar Offshore Wind Farm Landfall Between Rosehearty And Fraserburgh To New Deer (ENQ/2024/1010)
- 7.6.4 The cumulative schemes that warrant further consideration are outlined in Table 7.2 below.

Name	Application Reference	Status	Scenario	Distance (km)	Summary Description
Green Volt Onshore Infrastructure	APP/2023/1454	Consented	2	1.8 km	Formation of Onshore Landfall Point, Laying of Underground Cable and Erection of Substation
					The proposed substation approximately 2 km southeast of the Site is of most relevance to this assessment.
Onshore Electrical Transmission Cables	APP/2014/2430	Consented	2	>1 km	Onshore electrical transmission cables, comprising an onshore transition jointing pit, underground cables within an approximately 33 km long cable corridor and the construction of 2 No. Substations southwest of New Deer

#### Table 7.2 Relevant Cumulative schemes



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					The southernmost substation is of most relevance to this assessment.
Caledonia Onshore Transmission Infrastructure Land Along Moray/Aberdeens hire Coast	APP/2024/1812	Planning	3	1.2 km	Onshore Transmission Infrastructure for Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm including Formation of Onshore Landfall Point, Laying of Underground Cables, Erection of 2 Co- Located Substations, and Associated Works to connect to the Transmission Grid.
Greens (New Deer 2) Substation	APP/2024/1927	Planning	3	Less than 1 km	The 400 kV substation will comprise two 400 / 132 kV Super Grid Transformers (SGTs), outdoor Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) and associated busbars
North East 400 kV Overhead Line Reinforcement Works	ECU00000677	Planning	3	1.4 km	North East 400 kV Overhead Line Reinforcement Works.
Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV	ECU0005165	Scoping	3	Less than 1 km	Overhead transmission line: Double circuit steel structure 400 kV OHL between Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead, approximately 194km in length. This OHL would bisect the Site between the attenuation area and BESS compound.

7.6.5 Receptors judged to receive Negligible magnitude of effect at operation are not considered for cumulative assessment on the basis that any notable effects arising would primarily be caused by the cumulative developments to which the addition of the Proposed Development is unlikely to make a notable contribution. For instance, if the addition of the Proposed Development would result in a Negligible change to a receptor in isolation, the cumulative magnitude for other cumulative scenarios would not give rise to cumulative effects greater than Minor/Negligible at most.

### **Cumulative Landscape Effects**

- 7.6.6 Cumulative landscape effects would be limited to LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland. All the cumulative schemes relevant to this LVA cumulative study area would be located within this LCT and would present a cluster of energy generation and transmission infrastructure within a large scale landscape.
- 7.6.7 In cumulative scenario 2, consented schemes are limited to the substations associated with the Onshore Electrical Transmission Cable (APP/2014/2430) and Green Volt Infrastructure (APP/2023/1454). The addition of the Proposed Development would result in a very limited increase in electrical energy infrastructure. There would be some limited areas of



intervisibility within more elevated areas of LCT 20. The additional change would be Small in scale, Limited in extent and Long-term. The cumulative magnitude would be Slight/Negligible resulting in a **Minor Adverse** cumulative effect.

7.6.8 In cumulative scenario 3 a cluster of energy infrastructure includes several additional overhead transmission lines and most notably the Greens (New Deer 2) Substation and the substation associated with the Caledonia Onshore Transmission scheme. The overhead line schemes are at scoping where there is less certainty and the full search corridors are shown on Figure 6. The addition of the Proposed Development into this scenario would result in a limited increase in the influence of electrical energy schemes within a concentrated part of the LCT 20 across an area of forestry and agricultural fields. Undulating landform and forestry would limit intervisibility between the Proposed Development and the Greens (New Deer 2) Substation and Caledonia Onshore substation to the more elevated fields at Northburn and to the northeast at Balthangie. Although the Proposed Development is on more elevated ground, it would be largely concealed by earth screening bunds, woodland planting and established forestry to the west, east and northeast. The impression within the local landscape would therefore be limited and the additional change would be Small in scale, Limited in extent and Long Term. The cumulative magnitude would be Slight/Negligible resulting in a Minor Adverse cumulative effect.

### **Cumulative Visual Effects**

7.6.9 The cumulative visual assessment considers each of the receptor groups where the noncumulative effects are greater than Negligible at operation.

Visual Receptor Group	Cumulative Scenario 2	Cumulative Scenario 3
Residents within 0.8 km south	Nearby cumulative schemes are limited to underground cables. The proposed substation associated with the Onshore Electrical Transmission Cables (APP/2014/2430) would not be visible from this receptor group due to intervening landform. Therefore, no further cumulative assessment required.	The Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV overhead line would be visible on the skyline and would intersect the northern part of the Site. The addition of the Proposed Development would result in very limited change due to the screening effect of mitigation and earth bunds. The tops of transformers would be seen in combination with the overhead line leading to an increase in electrical infrastructure on the skyline. The scale of additional change would be Small across a Limited and Long Term. This would lead to a Slight magnitude and <b>Moderate/ Minor</b> <b>Adverse</b> cumulative effect.
Howe of Teuchar 1.5km west	Nearby cumulative schemes are limited to underground cables. Therefore, no further cumulative assessment required.	The Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV overhead line would be visible in combination with the Proposed Development. There would be no view of the more distant substation schemes to the east and southeast due to intervening landform.

### Table 7.3 Cumulative Visual Effects



		The addition of the Proposed Development into this scenario would result in some limited cumulative change due to the increase in the presence of electrical infrastructure on the skyline. The additional change would be small in scale across a Localised extent and Long Term. This would lead to a Slight magnitude resulting in a <b>Moderate/Minor Adverse</b> cumulative effect.
Hillend of Teuchar 0.5 to 1.2km north	Intervening forestry localised landform would restrict the extent of views of the Green Volt Onshore Infrastructure substation from this receptor group. Where there may be a limited area of intervisibility, the addition of the Proposed Development would add to the electrical infrastructure but not in combination. This would lead to a Slight/Negligible magnitude resulting in a <b>Minor</b> <b>Adverse</b> cumulative effect.	The Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV overhead line would be visible in combination with the Proposed Development. The Greens (New Deer 2) Substation may theoretically be visible subject to the screening effect of forestry. The 400kV overhead line would be a prominent feature that would bisect the Site between the battery storage compound and the attenuation and planted area to the north. Initially the addition of the Proposed Development would result in a concentrated increase in the presence of electrical infrastructure in views but once established mitigation planting would reduce the influence of change in views. The additional change would be Small in scale across a Localised extent and Long Term. This would lead to a Slight magnitude resulting in a <b>Moderate/Minor Adverse</b> cumulative effect.
Residents between 1.5-2 km east	The Green Volt Onshore Infrastructure Substation would be visible in views south from this group. Initially at operation, the addition of Proposed Development would result in very limited change in sequential views from south to west. Once mitigation planting has established it would screen most views of the proposed infrastructure and long term cumulative effects would be the same as the non-cumulative scenario.	The Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV overhead line and The Greens (New Deer 2) Substation would be apparent in views from this group. The addition of the Proposed Development would initially add to the extent of electrical infrastructure across multiple outlooks. Initially the scale of additional change would be minor, however, established mitigation planting would screen most of the proposed infrastructure and long term cumulative effects would be the same as the non- cumulative scenario, <b>Minor /Negligible</b> <b>Adverse</b> .

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### 7.7 Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects

7.7.1 There would be no notable effects on landscape character with potential effects confined to the Site fabric and its immediate surroundings, within 1.0-1.2 km. These would be limited to the host LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland. Effects on landscape character arising from the Proposed Development would affect only the host landscape character area. Initially Minor Adverse effects on character of the Undulating Agricultural Heartland Character Type (LCT 20) would be restricted to the Site and immediate surroundings with effects reducing to



Minor/Negligible adverse effects at year 10 of operation. During the 24-month construction period, effects would arise within the land where the Proposed Development would be situated and the immediate extents within 1 km. Effects beyond this LCT would be Negligible.

- 7.7.2 Visual effects would occur within a short distance of the Proposed Development on a limited number of receptor groups to the north, south, and west. Potential visibility would be restricted by localised landform between 1 km and 2 km, and pockets of forestry to the northeast and east. During construction, visual effects on residents immediately south and north of the Site would be Moderate Adverse. However, landscape mitigation measures including earth screening bunds and native woodland planting would screen views of most of the proposed battery storage infrastructure and effects would reduce to Moderate/Minor initially and Minor to Minor/Negligible at year 10 of operation. Intervisibility from the wider area would be restricted by topography and vegetation with visual effects reducing markedly with increasing distance beyond 1.2 km. Effects on other visual receptors to the east and northeast would be Minor/Negligible and Negligible.
- 7.7.3 Cumulative landscape effects would be limited to the host LCT and would be Minor Adverse. The addition of the Proposed Development would increase the presence of electrical storage and transmission infrastructure within the Agricultural Heartland LCT. Established landscape mitigation would reduce the influence of additional change in the landscape.
- 7.7.4 Cumulative visual effects would be Moderate/Minor Adverse for those visual receptor groups within 1.5 km to the north and south of the Site where the addition of the Proposed Development into this scenario would result in some limited cumulative change due to the increase in the presence of electrical infrastructure on the skyline particularly where the Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV overhead line and the Greens (New Deer 2) Substation would appear in combination with the Proposed Development.



### Table 7.4 Summary of Effects

Receptor	Sensitivity	Construction Magnitude	Construction Level of Effect	Operation Year 1 Magnitude	Operation Year 1 Level of Effect	Operation Year 10 Magnitude	Operation Year 10 Level of Effect
LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland	Medium/Low	Slight	Minor	Slight/Negligible	Minor/Negligible	Slight/Negligible	Minor/Negligible
Residents within 0.8 km south;	High/Medium	Moderate/Slight	Moderate	Slight	Moderate/Minor	Slight/Negligible	Minor
Howe of Teuchar 1.5 km west	High/Medium	Slight	Moderate/Minor	Slight	Moderate/Minor	Slight/Negligible	Minor
Hillend of Teuchar 0.5 to 1.2 km north	High/Medium	Moderate/Slight	Moderate	Moderate/Slight	Moderate	Slight/Negligible	Minor
Residents between 1.5-2 km east	High/Medium	Slight/Negligible	Minor	Slight/Negligible	Minor	Negligible	Minor/Negligible
Residents between 2 km to 3 km south and southeast	High/Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
National Cycle Route 1	High/Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible



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## **APPENDIX 1:**

## Landscape and Visual Appraisal Assessment Methodology and Criteria

### Introduction

- 1. The purpose of a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is to identify and report the level of landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development.
- 2. The following appendix sets out the methodology and criteria against which the appraisal of landscape and visual effects has been undertaken.
- 3. The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) (GLVIA3)<sup>1</sup> are widely recognised as the primary source of guidance for LVA in the UK but clearly state that: "The guidance concentrates on principles while also seeking to steer specific approaches where there is a general consensus on methods and techniques. It is not intended to be prescriptive, in that it does not provide a detailed 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation. It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstances." (paragraph 1.20)
- 4. GLVIA 3 also states that: "professional judgement is a very important" (paragraph 2.23) and that "in all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others." (paragraph 2.24).
- 5. Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, but as noted above, the nature of LVA requires interpretation using professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the LVA, the appraisal of landscape and visual effects is based on pre-defined criteria as set out in this appendix.
- 6. Landscape and Visual Appraisals are separate, though linked processes which GLVIA3 notes are *"related but very different considerations"*. The appraisal of the potential effect on the landscape is carried out as an effect on the environmental resource (i.e. the landscape). Visual effects are appraised as an inter-related effect on people.
  - Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape elements which may give rise to changes in its distinctive character and how this is experienced, including consideration of aesthetic and perceptual aspects.
  - Visual effects relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

## **Establishing the Baseline**

7. The baseline for consideration of landscape and visual effects is evaluated through desk study and site work and is the current situation at the time of the appraisal, unless noted otherwise. Existing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition*; Spon; 2013



operational/ built development and development under construction is considered as part of the baseline.

8. The **future baseline**, where relevant, incorporates any anticipated natural change to the landscape (e.g. change to land cover through natural regeneration or forestry rotation), and also in the case of built development, changes which are considered certain or likely to happen (including consented proposals which are not yet present in the landscape but which are expected to be constructed). These may or may not be included as part of the landscape and visual baseline depending on individual project circumstances. Where the future baseline differs from the current baseline, it is clearly stated in the LVA which baseline has been adopted for the appraisal of effects and a rationale for the approach taken is provided as necessary.

### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

9. Direct and indirect effects are defined in GLVIA3. Direct effects may be defined as resulting *"directly from the development itself"* (paragraph 3.22). An indirect (or secondary) effect is one that results *"from consequential change resulting from the development"* (paragraph 3.22) and is often produced away from the site of the proposed development or as a result of a complex pathway or secondary association.

### Landscape Effects

- 10. The starting point for an appraisal of landscape effects is a desk-based assessment of published landscape studies, which may include landscape character assessments, sensitivity and capacity studies and/or landscape designation reviews. Relevant documents are listed as appropriate in the appraisal and relevant extracts may be included as appendices where this is judged appropriate. Desk based assessment is supplemented by field work to verify the key characteristics of the landscape.
- 11. In accordance with GLVIA3, the level of landscape effects is determined by combining judgements regarding the sensitivity of the receiving landscape and the magnitude of the landscape effects arising from the Proposed Development.
- 12. An appraisal of the degree to which the proposed development changes "*distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*" ('An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England, 2014), enables a judgement to be made as to the level of the effect in landscape character terms.
- 13. In order to reach an understanding of the effects of development upon the landscape resource it is necessary to consider different aspects of the landscape baseline including:
  - Landscape Fabric/Elements: The individual features of the landscape, such as hills, valleys, woods, hedges, tree cover, vegetation, buildings and roads for example which can usually be described and quantified.
  - Landscape key characteristics: The particularly notable elements or combinations of elements which make a particular contribution to defining or describing the character of an area, which may include experiential characteristics such as wildness and tranquillity.

### Landscape Sensitivity

14. It should be noted, as stated in GLVIA3, "LVIA sensitivity is similar to the concept of landscape sensitivity used in the wider arena of landscape planning but is not the same as it is specific to the



*particular project or development that is being proposed and to the location in question"* (paragraph 5.39).

- 15. In LVA, landscape sensitivity is assessed by combining judgements about the value attached to a landscape and its susceptibility to the type of change and nature of the development proposed. The overall sensitivity of the landscape to a particular development is described in the appraisal as **High**, **Medium** or **Low**.
  - Landscape Value: This is the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities. Sometimes it is used as a basis for designation or recognition which expresses national or local authority consensus, because of its special qualities/attributes. Whilst the presence of formal designations are an important component when determining landscape value, other aspects are also considered as part of the judgement process as explained in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02-21<sup>2</sup>, especially when considering the value of landscapes outside of national designations. These include factors related to natural and cultural heritage (for example ecological, geological or heritage matters), landscape condition, cultural associations (in terms of connections with people, arts or events), distinctiveness (i.e. a sense of unique identity in the landscape), recreational opportunities, perceptual aspects (including scenic quality, wildness and tranquility) and landscapes with a clearly identifiable role or function. In this appraisal, the value attributed to the landscape is described as: National, Regional or Community.
  - Landscape Susceptibility: Landscape Susceptibility according to GLVIA3 means "the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed Development without undue consequences for maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies" (paragraph 5.40). The susceptibility of the landscape varies depending on the type of development proposed and the particular site location. Judgements on landscape susceptibility include references to both the physical and aesthetic characteristics and the potential scope for mitigation. In this appraisal, the susceptibility of the landscape is described as **High, Medium** or **Low**.
- 16. The criteria and the detailed judgements regarding susceptibility and value of landscape receptors are identified within the sensitivity tables included within **Appendix 3** to this appraisal.
- 17. Sensitivity is evaluated taking into account the component judgements about the value and susceptibility of the receptor as illustrated by the table below. Where sensitivity is judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment is adopted. Note that equal weighting is attributed to susceptibility and value when determining overall landscape sensitivity.

		Susceptibility			
		High	Medium	Low	
	National	High	High/Medium	Medium	
e	Regional	High/Medium	Medium	Medium/Low	
Val	Community	Medium	Medium/Low	Low	

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations



### Magnitude of Landscape Change

- 18. The magnitude of landscape change arising from the proposed development at any particular location is assessed in terms of *"size or scale, the geographic extent of the area or receptor that is influenced and its duration and reversibility"* (paragraph 5.48).
- 19. Judgements concerning the Scale of the change take account of:
  - degree of loss or alteration to key landscape features/elements; characteristics; and for designated areas – special qualities and/or purposes of designation;
  - distance from the development; and
  - landscape context to the development.
- 20. The approach to appraising effects on landscape character is to consider the key characteristics for the Landscape Character Area (LCA) within which the proposed development is located (the host LCA) and if relevant the adjacent LCA's (non-host) and identify which of these the proposed development would affect. A large scale change in landscape character is likely to occur where key characteristics would be lost or substantially changed. A small scale change is likely to occur where key characteristics are altered to a lesser degree and this can be influenced by distance and surrounding context.
- 21. Where particular views are a key characteristic of a landscape type, large or medium scale landscape character effects may occur where the proposed development becomes a key feature of those views. A similar approach applies to designated landscapes, for which the effects on the defined purposes of designation and special qualities are considered.
- 22. In this appraisal, the scale of landscape change is described as: Large, Medium, Small or Negligible.
- 23. Having established the scale of change to the landscape baseline, the **Geographic Extent** of the change can be identified. In this appraisal, the geographical extent of landscape change is described as: **Wide, Intermediate, Localised** or **Limited**.
- 24. **Duration and Reversibility** can be linked depending on the nature of the development. Reversibility is a judgement about the practicality of reversing the landscape effects of the proposed development (for example, solar farms are ultimately largely reversible whilst housing is permanent). Duration reflects how long the change will last and can include frequency the effect would be experienced. In this appraisal, the duration of the change would be considered:
  - **short term** when lasting less than 2 years;
  - medium term when lasting between 2 and 10 years;
  - long term when lasting between 10 and 40 years, and
  - permanent for more than 40 years.
- 25. Magnitude is considered taking into account the three contributory factors as illustrated by the diagrams in Plate 1 below.

### **Visual Effects**

26. In accordance with GLVIA3, the level of visual effects is determined by combining judgements regarding the sensitivity of visual receptors (people who view the landscape) and the magnitude of the change they experience arising from the Proposed Development.



### **Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

- 27. In visual appraisal, visual receptor sensitivity is assessed by combining judgements about the value attached to views and the susceptibility of the viewer to the type of change and nature of the development proposed. The overall sensitivity of the visual receptor to a particular development is described in this appraisal as **High**, **Medium** or **Low**.
  - Value of Views: The value of public views, which is the focus of GLVIA3, will vary depending on the nature, location and context of the view and the recognised importance of the view. Considerations include cultural associations; designation or policy protection; views of or from landmarks; and/or the scenic quality of the view. It should be noted that the value attributed relates to the value of the view only (e.g. a National Trail is nationally valued for access, but not always for the available views from every section). In this appraisal, the value attributed to visual amenity is described as: National, Regional or Community.
  - **Susceptibility of Visual Receptors**: Those living within view of the Proposed Development are usually regarded as the highest susceptibility group as well as those engaged in outdoor pursuits for whom landscape experience is the primary objective. The susceptibility of potential visual receptors will also vary depending on the activity of the receptor. For visual receptors, susceptibility and value are closely linked the most valued views are also likely to be those where viewer's expectations will be highest. In this appraisal, visual receptor susceptibility is defined in accordance with the criteria below.

**High** - Local residents; tourists; people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on an appreciation of views including users of footpaths and quiet country lanes, beauty spots and picnic areas and people experiencing views to or from important features of physical, visual, cultural or historic interest.

**Medium** - Local road users and travellers on trains. People engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape e.g. road cycling, nature conservation, golf and water based recreation.

**Low** - Workers, users of facilities and commercial buildings (indoors) experiencing views from buildings. Road and rail users on fast moving commuting or trunk routes. Visual receptors where views are incidental to the activity and/or location.

28. Sensitivity is evaluated taking into account component judgements about the value and susceptibility of the receptor as illustrated by the table below. Where sensitivity is judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment is adopted. Note that a greater weight is intentionally attributed to the susceptibility of the visual receptor than to value. This is in recognition of the fact that relatively few views are specifically recognised through designation or cultural reference. This approach still acknowledges that value associations influence sensitivity.

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		Susceptibility		
		High	Medium	Low
	National	High	High/Medium	Medium
ne	Regional	High/Medium	High/Medium	Medium/Low
Val	Community	High/Medium	Medium	Low



### Magnitude of Visual Change

- 30. The magnitude of visual change arising from the Proposed Development is appraised in terms of its size or scale, geographic extent of the area or receptor that is influenced and its duration.
- 31. Representative viewpoints are used in the LVA as 'samples' on which to base judgements of the scale of change experienced by visual receptors. The wider extent of the effect and its duration are not captured in the viewpoint analysis (as a viewpoint cannot capture these factors for an entire route or area). As duration and extent are necessary considerations in determining magnitude of change, judgements concerning magnitude and level of effect are provided for visual receptors and not for representative viewpoints. The only exception to this would be a specific viewpoint where people visiting that location to look at the view are assessed as a visual receptor group in its own right.
- 32. With the exception of specific viewpoints (as noted above), each route (e.g. a footpath or road) and receptor group (e.g. a community or village) will encompass a range of possible views, which might vary from no view of the development to very clear, close views. Therefore, effects are described in such a way as to identify where views towards the development are likely to arise and what the scale and duration and extent of those views is likely to be. In some cases, this will be further informed by a nearby viewpoint and in others it will be informed with reference to ZTV studies, aerial photography and site visits. Each of these individual effects are then considered together in order to reach a judgement of the effects on the visual receptors along that route, or in that place.
- 33. The Scale of change arising from the Proposed Development as experienced by a visual receptor group reflects the degree to which the nature of the views from that location would be changed taking into account:
  - The distance of the viewpoint from the development;
  - the degree to which the development is visible or screened;
  - the angle of view in relation to main receptor activity or main focus of the view;
  - the horizontal and vertical field of view occupied by the development; and
  - the extent and nature of other built development visible.
- 34. In this appraisal, the scale of change in view is described as: Large, Medium, Small or Negligible.
- 35. The approach to appraising effects on views is to consider the full 360 degree view from any given receptor not just those towards the development and/or shown in visualisations. It is assumed that the change would be seen in clear visibility and the appraisal is carried out on that basis. Seasonal variation in visibility due to varying vegetation cover is also taken into account in all judgements. Where there are operational developments considered as part of the baseline, the visual effects consider the effects of adding the proposed development to that baseline. Where appropriate, comment may be made on lighting and weather conditions.
- 36. For visual receptors moving through the landscape (e.g. road and footpath users), the length of their journey during which they would see the Proposed Development is reflected in the judgement of the **Geographic Extent** of effects. In this appraisal, the geographical extent of visual change is described as: **Wide, Intermediate, Localised** or **Limited**.
- 37. **Duration** reflects how long the change will last and judgements are framed in the same way as described above for landscape effects. In this appraisal, the duration of the change would be considered:
  - short term when lasting less than 2 years;
  - medium term when lasting between 2 and 10 years;
  - long term when lasting between 10 and 40 years, and



- **permanent** for more than 40 years.
- 38. Magnitude is considered taking into account the three contributory factors as illustrated by the diagrams in Plate 1 below.

## Combining Scale of Change, Extent and Duration to Determine Magnitude of Landscape and Visual Effects

- 39. Scale of change is the first and primary factor in determining magnitude. Geographical extent and duration of the effect are modifying factors to the overall magnitude judgement which may be higher if the effect is particularly widespread and/or long lasting, or lower if it is constrained in geographic extent and/or timescale.
- 40. The diagrams presented below in Plate 1 illustrate in outline how these two modifying factors are considered in a two-stage process. A judgement is first formed about the scale of the change to the landscape or visual receptor. The geographic extent of the effect is then considered as a modifying influence in the first part of Plate 1 (Stage 1). The result or outcome of Stage 1 is then considered again in relation to the duration of the effect as illustrated in the second part of Plate 1 (Stage 2). The outcome of Stage 2 is the overall magnitude of effect judgement reported in the assessment. Plate 1 is not intended to be interpreted rigidly as a chart to provide definitive answers; professional judgement is employed as appropriate to arrive at an overall magnitude judgement.
- 41. In this appraisal, the magnitude of effects is described as **Substantial**, **Moderate**, **Slight** or **Negligible**. Where magnitude is judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment will be adopted.



Plate 1 Combining Scale of Change, Extent and Duration to Determine Magnitude of Landscape and Visual Effects





### Stage 2 - Modifying Influence of Duration on Magnitude of Effect





## Level of Landscape and Visual Effects

42. The level of any identified landscape or visual effect is described as **Major**, **Moderate**, **Minor** or **Negligible**. These categories are based on the consideration of receptor sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of effect. The table below is not used as a prescriptive tool and illustrates the typical outcomes, allowing for the exercise of professional judgement. In some instances a particular parameter may be considered as having a determining effect on the analysis.

Magnitude of Effect						
			Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
tor vity	ivity	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Minor
ceb	nsit	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor/ Negligible
Re	Se	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible

## Beneficial/Adverse

- 43. Landscape and visual effects can be beneficial or adverse and in some instances may be considered neutral. Neutral effects are those which overall are neither adverse nor positive but may incorporate a combination of both. Whether an effect is beneficial, neutral or adverse is identified based on professional judgement. GLVIA 3rd edition indicates at paragraph 2.15 that this is a "*particularly challenging*" aspect of assessment, especially in the context of a changing landscape.
- 44. However, for the avoidance of doubt, in this appraisal it has been assumed that where new infrastructure is introduced into the landscape or views, this will generally constitute an adverse effect. Any variation from this stance will be clearly justified.

## **Cumulative Effects**

- 45. In a broad generic sense, cumulative impacts "*result from the incremental changes caused by other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions together with the project*"<sup>3</sup> However, an assessment of cumulative effects should focus on whether there are any potential cumulative impacts which are reasonably foreseeable and which are likely to influence the decision making of the proposed development, rather than an assessment of every potential cumulative effect<sup>4,</sup> which in practice means focusing on other nearby development proposals and the effects that might arise from the combined influence of those developments on landscape and visual receptors.
- 46. As recommended by the NatureScot cumulative guidance, this appraisal focusses on the "additional cumulative change which would be brought about by the proposed development"<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> GLVIA3 page 121 paragraph 7.5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> GLVIA3 page 120, paragraph 7.1 quoting Hyder, 1999 ' *Guidelines for the assessment of indirect and cumulative impacts as well as impact interactions*'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments, NatureScot, 2021



- 47. As noted above, operational developments are included in the baseline. Where there is some uncertainty regarding the future construction of consented developments, they may be considered as the first scenario of the cumulative assessment.
- 48. Scenario 1: the Proposed Development with operational development i.e. the effects of the Proposed Development compared to the current baseline as described in the main LVA.
- 49. Scenario 2: the Proposed Development with operational and consented development.
- 50. Scenario 3: the Proposed Development with operational and consented development and sites in planning.
- 51. The appraisal is based on the same landscape and visual baseline and receptor groups as the main LVA, and the methodology is also the same in terms of forming and expressing judgements.
- 52. Cumulative effects on landscape receptors arise from combined direct and/or indirect effects on the same receptor such as two developments within the same character area; or one development within, and one visible from, a designated area.
- 53. Cumulative effects on visual receptors arise either from two (or more) developments both being visible from the same place; or from sequential views as people travel through the landscape.
- 54. In order to simplify the following approaches is used for this LVA:
  - The cumulative assessment considers scenarios within which developments may be 'grouped' for instance two nearby cumulative proposals may be considered in one scenario if it is considered that the cumulative effects arising if one or both are developed are likely to be similar.
  - Receptors judged to receive Negligible or Slight-Negligible magnitude effects are not considered for cumulative effects on the basis that any significant effects arising would primarily be caused by the cumulative developments and would be unlikely to be contributed to by the proposed development.
  - Only those receptors judged likely to experience effects from the cumulative development(s) being considered within a given scenario are described within that scenario.
- 55. Qualitative assessment of design and aesthetic considerations arising as a result of cumulative development, and/or considerations set out within local guidance provided in relation to cumulative development, is also provided where relevant.

Term	Definition
CLVIA	Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
Cumulative Effects	Cumulative effects are the additional effects arising from changes caused by a development in conjunction with other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions.
Direct Effect	A direct (or primary) effect may be defined as an effect that is directly attributable to the development. <sup>6</sup>

### **ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

<sup>6</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p155



Term	Definition
GLVIA3	<i>'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition'</i> , published jointly by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013.
Indirect Effect	An indirect (or secondary) effect is an effect that results indirectly from the proposed project as a consequence of the direct effect, often occurring away from the site, or as a result of a sequence of interrelationships or a complex pathway. They may be separated by distance or in time from the source of the effects. <sup>7</sup>
Key Characteristics	Those combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place.
LVA	Landscape and Visual Appraisal
Landscape Capacity	The amount of change which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate without significant detrimental effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change proposed.
Landscape Character	The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. 8
Landscape Character Areas	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. $^{\rm 9}$
Landscape Character Types	These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur, they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.
Landscape Effects	Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right. <sup>10</sup>
Landscape Elements	Individual components which make up the landscape such as trees and hedges.
Landscape Features	Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines.
Landscape Quality or Condition	This is a measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which a typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements. <sup>11</sup>
Landscape Receptor	Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal.
Landscape Resource	The combination of elements that contribute to landscape context, character and value.

<sup>7</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p156

<sup>8</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p156

<sup>9</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p157

<sup>10</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p157

<sup>11</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p157



Term	Definition
Landscape Value	The relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities. <sup>12</sup>
Level of Effect	Determined through the combination of sensitivity of the receptor and the proposed magnitude of change brought about by the development.
Magnitude (of effect)	A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration.
Mitigation	Measures including any process, activity or design to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for adverse environmental impact or effects of a development.
Photomontage	A visualisation which superimposes an image of a proposed development upon a photograph or series of photographs.
Residential Visual Amenity	A collective term describing the views and visual amenity from a residential property, relating to the type, nature, extent and quality of views that may be experienced from the property and its 'domestic curtilage' including gardens and access driveway. Residential Visual Amenity is only one component of the overall Residential Amenity, others being for example noise, shadow flicker and access amongst others.
Residual Effects	Potential environmental effects remaining after mitigation.
Sense of Place	The essential character and spirit of an area: <i>genius loci</i> literally means 'spirit of the place'.
Sensitivity	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor. <sup>13</sup>
Type or Nature of Effect	Whether an effect is direct, indirect, temporary or permanent, positive (beneficial), neutral or negative (adverse) or cumulative.
Visual amenity	Value of a particular place in terms of what is seen by visual receptors taking account of all available views and the total visual experience.
Visual Effect	Effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people. <sup>14</sup>
Visual Receptors	Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.
Visualisation	Computer simulation, photomontage or other technique to illustrate the appearance of a development. <sup>15</sup>
Wildness	A quality of appearing to be remote, inaccessible and rugged with little evidence of human influence.

<sup>12</sup> The Landscape Institute; Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations

<sup>13</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Spon; 2013; p157

<sup>14</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p158

<sup>15</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p158



Term	Definition
Wireframe or Wireline	A computer generated line drawing of the DTM (Digital Terrain Model) and the proposed development from a known location.
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	Area within which a proposed development may have an influence or an effect on visual amenity. $^{\rm 16}$

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*; Spon; 2013; p158



## **APPENDIX 2: VISUALS METHODOLOGY**

### **Guidance and Standards Used**

1. All Visibility Maps (ZTVs), photography, visualisations (wirelines and photomontages) and their graphical presentation has been undertaken in line with the guidance Visual Representation of Development Proposals', The Landscape Institute, 2019 has also informed the approach and visualisations provided.

### The Computer Model

- 2. To generate wireline visualisations and photomontages, computer models of the proposed site and study area are produced. Sketchup, Autodesk 3DS Max and VRay software are used to create a 3D computer model of the proposed development representing the specified geometry and position of the proposed development, and the existing landform (terrain). The landform information is derived from 50m resolution terrain data incorporating 5m resolution terrain data around the site and each viewpoint and viewpoints where required (either by local guidance, or where we judge it is needed for accurate modelling).
- 3. The computer models include the entire study area and all calculations take account of the effects caused by atmospheric refraction and the Earth's curvature. The computer models do not take account of the screening effects of any intervening objects such as vegetation, buildings or other non-terrain features, unless expressly stated.
- 4. The computer models combine the existing landform with the model of the proposed development and detailed data collected in the field to enable the output of accurate visual and graphical information and associated data for presentation as finished figures.

## Visibility Maps: Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 5. Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps have been generated using GIS to assist in in identifying areas where visibility would not occur as well as viewpoint selection, illustrate areas from where part or all of the proposed development may be visible and to indicate its potential influence in the wider landscape.
- 6. Unless expressly stated, the visibility maps present the extent of potential visibility on the basis of a 'bare ground' scenario: They do not account for the effects of screening and filtering of views as a result of intervening features (e.g. buildings, trees, hedgerows, etc) and so tend to over-estimate visibility, both in terms of the area from which the project can potentially be seen and potentially in terms of the extent of the development visible from a particular viewpoint.
- 7. ZTVs which include vegetation and buildings may use real height information derived from standard DSM products such as LiDAR this approach is typically used for smaller study areas and urban areas. For larger study areas assumed heights are used which are stated on the ZTV figure. The location and extent of woodland and buildings is derived from OS Open data and assumed heights for these are added to the bare ground model. As a result, the ZTV study does not take account of all above ground features only those included as woodland and buildings in the OS mapping at the time the ZTV was prepared. These ZTV studies present a more realistic visibility pattern than bare ground studies, but do not take detailed account of felling cycles, tree growth, demolition or construction.



## Visualisations: Existing Views and Wirelines

8. Baseline photography has been undertaken at each representative viewpoint location using a highquality digital SLR camera with full frame sensor and a 50mm fixed focal length lens – in accordance with the relevant guidance identified above. The resulting photos are either presented as single frame images or combined into panoramas using PTGui photo stitching software and saved as planar projection images. Single frame and panoramic images are presented at either A3 or on wide format sheets, in accordance with Technical Guidance Note 06/19, and are annotated to indicate the extent of the proposed development and highlight any important features within the view.

### Visualisations: Photomontages

- 9. Baseline photography has been undertaken at each agreed representative viewpoint location using a high-quality digital SLR camera with full frame sensor and a 50mm fixed focal length lens, in combination with a panoramic head equipped tripod at 1.5m height Above Ground Level (AGL) unless stated otherwise in accordance with the relevant guidance identified above. The resulting photos are combined into panoramas using Adobe Photoshop and/or PTGui photo stitching software and saved as cylindrical and planar projection versions for use in visualisation production.
- 10. The Autodesk 3DS Max computer model is used to generate a perspective view from each viewpoint of the proposed development, using landform in the computer model and the specified geometry and position of the proposed development.
- 11. Using the computer model, a wireline diagram showing the proposed development (and any cumulative sites as required) is generated for each viewpoint to meet the relevant requirements of guidance (e.g. blades upwards, numbered, facing the viewpoints, etc).
- 12. To produce a photomontage, the above wireline is combined with the photographic panorama using Autodesk 3DS Max and Adobe Photoshop. Detailed viewpoint information as recorded on site (e.g. GPS grid co-ordinates; ground level information; compass bearings; and any other known references; etc) is used to enable the accurate alignment of the photographs with the computer model. A perspective match is achieved between the computer generated wireline and the photographs by iteratively adjusting the parameters until all the major features in the image are aligned satisfactorily. The Proposed Development is then rendered using Autodesk 3DS Max taking into account the time and conditions occurring on the day of the photography to provide a realistic image.
- 13. A minimal amount of image processing is undertaken. Where necessary, the contrast between the background photograph and the proposed development is increased to ensure that the development is apparent in the photomontage, as far as possible. It should be noted that there is an element of professional judgement inherent in the illustration of the changes represented by any photomontage.
- 14. The information shown on the visualisations and within the LVIA is generated via the computer model or from mathematical calculations.
- 15. The completed base photography, wirelines, photomontages and accompanying data are then presented as figures using desktop publishing/graphic design software to meet the relevant guidance requirements.

## Image Verification

16. The image verification details set out in the Visual Representation of Development Proposal TGN 06/19 have been retained. These details and the 'additional imagery' requirements of a photograph



of the tripod location and a 'composite view' showing the underlying construction of a photomontage are recorded for each viewpoint and can be provided if required for verification purposes .

### **Data Accuracy**

- 17. The Ordnance Survey (OS) provides accuracy figures for the following terrain data products expressed statistically as root-mean-square error (RMSE) in metres:
  - OS Terrain®50 (50m resolution): 4m RMSE.
  - OS Terrain®5 (5m resolution): Urban and major communication routes 1.5m RMSE; Rural 2.5m RMSE; Mountain and moorland 2.5m RMSE.



## **APPENDIX 3: VIEWPOINT ANALYSIS**

### Introduction

- 1. Viewpoint analysis has been carried out from a selection of key representative viewpoint locations to inform the assessment of the likely magnitude and significance of landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 2. Following desk-top analysis six viewpoints were identified and represent the main landscape and visual receptors found in the study area.
- 3. The locations of the selected viewpoints are shown on Figures 1 to 4 and Figure 6. Details for each viewpoint are provided below. Annotated photographs are provided to illustrate the existing view at each viewpoint location and the likely extent of the Proposed Development within the view (see Appendix 5: Viewpoints 1-6). A summary of the viewpoint analysis is provided in the main LVA.
- 4. This viewpoint appraisal considers the nature of the predicted view and the scale of change. The wider extent of the effect (beyond the individual viewpoint considered), and its duration, are not captured in the viewpoint analysis (as a single viewpoint cannot capture extent or duration) and are considered in the main body of the appraisal. Extent and duration are factors in the overall judgement on magnitude of change, therefore judgements on magnitude of change and overall level of effect and significance are also provided in the main assessment.
- 5. The method of assessment used for the viewpoint analysis, which is described in Appendix 1, accords with current best-practice, Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management, 2013). Observations are made of the baseline landscape and visual characteristics at each of the representative viewpoints. Observations, computer modelling and professional judgement are applied to determine the scale of change attributable to the Proposed Development (Large, Medium, Small and Negligible) upon landscape character and visual amenity at each individual viewpoint in order to determine the scale of effect.
- 6. The visual assessment takes into account the screening effect of intervening landform, vegetation and built form. It assumes excellent clear weather conditions; although the influence of different seasons, weather, sunlight and visibility conditions have been considered, where relevant.



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VP	Location	Key features of existing view	Predicted Visual Change	Predicted Change to Landscape Character
1	Minor Road near Berryhill	This viewpoint is located on a minor road 0.3 km south of the site boundary near the residential property at Berryhill. Open and multidirectional views extend across gently undulating agricultural fields and blocks of forestry at various stages of rotation including more open views across the recently planted area within the site. More elevated undulating agricultural fields form a consistent skyline interrupted by several operational wind turbines.	Construction: The movement of construction plant, vegetation clearance, earthworks and construction of electrical and storage infrastructure would be visible across a noticeable extent of mid-range views north. Vegetation clearance would open views of the main construction site. Construction of the transformers would be particularly prominent. Occasional constriction traffic would be visible on the existing minor road in the foreground and the access to the main site. Construction of earth screening bunds would progressively screen some ground level operations. Operation: The introduction of the Proposed Development would occupy a notable extent of views within an area of young forestry to the north. The earth bunds would screen most of the battery storage infrastructure however the taller parts of the transformers and substation control building would be visible above the bunds at the southern extent of the site. The proposed earth bunds would initially contrast with the more sweeping undulating landform. Once established, mitigation planting would heavily filter views of proposed electrical infrastructure. Forestry to the west of the main site would further contain views of the Proposed Development.	Construction: Construction activities would be a notable addition within a small part of the host, Undulating Agricultural Heartland LCT from this viewpoint. The movement of plant and vegetation clearance would be greater than the existing forestry operations within the landscape. All construction activity would be contained within area of forestry. Operation: The Proposed Development would introduce electrical storage infrastructure within a very small area of forestry. Landscape effects would result from the change in land use and perceptual associations due to the increase in electrical infrastructure. However, the earth screening bunds to the south, and more established forestry to the west of the proposed battery storage compound would restrict the influence of change within the landscape to its immediate extents. The transformers and buildings within the substation site would remain perceptible. Overtime established forestry to the west boundary planting and native woodland planting to the south would further limit change to the Undulating Agricultural Heartland LCT.



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### 2 Howe of Teuchar

#### This low-level viewpoint is located along the local road with dispersed residential properties between Howe of Teuchar and Cummineston. The outlook across undulating agricultural fields is interspersed with blocks of forestry, individual properties/ farmsteads and linear shelterbelts. Views east towards the site consist of forestry at various stages of rotation including a wide expanse of low-level recently planted forestry within the site. The ground plan of the main site is not visible.

#### Construction:

Intervening landform along the western site boundary would restrict views of most construction activity. Some taller plant would be perceptible across a small horizontal extent of the view on the skyline to the east.

#### Operation:

Intervening landform, and earth screening bunds would screen most of the proposed battery storage units, substation building and electrical infrastructure. Initially, a water tank and the transformers would be perceptible on the skyline. Overtime, intervening forestry within the western part of the site and mitigation planting would screen the Proposed Development.

#### Construction:

The introduction of construction activity would be mostly screened by intervening topography. The perceptual associations with the introduction on construction activities within existing forestry would result in very limited change to the wider impression of landscape character.

#### Operation:

Initially the Proposed Development would result in direct but very limited change to the landscape character to this LCT. The introduction of electrical infrastructure within the local landscape would be mostly contained be intervening landform. Over time, the combination of woodland planting on the proposed earth screening bunds and established intervening forestry would limit the influence of change within the wider LCT.



3

#### near Sunnyside Lodge

Minor Road

This elevated viewpoint is located on a minor road that connects several residential properties between the B9170 and Howe of Teuchar. Expansive and multidirectional views consist of undulating agricultural landscape. The vast skyline consists of large agricultural fields, blocks of forestry at various rotation stages and maturity and linear shelterbelts. Some areas of forestry have been recently felled immediately southwest of this location. Forestry within the site has recently planted and is visible on the skyline beyond the residential property at Boghead. Individual operational wind turbines are noticeable features on the skyline to the north and south.

### Construction:

Intervening landform along the western site boundary would restrict views of some ground level construction activity within the eastern part of the site. Construction activities across the battery storage and substation compounds including the construction of the transformers, earthworks and taller plant would be perceptible across a noticeable but small horizontal extent of the view on the skyline to the east. The addition of construction would be a noticeable addition in views in contrast with the existing composition.

#### Operation:

Intervening landform and earth screening bunds would screen most of the proposed battery storage units and lower level infrastructure. Initially, the water tanks, transformers and the roof level of battery units and associated infrastructure would be visible on the skyline above the earth screening bunds. Overtime, intervening forestry within the western part of the site and mitigation planting would screen most the Proposed Development, albeit the tops of the transformers may be perceptible.

### Construction:

The introduction of construction activity would be a limited addition within a block of forestry across a very small part of the host LCT 20. Construction activity would temporarily affect the landscape character and perceptual qualities of this landscape. there would be some limited change to the wider impression of landscape character.

### Operation:

The Proposed Development would result in direct change to the landscape character to the Undulating Agricultural Heartland LCT. The Proposed Development would introduce electrical storage infrastructure within an area of forestry. However, mitigation woodland planting on the proposed earth screening bunds and, established intervening forestry would restrict the influence of change within the wider LCT.



4	Hillend of Teuchar	This viewpoint is located on a local recreational route (Moss Side Public Footpath) near several recently constructed holiday cabins. Expansive and wide-angle views south extend across large undulating agricultural fields and large blocks of forestry. Linear shelterbelts lie across part of the mid- range views lining the boundary of the Hillend of Teuchar local trail adjacent to the holiday cabins. The ground plane of the site is visible on the skyline and comprises of recently planted forestry whilst a wood pole electricity line is perceptible on the distant skyline just beyond the site boundary.	Construction: Construction activities including vegetation clearance, earthworks, the movement of plant and construction of battery storage infrastructure would be visible across a small but noticeable horizontal extent of the view south. Construction activities would be located within a more elevated undulation however the low-level nature of activities would result in a small and somewhat obtrusive change on the skyline in contrast with the agricultural and forestry context. Operation: The Proposed Development would occupy a small but noticeable horizontal extent of the background view south within the context of forestry and agricultural fields. The introduction of electrical infrastructure would be clearly visible on the skyline. Once established mitigation planting within the northern part of the site and the battery storage compound would heavily screen views of the electrical infrastructure. Established forestry would occupy the area west of the main battery compound.	Construction: The introduction of construction activity would be a small but noticeable addition within an area of forestry across a very small part of the Undulating Agricultural Heartland LCT. Construction activity would include the movement of plant and earthworks which would temporarily affect the landscape fabric and perceptual qualities of this landscape. Operation: The Proposed Development would result in direct change to the landscape character of this LCT. The introduction of the proposed battery storage compound, substation infrastructure and transformers would add to the presence of electrical infrastructure within the local landscape. The combination of native woodland planting and the context of taller forestry to the west and east would limit the impression of change within the wider LCT.
5	Minor Road near Northburn	This viewpoint is located on a minor track that links several residential properties to the B9170. Expansive and panoramic views extend across the undulating agricultural fields and blocks of forestry in all directions interspersed by a limited number of residential properties and farmsteads. Views west towards the site consist of an established block of forestry and the more recently planted forestry within the site on the skyline. Operational wind turbines and overhead lines and pylon	Construction: Intervening landform would limit views of ground level construction activity. A small part of the site would be screened by intervening forestry. Some taller construction activity associated with the water tanks, transformers and the movement of taller plant would perceptible across a very small part of the skyline. Construction would temporarily appear at odds with the rural features on the skyline. However, the low- level nature of construction activity would not result in conspicuous change to the overall composition within a long range and panoramic view.	Construction: Construction activities would be contained in an area of recently planted forestry adjacent to an established block of forestry. Whilst vegetation clearance and low level earthworks would not be uncharacteristic, the construction of transformers and battery storage infrastructure would result in a slight contrast in character within this landscape. There would be limited change to landscape character.



		towers are noticeable features in outlooks to the east and northeast.	Operation: The Proposed Development would be visible across a very small horizontal extent on the skyline. A small part of the site would be screened by intervening forestry. The introduction of battery storage infrastructure would add to the presence of electrical infrastructure within a panoramic view. Once established mitigation planting would mostly screen views of the battery storage infrastructure, water tanks and transformers and the Proposed Development would be barely perceptible.	Operation: The introduction of the Proposed Development would result in a limited addition to the presence of electrical infrastructure within the landscape. Once established mitigation planting along the eastern site boundary and taller forestry to the west would integrate the Proposed Development and there would be limited perceptible change in landscape character.
6	National Cycle Route 1, near Mid Balthangie	This viewpoint is located on a minor road part which forms part of National Cycle Network (NCN) 1. Expansive and wide angle views extend across large undulating agricultural fields with occasional farmsteads. The skyline spanning west to southwest towards the site consist of several established shelterbelts and blocks for forestry. Operational single wind turbines are notable features above the skyline from various outlooks. Mither Tap is a distinctive summit and ridgeline on the distant skyline to the south.	Construction: Construction activity would be heavily screened by intervening landform and a band of established shelterbelt. Taller plant associated with the construction transformers and substation infrastructure would not draw attention from recreational receptors of NCN 1. Operation: The Proposed Development would be barely perceptible on the skyline. Most of the electrical infrastructure would be screened by intervening landform and shelterbelt vegetation. Once established, mitigation planting would further screen the taller operational infrastructure including the transformers and substation building.	Construction: Construction activities would be located within LCT 20 but contained by intervening landform. There would be a barely perceptible change to character of this landscape due to intervening vegetation. Operation: Initially, the Proposed Development would result in a barely distinguishable change in landscape character. Established mitigation planting would further limit any impression of change in landscape character from this location.



## APPENDIX 4: LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

The sensitivity of the landscape character types which may receive notable landscape effects are assessed below. Landscape sensitivity is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location. To assess the sensitivity of a particular landscape it is good practice to consider the value attached to the landscape and its susceptibility to the particular form of change likely to result from the proposed development. Assessment text relates to sensitivity of the landscape receptor as a whole, to the proposed development, with additional comments regarding the Site where relevant. In the main this has been taken from the NatureScot Landscape Character Assessment 2019 (quotes shown in italics) as well as from local sources and site assessment. The table below is based on guidance provided within LI TGN 02/21 - specifically Table 1 within that document.

### Host Landscape: LCT 20 Undulating Agricultural Heartland

#### Value attached to Landscapes

Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	There are no landscape designations within this landscape that coincide with the LVA study area.	Community
Natural Heritage	Low presence of ecological or geological / geomorphological interest.	High presence of ecological or geological / geomorphological interest.	There are few notable ecological or geological features of interest within the LVA study area. There are some limited pockets of lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland within the site.	Regional/ Community
Cultural Heritage	Low presence of archaeology or historical interests	High presence of archaeology or historical interests	Most of the historical and archaeological features of note including grand castles and Delgaties, Craigston and Hatton and the Culsh Monument are outside the LVA study area.	Community
Landscape condition/ quality	Landscape in a poor state of repair with incongruous elements	Landscape fully intact in good condition with limited incongruous elements	This landscape is generally in good condition with an intact network of large agricultural fields with occasional stone dykes and historic settlements. More incongruous elements consist of forestry felling operations and the presence of rotating wind turbines.	Community
Cultural associations	No strong associations with notable people, events or the arts.	Strong cultural associations with notable people, events or	Cultural associations are of limited value within the LVA study area.	Community



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		the arts, which contribute to perceptions of natural beauty.	The Culsh Monument above New Deer is a notable feature beyond the western extent of the study area.	
Distinctiveness	Commonplace elements and features, or the landscape itself. Lacking distinctive and strongly expressed character and with no important relationship to a settlement.	Presence of rare elements or features or rarity of the landscape itself. Landscape with a distinctive and clearly expressed character and/or with an important relationship to a settlement.	Most of the LVA study area comprises of common place features including large agricultural fields, large but infrequent blocks of forestry and it lacks any distinction. There are views from more elevated locations at the eastern extent of this study area to more notable elements such as the Culsh Monument further west and the summit Mither Tap of Bennanchie.	Community
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity/recreational function where experience of the landscape is important	Well used for recreation where experience of the landscape is important; or forms part of a view that is important to a recreational experience. May contain National Trails or other long distance routes.	National Cycle Network Route 1 is a key route between Cuminestown to the northeastern extent of the study area. Two core paths coincide with the northern part of the study area and both link into Cuminestown from the north and west. Two local trails at the Hillhead of Tuechar (Bailey's Walk and Moss Side Public Footpath) and the network of forestry tracks are a well-used community recreational resource. Holiday cabins have recently been constructed between these two local trails.	Regional/ Community
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape with no particular scenic / visual appeal.	Landscape with strong appeal to the senses, particular visual.	More elevated views, particularly within the north and east of the study area offer some appeal and scenic quality. "Views to landmark hills within Aberdeenshire and Moray are also possible with Bennachie, Tap o'Noth, Knock Hill, Mormond Hill and Ben Rinnes visible in good weather. The relatively limited relief and openness of this landscape give big skies and a notably strong sense of space and light." Lower elevations are of limited scenic value contained by undulating and rising agricultural fields.	Regional/ Community
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Busy with evidence of human activity, well-lit.	Remote, peaceful or with a sense of wildness. Dark skies.	This is a well settled landscape where the nature of farming activities, some forestry operations, single operational wind turbines and vehicular traffic on the network of local roads and the B9170 result in a limited sense of tranquillity and wildness.	Community



Function	No important blue/green infrastructure function or important relationship with national landscape designation.	Landscape with important blue/green infrastructure function or strong relationship that is important to a national landscape designation.	Green infrastructure functions are of limited importance within this LCT and LVA study area. "Woodland is sparse although a frequent scattering of broad-leaved trees occurs in shelterbelts along hill ridges, around farms and in small coniferous blocks. Larger areas of coniferous plantation occur on the higher ridge of Waggle Hill, on the western hill slopes at the transition with the Ythan valley, where they form part of the wider policies of estates such as Hatton, and within wetter basins west of Strichen. Some mixed policy woodlands are present within the den of Craigston Castle in the north of this character area and around Cuminestown where a particularly strong framework of beech shelterbelts is a feature"	Community
Overall Judgement of Value				

Susceptibility						
Scale	Large scale landscapes where the infrastructure may be in proportion with the landscape are generally less sensitive.	Small scale intimate landscapes are generally more sensitive to large scale structures.	This is a large scale landscape that consists of "vast rolling plain, with low hills and ridges cut by broad shallow valleys."	Low		
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, flat or uniform landscapes	Dramatic, rugged and complex landscapes	Landform is not particularly susceptible due to "an extensive area of gently undulating farmland lying at the core of north- eastern Aberdeenshire". The site is located within a more elevated part of the landscape which increases susceptibility.	Medium/Low		
Openness/enclosure	Open and exposed landscapes	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	This landscape is of open, expansive character across large-scale undulating landform and consistent skylines. Some pockets of enclosed shelterbelt at the Hillend of Teuchar coincide with a local trail	Low		



Land cover	Extensive areas of simple or regular landcover (including intensive farming and forestry)	Complex, intimate or mosaic cover	"The smoothly rounded terrain is accentuated by large fields divided by fences, or, more rarely, low walls, and by the rotation of arable cropping and ploughed fields and closely grazed improved pasture. Occasional beech and thorn hedges add diversity in places"	Low
Complexity and patterns	Simple and sweeping lines, linear feature and patterns	Complex or irregular patterns	Landscape patterns are predominantly simple with large sweeping lines and consist of <i>"Frequent, regularly dispersed</i> <i>medium-sized farms, with pockets of smaller farms and</i> <i>crofts."</i> The site itself is located within a larger block of forestry and more tolerant of change.	Low
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	There are dispersed areas of residential properties and farmsteads with small settlements from the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century including Cumineston. Farmsteads are typically sheltered by clumps of mixed trees. Other built features include several single turbines and an overhead line leading to the New Deer Substation to the southeast beyond the LVA study area.	Low
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	There are extensive views throughout most of this landscape, more so from elevated locations to the west of the study area. <i>"This landscape has an open and expansive character with long views across the surrounding landscape a key feature.</i> <i>Views to landmark hills within Aberdeenshire and Moray are also possible with Bennachie, Tap o'Noth, Knock Hill, Mormond Hill and Ben Rinnes visible in good weather.</i> <i>"The relatively limited relief and openness of this landscape give big skies and a notably strong sense of space and light Movement of the clouds overhead forms patterns of light and shade across the fields."</i>	Medium
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	Mither Tap of Bennachie is a distinctive setting and skyline from elevated areas within this landscape particularly at the western edge of the LVA study area. There are	Medium



Overall Judgement of Susceptibility	Medium/Low
Overall Judgement of Sensitivity	Medium /Low