

FEARNA STORAGE

Fearna Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme EIA Report

Chapter 7 – Landscape and Visual

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7. Landscape and Visual

7.1 Executive Summary

Introduction

- 7.1.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development by Chartered Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd. (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute, in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA)¹.
- 7.1.2 The Proposed Development would be situated within a mountainous context, near the eastern end of Loch Quoich. This is a remote landscape with limited habitation but is popular for outdoor recreation. The site falls within the regionally designated Moidart Morar and Glen Shiel Special Landscape Area (SLA) with more elevated areas also within Wild Land Area 14 (WLA 14) Kinlochhourn – Knoydart Morar. It also lies around 6.5km to the east of the Knoydart National Scenic Area (NSA). However, the sense of wildness is affected locally by a range of existing infrastructure, including the Quoich Dam which lies less than 1 km to the east of the Proposed Development, visible drawdown around the shoreline of Loch Quoich which is used as an existing hydroelectric reservoir, and the Skye Overhead Transmission Line which follows the northern shore of the loch. Various small-scale run-of-river hydroelectric schemes are also present around the northern shore of Loch Quoich.
- 7.1.3 The LVIA considers the two separate subjects of landscape and visual amenity as follows:
- The landscape assessment considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes.
 - The visual assessment considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential areas and routes.
- 7.1.4 The LVIA also gives consideration to cumulative effects occurring as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to other proposed hydro and electrical infrastructure development with the potential to affect the landscape and visual amenity of the study area.
- 7.1.5 Potential effects have been considered during the construction phase of the Proposed Development and during operation, after 15 years, once regeneration and proposed landscape mitigation has been allowed to establish. This includes earthworks and planting around the powerhouse as well as riparian planting along the Gearr Garry.

Summary of Effects

Landscape Effects

- 7.1.6 The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development to Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified by NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment of Scotland² and designated and protected landscapes within the study area including the Knoydart NSA, Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA, and WLA 18: Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar.

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition

² Scottish Natural Heritage (2019) [ONLINE]. Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions> [Accessed in September 2024]

- 7.1.7 The landscape assessment has established that during construction, there would be temporary, localised significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development, mostly occurring within an area contained by the surrounding ridgeline of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach to the north of Loch Quoich and extending to areas within around 5 km from the Proposed Development on the southern side of Loch Quoich. A small area to the west of the Quoich Dam would also be affected by access to the Proposed Development.
- 7.1.8 By 15 years post construction, once restoration of vegetation has taken place and planting proposals have been allowed to establish, the area of significant effects would reduce and would be mostly focused around the permanent features of the Proposed Development at the upper reservoir. These effects would be largely contained by the horseshoe ridge of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach to the north, and the facing slopes and summit of Gairich to the south (within around 4 km of the Fearna Dam).
- 7.1.9 These effects are also predicted lead to significant effects during construction and operation within a corresponding localised area of WLA 18 (Kinlochhourn - Knoydart – Morar) and the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA. However, there would be no significant effects on the Knoydart NSA during construction or operation.

Visual Effects

- 7.1.10 The detailed assessment of effects on visual amenity has considered potential effects on visual receptors (those obtaining views) based in buildings and residential properties and using transport and recreational routes.
- 7.1.11 No significant visual effects are identified for any residential or other building-based receptors during the construction or operation of the Proposed Development, although some non-significant effects may occur during construction where visibility of the Southern Access Route (SAR) and main construction compound is obtained.
- 7.1.12 Significant visual effects during construction have been identified for users of the minor public road to and alongside Loch Quoich and recreational users of two mountain walking routes: a circular route ascending the mountains of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, which would be diverted for the Proposed Development; and a route ascending Gairich, on the opposite side of Loch Quoich. Users of these routes would obtain close or overlooking views of construction activities at the powerhouse and / or upper reservoir area, likely to be distracting, during this period.
- 7.1.13 During operation, after 15 years, the effects on the minor road and route ascending Gairich are predicted to reduce to levels that would not be significant. However, significant visual effects are predicted for recreational user of the circular route up Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach where the upper reservoir area would be very visible, and the route would be diverted to cross the Fearna dam.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

- 7.1.14 The Proposed Development is also predicted to lead to some cumulative landscape and visual effects within a baseline scenario which includes the proposed Beinn Bheag Wind Farm. Under this scenario, one additional significant effect is predicted during operation, affecting users of the walking route to Gairich.

Conclusion

- 7.1.15 The LVIA has identified that there would be localised significant landscape and visual effects occurring during the construction of the Proposed Development within an area extending up to around 5 km and affecting the landscape character and special qualities of *localised* parts of the Moidart Morar and Glen Shiel SLA, and WLA 18. Significant effects are also predicted to the visual amenity of those using the minor road to Kinloch Hourn and walking routes to the mountains of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, and Gairich.
- 7.1.16 Significant effects to landscape areas would reduce after 15 years, to an area affected by the upper reservoir and dams within around 4 km. Significant visual effects would be limited to those accessing the Gleouraich / Spidean Mialach walking route. An additional cumulative significant effect is

predicted for those accessing the Gairich walking route within a scenario where the Beinn Bheag wind farm is also operational.

7.1.17 Whilst some longer term significant effects within this localised area are predicted to qualities of the SLA and WLA 18, within which the Proposed Development would be situated, the wider effect on these areas as a whole would not be significant.

7.1.18 No significant effects are predicted to the Knoydart NSA during either construction or operation.

7.2 Introduction

7.2.1 This Chapter presents the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which considers the potential effects, including cumulative effects, of the Proposed Development on landscape character and visual amenity during its construction and operation. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify and describe potential significant effects which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development to views obtained by those living, working in and visiting the area, and to the wider landscape resource, and the predicted residual significance of effects after mitigation.

7.2.2 The Proposed Development is described in detail in **Chapter 2: The Proposed Development**. The layout of the Proposed Development is shown in **Figure 2.2**. The LVIA considers the key above ground elements of the Proposed Development, including:

- Loch Fearn (the upper reservoir) which would be increased in size through the construction of two dams: The Coire Dubh dam and Fearn dam;
- Loch Quoich (the lower reservoir) which operates as an existing hydroelectric reservoir for the Loch Quoich Hydroelectric Scheme;
- A proposed powerhouse and switchyard on the shore of Loch Quoich;
- The Southern Access Route (SAR) involving use of existing forest tracks along the southern side of Glen Garry from the A87 which would be connected to the existing C1144 Minor Road near Quoich dam via a new section of track; and
- New sections of access track leading to the powerhouse and upper reservoir area.

7.2.3 As detailed in **Chapter 2**, with proper maintenance the Proposed Development should remain functional indefinitely. If the project were to be decommissioned, it is anticipated that the potential effects on landscape and visual receptors would be equal to or lesser than the construction impacts. As such, a separate assessment of potential decommissioning effects on landscape and visual receptors is not included in this Chapter.

7.2.4 This assessment has been carried out by Chartered Landscape Architects at ASH design + assessment Ltd. (ASH), a registered practice with the Landscape Institute. The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)¹. A table presenting relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Appendix 1.1: EIA Specialist Team**.

7.3 Scope of Assessment

Consultation and Scoping

7.3.1 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement, reference to the relevant guidance documents and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA scoping process and pre-application advice.

7.3.2 The Scoping Opinion was issued by the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit on the 3rd of July 2024. The Scoping Response from the Highland Council, was received after the Scoping Opinion had been issued, on 17th of July 2024. Table 7.1 provides a summary of the key responses

from consultees which are relevant to the subject areas of landscape and visual amenity and provides comment as to how these have been addressed.

- 7.3.3 Full details on the consultation responses and scoping opinion can be reviewed in **Chapter 4: Assessment Methodology, Scoping and Consultation**, and associated appendices.

Table 7.1: Scoping Responses

Consultee	Response	Comment
The Highland Council (THC)	Potential cumulative effects with other energy developments to be considered.	Cumulative effects on visual amenity and landscape character are discussed in section 7.11 below.
	The LVIA should consider criteria set out in The Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.	A review of the Proposed Development against the criteria outlined in the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance has been undertaken and is provided in Appendix 7.6 .
	An assessment of potential impacts on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ's) and Key Landscape and Visual Characteristics of the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA should be included.	Potential effects on the Moidart, Mortar and Glen Shiel SLA have been assessed in Appendix 7.4 , and are summarised in section 7.9 below.
	Landscape and visual effects should be considered separately in the assessment.	Landscape and visual impacts are considered separately within sections 7.9 and 7.10 respectively.
	Photomontages should be produced in accordance with the Council's Visualisation Standards. Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance.	Photomontages have been produced to both THC and NatureScot guidance, and are included in Volume 3a and Volume 3b.
	This assessment should include the expected impact of all aspects of the development including tracks, substations/other ancillary infrastructure and on-site borrow pits.	All aspects of the Proposed Development have been assessed, including temporary and permanent elements as well as landscape mitigation.
	The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints, and whether they are representative or illustrative, should be identified and stated in the supporting information.	The purpose of chosen visualisation locations is detailed in Table 7.2 .
	The term "Hours of Darkness" should be used rather than "Night-Time".	This has been noted.
	Gardens and Designated Landscapes (GDLs) should be considered in LVIA chapter in addition to the Cultural Heritage Chapter, in terms of how they relate to landscape setting, or relationship to the wider landscape.	There are no GDLs within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

	The LVIA should clearly set out the methodology including: • Definitions of each point on the scale of magnitude of change on the magnitude of change; • Definitions of each point on the scale of sensitivity of receptor • The threshold to which a significant effect is reached; • A clear matrix approach supported by descriptive text setting out how the applicant reaches their conclusion of effect on landscape character, designated landscapes, visual receptors and residential amenity.	The LVIA methodology is detailed in section 7.5 of this chapter. GLVIA3 does not advocate the use of a matrix and significance of effects is evaluated through professional judgement. Clear criteria are given for effect ratings with effects of Moderate or greater being considered significant.
	All core paths and long distance trails should be included in the assessment.	Core paths and long distance trails have been included where relevant. Potential effects on recreational routes have been assessed as part of the visual assessment in Appendix 7.2. A sequential analysis of the mountain route to Spidean Mialach / Gleouraich has been provided in Appendix 7.2, Annex A. Cumulative impacts are discussed in Section 7.11, with consideration of potential combined effects with wind farm and hydro developments within the study area.
	A ZTV of the proposed construction track should be included.	A track ZTV is included as Figure 7.1c.
	An additional visualisation location requested along the C1144 minor road which is closer to the site than VP7 in the west.	This visualisation location has been included from the Minor Road near Bac nan Canaichean Path (See VL9, Figure V3a-9a-e and Figure 3b-9a-h)
	The assessment should include any landscapes designated at a national and local scale, including the Kinlochhourn - Knoydart - Morar Wild Land Area (WLA18).	Potential effects on designated and protected landscapes are considered in Section 7.9 below. Potential effects on the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA are assessed in more detail in Appendix 7.5, and potential effects on WLA18: Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar are assessed in Appendix 7.4.
	The impacts of aviation lighting should be assessed.	There would be no aviation lighting required as part of the Proposed Development.
	The Access Officer is keen to see a recognition of the loss of visual and physical amenity inherent within this development proposal and would welcome a discussion about both mitigation measures and possible access improvements.	Visual effects on recreational routes are assessed in Appendix 7.2 and Section 7.10 below. Further detail on access is discussed in Chapter 13: Land Use and Chapter 14: Recreation and Access.

NatureScot (NS)	A Wild Land Assessment for WLA18: Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar should be included. Further consultation regarding the final selection of Wild Land Qualities (WLQs) to be included is advised. Cumulative effects on WLA18 should be included.	Potential effects on WLA18: Kinlochhourn - Knoydart - Morar have been assessed in Appendix 7.4 . Further consultation was undertaken, as discussed in paragraphs 7.3.4 below. Potential cumulative effects are discussed in Section 7.11.
	A ZTV of the proposed permanent access track, powerhouse and upper inundation should be included.	ZTVs have been included for the powerhouse, upper access tracks and dams at the upper reservoir area (see Figures 7.1a-c).
	A wireline was requested from the Mountain route south of Sgùrr Dubh to better understand effects on the Knoydart NSA and inform whether assessment of effects on the NSA will be required.	This was provided through further consultation with NS as discussed in paragraph 7.3.5. The Knoydart NSA has been scoped out of detailed assessment in agreement with NS.
	Effects from external lighting of the Proposed Development on WLA 18 should be considered, including potential cumulative effects, and night-time visualisations may be required.	No operational lighting would be required as part of the Proposed Development so this is not required.
	Photomontages should clearly show all relevant elements of the scheme. Photomontages and design sections should also show planting/ landscape mitigation proposals at year 1 and year 15.	In agreement with THC and NatureScot photomontages have been produced to show the Proposed Development upon completion and in year 15 of operation with proposed landscape mitigation measures. Construction phase photomontages have also been included from two locations. All elements of the Proposed Development are included on the photomontages where relevant.
	Assessment of the landscape and visual impact of the likely drawdown maximum and minimum levels (natural and managed) and the duration of the maximum and minimum levels and the timing (season) should be considered.	Consideration of maximum and minimum drawdown levels as well as fluctuations between these levels has been considered in the assessment. Photomontages show drawdown at its half-way point as this is considered to be representative of the most commonly occurring scenario. (refer to paragraphs 7.3.14 -7.3.18)
	A viewpoint from Sgùrr Mhurlagain should be included.	A photomontage from Sgùrr Mhurlagain is included as Figure V3a-8a-e and Figure V3b-8a-h .
	Demonstration of mitigation through design, relating to reducing impacts on WLAs, should be detailed in the submission. NatureScot would like to see options explored throughout the design evolution, to illustrate where mitigation has been used to reduce the significance of effects.	Mitigation is discussed in Section 7.8 of this chapter. Mitigation specifically relating to the WLA is discussed in Appendix 7.4 .

Mountaineering Scotland	Proposed viewpoints should allow a comprehensive assessment of the Proposed Development from a mountaineering perspective, and recreational access routes should be identified and managed.	Visualisation locations have been agreed with THC and NatureScot and chosen to show a representation of elevated and lower level views, located on the minor road and recreational routes within the study area. Recreational routes within the study area which have potential for effects have been included within the visual assessment (see Appendix 7.2, and Section 7.10 of this chapter).
	Indication of how the proposal intends manage mountaineering access around the inundation area, and the visual impact of the diversion should be included. This may require a further series of visualisations from where the path is severed by the proposed dam, and from points along any suggested alternative diversionary routes	Engagement has been undertaken with Mountaineering Scotland with regards to the management of access for users of recreational routes. This is discussed in Chapter 13: Land Use and Chapter 14: Recreation and Access and would be developed further in agreement with Mountaineering Scotland. A detailed assessment of the visual effects on the diverted mountain route to Spidean Mialach and Gleouraich is included in Appendix 7.2, Annex A .
Glengarry Community Council	Concerns raised regarding impact on the landscape due to inevitable ancillary works for connection to the grid with associated switching stations and overhead lines.	The grid connection for the Proposed Development will form a separate application.
	Concerns highlighted regarding landscape and visual impact of new road and bridge needed to cross Gearr Garry.	Potential impacts of the Southern Access Route (SAR), including both the new section of track and works to upgrade existing sections are assessed as part of the LVIA.
	Concerns raised around the project being sited upon the only access route into the 'last great wilderness of the UK'.	The LVIA considers the effects on the Minor Road (see Appendix 7.2) and wild land qualities (see Appendix 7.4). Specific consideration of the experience of moving through and towards more remote landscapes is covered in SLA assessment of the SQ "the 'back door' of Knoydart" (see Appendix 7.5).

Post Scoping Consultation

- 7.3.4 Post scoping consultation was undertaken by email with NatureScot to agree the scope of the Wild Land Assessment. In an email dated 29th July 2024, it was agreed to add an additional assessment location near Sgùrr Mhaoraich to cover potential effects to the Wild Land Area to the north-west of Loch Quoich (see **Appendix 7.4**)
- 7.3.5 Additional consultation was also undertaken with NatureScot, as requested through Scoping, to confirm the requirements for a Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ) Assessment of the Knoydart NSA, including provision of a wireline. It was concluded that a full SLQ Assessment would not be required. However, a review of the Proposed Development in relation to the NSA and SLQs has been included in Section 7.9 and **Table 7.8**.

- 7.3.6 Further consultation was also undertaken with the THC Landscape Officer via email (dated 26th July 2024), to confirm visualisation locations. One additional location was added on the minor road C1144 alongside Loch Quoich (VL9). A further visualisation was also added following feedback from Glengarry Community Council on Sgùrr Mòr within the ‘Rough Bounds’ area (VL10). The final list of visualisations was also confirmed with NatureScot (see **Figure 7.2** and **Table 7.2**).

Study Area

- 7.3.7 The study area comprises the area where any potentially significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development would be likely to occur and has been established through consideration of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (see paragraphs 7.3.8 – 7.3.12 below), and professional judgement. In agreement with THC and NatureScot, a study area has been adopted for the LVIA which extends 10 km from the dams and powerhouse site with an additional corridor around the Southern Access Route (SAR) extending to the minor road to the north and 1km to the south, to capture potential visual receptors within Glen Garry.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.3.8 As an aid to establishing the scope for the LVIA, a ZTV has been produced for the Proposed Development and is presented in **Figures 7.1a-c**. The ZTV is a computer generated diagram which uses a terrain model to indicate areas from which the Proposed Development would be theoretically visible. The ZTV for the Proposed Development has been generated using ESRI ArcGIS software based on a terrain modelled using Ordnance Survey (OS) T5 DTM data.
- 7.3.9 The ZTV has been produced using points located at regular intervals along the crest of the dams and the perimeter of the powerhouse. The following height parameters have been used:
- Fearna and Coire Dhubh Dam: 602 m AOD;
 - Powerhouse: 17.5m above proposed ground level; and
 - Tracks: 4m above running surface, representative of use by trucks during construction.
- 7.3.10 The ZTV takes account of earth curvature and light refractivity, set to 0.075 in accordance with NatureScot guidance³.
- 7.3.11 Whilst the ZTV is a useful tool for the identification of potential effects, it is not indicative of an effect in itself. The ZTV does not take into account the potential screening effects of woodland and other localised features such as buildings, trees or local landform which are not captured by the OS T5 data. Nor does it give indication of the way in which a development may relate to its broader landscape context and the receding scale and visibility of features with distance.
- 7.3.12 Further details on the technical parameters of the ZTV production are included in **Appendix 7.1**.

Visualisations

- 7.3.13 Visualisations have been produced to support the LVIA work, in accordance with both THC⁴ (see Volume 3b) and NatureScot³ (see Volume 3a) visualisation standards. These show the predicted appearance of the Proposed Development during operation, upon completion, and after 15 years, once planting is expected to have established. Two visualisations have also been provided during the construction stage to give an impression of how the site would appear during this period (Visualisation Locations (VLS) 2 and 5). The locations and purpose of visualisations are outlined in **Table 7.2**. VLs are shown on **Figure 7.2**.

³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017): Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2.

⁴ The Highland Council (2016): Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.

Table 7.2: Visualisation Locations

VL	Name	Reason for selection
VL1	Minor Road Near Proposed Powerhouse Site	Representative view of powerhouse from the C1144 public road. Also within the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA.
VL2	Path from Quoich Dam	View from a popular mountain footpath route illustrating the appearance of the powerhouse across the loch. Also within the SLA.
VL3	Gleouraich Summit (Munro)	Popular mountain summit with views overlooking the reservoir and dam. Also within the SLA and WLA.
VL4	Spidean Mialach Summit (Munro)	Popular mountain summit with views overlooking the reservoir and dam. Also within the SLA and WLA.
VL5	Gairich Summit (Munro)	Popular mountain summit and representative of elevated views from the south, within the SLA and WLA.
VL6	Kingie	Representative view of Fearna dam from residential area and minor C1144 public road to the east.
VL7	Minor Road near Loch a' Choire Bheithe	Illustrative of views obtained by travellers along the C1144 public road within the Knoydart NSA.
VL8	Sgùrr Mhurlagain	Additional VL requested by NatureScot. Representative of more distant mountain summit views to the south.
VL9	Minor Road near Bac nan Canaichean Path	Additional VL requested by THC. Representative view of Fearna dam from minor C1144 public road to the west.
VL10	Sgùrr Mòr	Additional VL following feedback from Glengarry Community Council, located on a mountain summit within the Route Bounds and WLA18

Consideration of Drawdown Fluctuations within the LVIA

- 7.3.14 The maximum water level of the upper reservoir would be 600 m AOD and the minimum water level would be 540 m AOD, giving a maximum vertical drawdown extent of 60 m. Fluctuations of between 2.6 m and 3.2 m would occur to levels of the lower reservoir (Loch Quoich) but the levels of Loch Quoich are already managed by the Quoich Dam and operation of the existing Quoich hydro scheme, and these fluctuations would be within the existing 26m operational range, leading to no additional drawdown area.
- 7.3.15 Based upon an installed generating capacity of up to 1800 MW, it would take approximately 20 hours of continuous electricity production at maximum output to move the maximum volume of water from the upper reservoir to Loch Quoich, resulting in the maximum drawdown in the Fearna Reservoir. This would increase water levels within Loch Quoich by around 2.6 m – 3.2 m depending on the baseline water level within Loch Quoich (a greater change if the baseline water level is lower due to the smaller footprint of the loch). It would take approximately 27 hours to pump the same volume of water back up to the upper reservoir which would lead to it being filled to capacity.
- 7.3.16 The fluctuations in water level would be subject to the demands of the electricity market and may therefore vary considerably day-to-day, so there would be no predictable pattern of generation and pumping or predictable levels of drawdown on any given day. However in reality, the potential for people to experience the upper reservoir either fully drawn down or fully filled at any given time would be rare because this would usually be the case only if a maximum generation or pumping episode had just occurred. Therefore, whilst the LVIA gives consideration to the landscape and visual effect of the full potential drawdown at the upper reservoir, judgements have been made based on a varying situation and an assumption of the more likely scenario being, that the reservoir would be partially filled for the majority of the time.

- 7.3.17 At Loch Quoich, whilst the maximum changes in water level due to operation of the Proposed Development could theoretically be perceived by some members of the public (for example, someone camping at the side of the loch may be present for long enough to notice a change in water level), this level of change would only occur during a maximum generation or pumping episode. The water levels of Loch Quoich are already managed and day-by-day changes to levels are unlikely to appear different to the existing fluctuations that occur. The LVIA has therefore assumed that the appearance of water levels and drawdown on Loch Quoich would be no different to the existing situation.
- 7.3.18 The photomontages have been prepared to show water level on the upper reservoir at half full, as this is considered to be most representative picture of how it would appear for the majority of the time. Wirelines have been included showing the maximum water level in the upper reservoir so that the extent of the reservoir can be easily seen. However, for VLs where there is a view overlooking the reservoir (VL3 and VL4) a wireline has also been provided showing the reservoir fully drawn down.

Issues Scoped out of Assessment

- 7.3.19 Effects arising from the process of decommissioning are considered to be of a similar nature and duration to those arising from the construction process and therefore have not been assessed separately in this LVIA. Therefore, potential construction effects referenced in the assessment are representative of predicted decommissioning effects.
- 7.3.20 A detailed SLQ Assessment of the Knoydart NSA has been scoped out in agreement with NatureScot (see paragraph 7.3.5) as the potential for significant effects is unlikely. However, a review of effects on SLQs has been included as part of the landscape assessment.

7.4 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 7.4.1 The assessment has taken into account national, regional and local policy and guidance relating to landscape character and visual amenity relevant to the Proposed Development. Detailed information on planning policy is contained within the Planning Statement accompanying the application for the Proposed Development and **Chapter 5: Planning and Policy Context**. The following provides a summary of key policy documents with respect to the LVIA.

National Context

- 7.4.2 The following national policy documents and statements have been referred to in carrying out this assessment:
- The Fourth National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4) (2023);
 - Scottish Government Online Planning Guidance for Onshore Wind Turbines (last updated May 2014);
 - Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland (2017);
 - Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (PAN60), 2000;
 - Renewable Energy and the Natural Heritage, SNH Policy Document, 2010; and
 - Wildness in Scotland's Countryside, SNH Policy Statement 02/03.

Regional Context

- 7.4.3 The following Regional policy documents have been referred to:
- The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), 2012.
 - The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan, 2019 (WestPlan)

Supplementary Guidance

- 7.4.4 The following THC Supplementary Guidance (SG) to the HwLDP has been referred to:

- The Highland Council Onshore Wind Energy SG, 2016;
- Physical Constraints SG, 2013;
- Sustainable Design Guide SG, 2013;
- Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, 2011; and
- Trees, Woodlands & Development SG, 2013.

7.5 Methodology

Assessment Guidance

- 7.5.1 The LVIA has been prepared with reference to GLVIA3⁵ and Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland¹.

Professional Judgement

- 7.5.2 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in identifying and defining the significance of landscape and visual effects. As part of this assessment, professional judgement has been used in combination with structured methods and criteria to evaluate landscape value and landscape and visual sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effect. The assessment has been undertaken and verified by two Landscape Professionals (Chartered Landscape Architects) to provide a robust and consistent approach.

Key Stages of the Assessment

- 7.5.3 GLVIA3 advises that landscape and visual effects should be assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any mitigation measures which are being adopted.
- 7.5.4 The GLVIA3 methodology for landscape assessment involves an appreciation of the existing landscape resource, the susceptibility of its key components to accept the change proposed, and an understanding of the potential effects which could occur and how these could affect these key components.
- 7.5.5 Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature, and expectation of existing views by visual receptors is a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed. The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and the subsequent evaluation of the significance of effects.
- 7.5.6 The potential to mitigate adverse effects should also be considered for both landscape and visual assessment.
- 7.5.7 There are five key stages to the assessment:
- Establishment of the baseline;
 - Appreciation of the development proposed;
 - Identification of key landscape and visual receptors;
 - Identification of potential effects; and
 - Assessment of significance of effect.

⁵ Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013): Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Effect Assessment (Third Edition). Routledge.

Establishment of the Baseline

- 7.5.8 Establishment of the baseline conditions has been undertaken through a combination of desk study and site appraisal. The desk review has involved review of the following general documents and sources:
- National and Regional Planning Policy and Guidance as detailed in Section 7.4;
 - The Scoping Opinion and other consultation responses for the Proposed Development (see **Table 7.1** and **Appendix 4.1**);
 - Online mapping and aerial photography resources from Ordnance Survey, Google, Bing and the National Library of Scotland; and
 - ZTVs for the Proposed Development (see **Figures 7.1a-c**).
- 7.5.9 Site surveys were undertaken in August and September 2024.
- 7.5.10 In addition, specific baseline activities were undertaken for the two differing assessments of landscape and visual effects, as described in paragraphs 7.5.11 to 7.5.18 below.

Landscape Assessment Baseline Tasks

- 7.5.11 The desk review for the landscape assessment has included review of the following additional documents and resources:
- Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + MacLennan and Wood, 2011)⁶; and
 - NatureScot Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions (SNH, 2019 [online])².
- 7.5.12 Site survey was undertaken to verify information gathered from the desk study and included a combination of access via vehicle, on foot and by boat on Loch Quoich and collation of a photographic record.

Identification of Baseline Landscape Value

- 7.5.13 The value of the landscape is an important consideration in informing later judgement of the significance of effects. Landscape value concerns the perceived importance of the landscape when considered as a whole, and within the context of the study area and is established through consideration of the following factors:
- Presence of landscape designations, other inventory or registered landscapes / landscape features or identified planning constraints;
 - The scenic quality of the landscape;
 - Perceptual aspects, such as wildness or tranquillity;
 - Conservation interests such as cultural heritage features or associations, or if the landscape supports notable habitats or species;
 - Recreational value; and
 - Rarity, either in the national or local context, or if it is considered to be a particularly important example of a specific landscape type.
- 7.5.14 It should be noted that absence of a designation does not necessarily mean that a landscape or component is not highly valued, as factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality, highly valuable as a local resource.

⁶ Horner + MacLennan (2011): Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. The Highland Council.

7.5.15 Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in **Table 7.3** below:

Table 7.3: Landscape Value Criteria

Landscape Value	Criteria
High	- The landscape is closely associated with features of international or national importance which are rare within the wider context; - The landscape is of high scenic quality and forms a key part of an important designated landscape or planning constraint; and/or - The landscape is an example of a scarce resource within the local context and is of considerable local importance for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Medium	- The landscape is associated with features of national or regional importance which are relatively common within the wider context; - The landscape forms part of a designated landscape or is associated with other features of importance but is not rare or distinctive within the local context; and/or - The landscape is one of a number within the local context appreciated for its scenic quality, recreational opportunities or cultural heritage associations.
Low	- The landscape characteristics are common within the local and regional context and the landscape is not associated with any particular features or attributes considered to be important; and/or - The landscape is of poor scenic quality and is not appreciated for any recreational or cultural associations.

Visual Assessment Baseline Tasks

- 7.5.16 A combination of desk and field survey was used to establish the range and distribution of potential visual receptors within the study area. Visual receptors can be defined as individuals occupying and using the study area with the potential to obtain views of the Proposed Development. Potential visual receptors included in the assessment have included those experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public.
- 7.5.17 The following additional resources were used to enhance understanding of the use of the study area by potential visual receptors:
- The Highland Council (THC) Core Paths Interactive Map [online]⁷;
 - Scottish Hill Tracks (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways), 2011)⁸; and
 - Other web based and published sources providing information on local resources and activities within the study area.
- 7.5.18 Site visits were undertaken in August and September 2024 to verify the visual receptors identified through desk study, identify any further potential receptors which had been missed and collate information on baseline visual amenity. This included information on the types of receptors and activities of visual receptors likely to be present, and the nature of the existing views which are obtained. Site recording involved the completion of standardised recording forms and annotation of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey plans, supported by a photographic record of views from key receptor locations.

⁷The Highland Council, Core Paths Interactive Map [ONLINE]:
<https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2fd3fc9c72d545f7bcf1b43bf5c8445f> [accessed November 2023].

⁸The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) (2011): Scottish Hill Tracks (Fifth Edition) Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

Appreciation of the Development Proposed

- 7.5.19 Appreciation of the Proposed Development involves the accumulation of a thorough knowledge of the proposal, its nature, scale and location within the baseline landscape, and any peripheral or ancillary features proposed. Analysis of the proposed activities and changes which would take place leads to an understanding of the potential effects that may occur to the landscape and visual resource.
- 7.5.20 This stage has included review of all available desk-based information relating to the Proposed Development in terms of its long term physical appearance and requirements for construction and access and review of visual aids featuring other, similar development types.

Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors

- 7.5.21 The identification of key landscape and visual receptors with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development is the first step in the analysis of the potential for significant effects to occur. Landscape and visual receptors can be described as follows:
- 7.5.22 Landscape receptors comprise key characteristics or individual features which contribute to the value of the landscape and have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. Landscape receptors are identified through analysis of baseline characteristics when considered in relation to the impacts which might result from a development of the type proposed.
- 7.5.23 Visual receptors comprise individuals experiencing views from locations such as buildings, recognised routes and popular viewpoints used by the public. Potential visual receptors are identified through analysis of desk resources, mapping and field survey, as described under 'Establishment of the Baseline' above. A review of the ZTV in the context of site survey is used to identify the potential for visual receptors to be affected by the Proposed Development.

Identification of Potential Effects

- 7.5.24 The second step in the assessment process involves the identification of potential effects which may occur as a result of the interaction of the Proposed Development with the identified landscape and visual receptors.
- 7.5.25 The assessment takes into account direct effects upon existing views, landscape elements, features and key characteristics and, also, indirect effects which may occur secondarily to changes affecting another landscape component or area. The identification of potential effects is a two-fold process, giving consideration as to how these effects may arise from aspects of the Proposed Development and how they may be accommodated by the existing baseline features.
- 7.5.26 Where it is established that potential effects could be limited by mitigation measures, these are also given consideration.
- 7.5.27 Potential effects are evaluated through the allocation of criteria for sensitivity and magnitude.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

- 7.5.28 Sensitivity concerns the nature of the baseline landscape or visual receptor, and the ability to accommodate development of the type proposed without compromising the key characteristics and / or composition.
- 7.5.29 There are two aspects which contribute to the evaluation of landscape and visual sensitivity: value and susceptibility to change. The consideration of these two separate aspects in the differing assessments for landscape and visual amenity are outlined below:

Landscape

- Value: The baseline value of the landscape and the contributory value of individual landscape receptors to the landscape as a whole; and

- Susceptibility: The ability of landscape receptors to accommodate development of the type proposed without changing the intrinsic qualities of the landscape as a whole.

Visual Amenity

- Value: The baseline value of a particular view to the visual receptor, including the perceived value of individual features or aspects within the view; and
- Susceptibility: The susceptibility of the viewer to changes to the view, giving consideration to the particular activity they may be involved in and also the composition of the baseline view and importance of the proposed area of change as a part of the view.

7.5.30 Criteria for the evaluation of sensitivity to change are presented in **Table 7.4**.

Table 7.4: Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

Sensitivity Rating	Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity
High	A highly valued landscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present.
Medium	A reasonably valued landscape with a composition and characteristics tolerant of some degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; and • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape which is potentially tolerant of a large degree of change of the type proposed.	Visual receptors obtaining views from: • dwellings and publicly accessible buildings where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or numerous detracting features are present; • recreational routes and locations where the changed aspect is an unimportant element in the view and / or where numerous detracting features are present; • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present; and • workplaces where the changed aspect is a less important element in the view and / or where some detracting features are present.

Landscape and Visual Magnitude

7.5.31 Magnitude of change concerns the extent to which the existing landscape character or view would be altered by the Proposed Development. Elements specific to the evaluation of magnitude of change for the differing assessments of landscape and visual amenity are detailed below:

Landscape

- The degree to which features or characteristics may be removed, altered or added within the landscape;
- The geographical extent of proposed changes;
- Whether changes would be direct or indirect; and
- The potential duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

Visual Amenity

- The scale or extent of proposed changes within the view;
- The location of proposed changes within the view, relevant to other existing features;
- The extent to which this may alter the composition or focus of the view; and
- The duration and reversibility of proposed changes (taking into consideration proposed mitigation measures where relevant).

7.5.32 Criteria for the evaluation of magnitude of change are presented in **Table 7.5**. In recognition of the differing changes that would occur over time, two ratings for magnitude of change have been included: during the construction of the Proposed Development and during operation, after approximately 15 years, once landscape / habitat reinstatement and any other mitigation or planting has had time to establish.

Table 7.5: Landscape and Visual Magnitude of Change

Magnitude Rating	Landscape	Visual
High	Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a very noticeable change in the existing view.
Medium	Perceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to notable change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view.
Low	Virtually imperceptible change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or perceptible change in a localised area.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view.
Negligible	No discernible change in any landscape characteristics or components.	Where the Proposed Development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view.

Assessment of Significance of Effects

- 7.5.33 Evaluation of the predicted significance of effect has been carried out through the analysis of the anticipated magnitude of change in relation to the landscape or visual sensitivity, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, and is established using professional judgement.
- 7.5.34 In recognition of the potential for effects to vary over time, the assessment has been undertaken at two different stages: during the construction phase, and during operation, once landscape / habitat reinstatement measures and any mitigation measures or other planting have been allowed to establish. This is assumed to be approximately 15 years after the completion of construction and reinstatement works.
- 7.5.35 The significance of effect for landscape and visual elements is considered as follows:

Landscape Effects

- The assessment takes into account identified effects upon existing landscape receptors and assesses the extent to which these would be lost or modified in the context of their importance in determining the existing baseline character.

Visual Effects

- The assessment takes into account likely changes to the visual composition, including the extent to which new features would distract or screen existing elements in the view or disrupt the scale, structure or focus of the existing view.

7.5.36 The assessment takes into consideration the potential for effects to be adverse, where changes such as the addition of new distracting features, or the removal of existing positive features, are anticipated to negatively affect the landscape or view; or beneficial, where changes, such as the removal of existing distracting features or the addition of associated planting or other mitigation measures are anticipated to positively influence the landscape or view.

7.5.37 Criteria used for the assessment of effects are presented in **Table 7.6**. For the purposes of the LVIA, effects with a rating of Moderate or greater are considered to be significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Table 7.6: Landscape and Visual Significance of Effect Criteria

Significance of Effect	Landscape	Visual
Major Adverse	The Proposed Development is at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape and would be a dominant feature, resulting in considerable reduction in scenic quality and large scale change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would become a prominent and very detracting feature and would result in a very noticeable deterioration to an existing highly valued and well composed view.
Moderate Adverse	The Proposed Development is out of scale with the landscape, or inconsistent with the local pattern and landform and may be locally dominant and/or result in a noticeable reduction in scenic quality and a degree of change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would introduce some detracting features to an existing highly valued view or would be more prominent within a pleasing or less well composed view, resulting in a noticeable deterioration of the quality of view.
Minor Adverse	The Proposed Development does not quite fit with the scale, landform or local pattern of the landscape and may be locally intrusive but would result in an inappreciable reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a perceptible but not detracting feature within a pleasing or valued view or would be a prominent feature within a poorly composed view of limited value, resulting in a small deterioration to the existing view.
Negligible	The Proposed Development sits well within the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and would not result in any discernible reduction in scenic quality or change to the intrinsic landscape character of the area.	The Proposed Development would form a barely perceptible feature within the existing view and would not result in any discernible deterioration or improvement to the view.
Minor Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a small or localised improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a fairly attractive feature and / or remove a fairly detracting feature from an existing less well composed view, resulting in a small improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.

Moderate Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would become a new attractive feature within, or result in the removal or partial removal of an existing detracting feature from, a poorly composed or less well composed view leading to a noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.
Major Beneficial	The Proposed Development would add / remove landscape features or alter the composition of landscape components which would result in a very noticeable improvement to the landscape characteristics and scenic quality of the landscape.	The Proposed Development would form a prominent new attractive feature within, or result in the removal of an existing very detracting feature from, a poorly composed view leading to a very noticeable improvement to the attractiveness, composition and value of the existing view.

Assumptions and Limitations

7.5.38 The LVIA is subject to the following limitations and assumptions:

- The prominence of the Proposed Development in the landscape and views will vary according to the prevailing weather conditions. The LVIA has been carried out, as is best practice, by assuming the 'worst case' scenario i.e. on a clear, bright day in winter, when neither foreground deciduous foliage nor haze can interfere with the clarity of the view obtained.
- The assessment of operational effects assumes that disturbed areas not required for the operation of the Proposed Development (temporary tracks, laydown and working areas,) would be successfully reinstated to reflect, as far as possible, similar vegetation types and appearance to that present prior to construction (with the exception of bare rock cuttings). It is noted that these vegetation types may not necessarily comprise identical habitat types and value to those previously present. Habitat change is discussed separately in **Chapter 8: Terrestrial Ecology**.
- Additional woodland planting and other works are proposed as part of biodiversity net gain (BNG) proposals within **Chapter 8: Terrestrial Ecology** (see **Appendix 8.7: Outline BEMP**). As these proposals have been developed at a strategic level only and have not been fully designed, they have not been fully assessed within the LVIA. However, these measures are unlikely to lead to adverse effects and are not anticipated to lead to any very noticeable changes to the landscape character baseline (see section 7.8).
- Planting proposed for landscape and visual purposes and integrated into the design of the Proposed Development is fully considered within the LVIA.
- ZTVs are used to inform the landscape, visual and cumulative assessments. The limitations and technical specifications for production of ZTVs are included in paragraphs 7.3.8 to 7.3.12 and are further discussed in **Appendix 7.1**.
- The field assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from public roads, footpaths or open spaces. For residential receptors, assumptions have been made about the types of rooms in buildings and about the types and importance of views from these rooms. For there to be a visual effect, there is the need for a viewer and therefore only buildings that are in use have been considered in the visual assessment.
- The assessment of effects on visual receptors occupying buildings such as residences and public buildings includes consideration of potential for views from exterior areas associated with the building including gardens where appropriate. These effects are referenced where relevant.
- The assessment reflects the baseline situation at the time of site work (August and September 2024) and therefore does not take account of any changes to the landscape fabric which have taken place after this date.

7.6 Baseline Conditions: Landscape

Overview

- 7.6.1 The Proposed Development would be located at the eastern end of Loch Quoich in Glen Garry, approximately 25 km west of Invergarry. Loch Quoich, a hydroelectric reservoir, occupies a long, linear valley, flanked by a series of mountains on its northern and southern sides which rise steeply from the shore of the loch. The area is situated at the eastern edge of a wider mountainous area, with a strong east/west pattern of mountain ridges and deep, sweeping valleys to the north and south, and a more remote and intricate landscape of many peaks lying to the west. The eastern end of Loch Quoich marks a change in character, with a generally lower lying landscape of moorland hills, extensive forest plantation and scattered settlement lying to the east. Access to the Proposed Development would pass through this area.
- 7.6.2 The area has a generally strong sense of remoteness, but Loch Quoich, which would comprise the lower reservoir, is already operated as a hydro reservoir with a dam situated at its eastern end and a visible area of drawdown present around its shoreline. A long, narrow, single-track road follows the northern shore of the loch and cuts through the mountains to the west coast to Kinloch Hourn and is followed by a steel lattice tower transmission line. There are also a number of existing small-scale hydro developments within the area. From Loch Quoich there are open views across and along the loch towards the mountains beyond.
- 7.6.3 The proposed upper reservoir would utilise Loch Fearna and Coire Dubh situated within an elevated natural bowl contained by the steep, rocky slopes of the mountains Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach and their adjoining ridge.
- 7.6.4 The remote landscape is popular for recreation with a number of tracks and paths leading up to nearby mountain summits and long, open views across and along Loch Quoich towards the mountains beyond.

Designated and Protected Landscapes

- 7.6.5 Landscapes can be ascribed an international, national, regional or local designation that recognises the importance of the landscape for its scenic interest or attractiveness. Areas of landscape may also be protected by planning policy at either a national or regional level.
- 7.6.6 The following designated or protected landscapes fall within the study area (see **Figure 7.3**):

National Context:

- Knydart National Scenic Area (NSA);
- Kintail NSA;
- Glen Affric NSA;
- Wild Land Area (WLA) 18. Kinlochhourn - Knydart - Morar
- WLA 24. Central Highlands

Regional / Local Context:

- Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel Special Landscape Area (SLA).
- 7.6.7 Only small parts of WLA 24, Kintail NSA and Glen Affric NSA fall within the study area with no intervisibility with the Proposed Development. These areas have therefore been scoped out of further assessment.
- 7.6.8 Those areas identified for inclusion are described below and their qualities are listed in **Table 7.7**. Further baseline description of the parts of the WLA and SLA falling within the study area are also included in **Appendix 7.4** and **Appendix 7.5** respectively.

Knoydart NSA

- 7.6.9 NSA is a national, statutory designation and comprises 40 areas of Scotland that have been designated as having outstanding scenic value in a national context. SLQs of the NSA have been identified by NatureScot and are described in the publication, *The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas* (SNH, 2010)⁹.
- 7.6.10 Within the study area, this NSA covers a small area at the north-western end of Loch Quoich and to the west of the Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich summit, comprising a narrow glen through from Loch Quoich to the head of the sea-loch, Loch Hourn, featuring small rocky knolls and a string of small lochs, rising into higher rocky hills.
- 7.6.11 The SLQs of the NSA are listed in **Table 7.7** below.

WLA 18. Kinlochhourn - Knoydart - Morar

- 7.6.12 Wild Land Areas (WLA) have been defined by NatureScot as those areas comprising the greatest and most extensive areas of wild characteristics within Scotland. Although not a designation, these areas are given protection within the planning system through NPF4.
- 7.6.13 The presence of wildness is based on the presence and strength of four perceptual attributes identified in NatureScot Policy Statement *Wildness in Scotland's Countryside* (SNH, 2002) as follows:
- A sense of sanctuary or solitude;
 - Risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety, depending on the individual's emotional response to the setting;
 - Perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and
 - Fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.
- 7.6.14 Because these responses are very much dependant on an individual's perceptions, five physical attributes are identified as considered likely to lead to these perceptual responses being present. These are:
- A high degree of perceived naturalness in the setting, especially in its vegetation cover and wildlife, and in the natural processes affecting the land;
 - The lack of any modern artefacts or structures;
 - Little evidence of contemporary human uses of the land;
 - Landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and
 - Remoteness and/or inaccessibility.
- 7.6.15 The Kinlochhourn – Knoydart - Morar WLA (WLA 18) covers an extensive area, stretching from north to south between the A87 through Glen Shiel and the A830 at Glenfinnan and reaching towards the western coast. The WLA consists of a core of complex rugged mountains, breaking into three long "fingers" comprising narrower ridgelines of mountains and hills set to north and south of Lochs Quoich and Arkaig where the influence of forestry and hydro development is more noticeable.
- 7.6.16 Within the study area, the WLA covers the two "fingers" of the WLA, set to the north and south of Loch Quoich, as well as the western end of the loch which lies closer to the WLA core. This area is defined by a number of high peaks which rise steeply from the shoreline of Loch Quoich, separated by deep glens and passes and cut into by large, scooped corries. There are some existing areas of

⁹ Scottish Natural Heritage (2010). *The special qualities of the National Scenic Areas*. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 374. (iBids and Project no 648)

limited human intervention, particularly around Loch Quoich which is a hydroelectric reservoir and features a band of visible drawdown around its shoreline as well as various features including the minor road and existing steel lattice overhead line which follow the north shore of the loch, several small hydroelectric schemes and Quoich Dam at its eastern end.

- 7.6.17 NatureScot has identified WLA Qualities (WLQs) for each of the WLAs. Those for WLA 18 are listed in **Table 7.7**. Further baseline description of the WLA is contained in **Appendix 7.4**.

Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA

- 7.6.18 SLA is a non-statutory designation applied by THC through the development planning process to landscapes identified as being of regional or local importance. The Special Qualities (SQs) of Highland SLAs are identified in the publication, Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + MacLennan and Wood, 2011)⁶.
- 7.6.19 Within the study area, this SLA covers Loch Quoich as well as part of Glen Kingie to the south and Glen Loyne to the north, and the mountain ridges which separate them, comprising a vast area of deep glens, lochs and rising moorland which leads to high mountains. The SLA provides a setting to the NSAs which surround it to the north and west.
- 7.6.20 The SQs of the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA are detailed in **Table 7.7**. Further baseline description of the SLA is contained in **Appendix 7.5**.

Table 7.7: Special Qualities of Designated and Protected Landscapes

Designated / Protected Area	Special Qualities* (*Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of NSA, WLA Qualities (WLQs) and Special Qualities (SQs) of SLAs)
Knoydart NSA	• One of the remotest places on mainland Britain; • One of Scotland's last great wild areas; • Some of the grandest coastal and mountain scenery on the west coast; • The majesty and extent of the mountains experienced from sea level; • Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, dramatic but contrasting sea lochs; • Views across to the Inner Hebrides; and • An exemplar of a previously glaciated landscape.
WLA 18. Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar	• WLQ1: High, remote, rugged and rocky mountains with a strong sense of naturalness and awe – some angular in profile with sweeping peaks, and some more massive in form; • WLQ2: A very remote interior drawing adventurous and experienced hillwalkers; • WLQ3: Spectacular deep glens and lochs cut through the high mountains and hills, strongly influencing visibility, remoteness and access through the landscape; • WLQ4: A strong influence of the sea around the north and western edges of the WLA, providing open views and contributing to perceived awe, remoteness and naturalness; and • WLQ5: Secluded and elevated rocky cnochan and plateaux, containing hidden depressions and lochs with a strong sense of sanctuary.
Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA	Distinctive West Highland Composition: • The pattern of east-west-aligned mountain ridges, deep glens and lochs typifies the West Highland landscape. This is popular with visitors world-wide, and images of the landscape are often used to represent and promote some of the distinctive qualities of Scotland. The opportunity to reach many high peaks and to sustain height over long distances makes this area particularly popular for hill walking and climbing. • Much of the area represents the “back door” into Knoydart, Glenshiel and Kintail. At Kinlochhourn and the junction of Glen Dessary and Glen Pean at Strathan, long distance walking routes proceed west. Apart from the sporting estates and a limited number of forestry and hydro workers, the main users of this area are hillwalkers and wilderness enthusiasts who typically engage in multi-day treks.

	- Loch Morar is something of a hidden gem, a very large, deep freshwater loch, with attractive wooded islands at its eastern end, and a shoreline with many small bays and headlands which is almost completely undeveloped. - The area is very sparsely populated, particularly in the central and northern areas, with most communities lying close to the A830 road from Glenfinnan to Mallaig and around the southern end of Loch Shiel. - Quiet, uninhabited glens and isolated peaks create a landscape experience where the sense of wildness, and tranquillity are key qualities. - Appreciation of the landscape is strongly influenced by the weather with the pattern of systems strongly affected by the Atlantic to the west and able to change rapidly. Spectacular sunsets are often obtained from areas of high ground and coastal locations looking west. - Within the landscape there is a rich local heritage of battle sites, places of refuge, and historical associations with the Jacobite uprisings and their aftermath, this creates a strong sense of historic connection between the past and present landscape. - The A830 (Fort William – Mallaig) 'Road to the Isles' follows a well-defined glen which forms a major dividing line through the West Highlands - between the higher mountains to the north and the lower, yet still rugged, peaks of Moidart to the south. Running approximately parallel is the West Highland Railway line which crosses Glen Finnan on an iconic viaduct. In the north, the A87 (Invergarry – Kyle of Lochalsh) road hugs the shore of Loch Cluanie before winding through the remote Glen Shiel. - There is an intricate coastline both diverse, and intimate with rocky promontories containing white sandy beaches, impressive dunes and machair habitats, interspersed with scattered crofting and fishing settlements and fringed by rich native woodlands. Popular for its sand beaches and superb vistas, an integral feature of these views is the foreground detail provided by large numbers of skerries. Loch nan Ceall is particularly notable in this regard. This provides a stimulating sense of place and strong contrast of scale with the mountains. It also offers expansive views to the sea and distinctive profiles of the mountainous islands to the west. (THC, 2011)
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Landscape Character

- 7.6.21 NatureScot has undertaken detailed review and classification of various landscape areas and types of Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online])². 10 individual Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are identified within the study area for the Proposed Development (see **Figure 7.4**).
- 7.6.22 The following four LCTs have been identified for inclusion within the assessment:
- LCT 235: Broad Forested Strath;
 - LCT 237: Rocky Moorland – Lochaber;
 - LCT 238: Rugged Massif – Lochaber; and
 - LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber.
- 7.6.23 LCT 239, within which the majority of the Proposed Development is situated, covers a very large area with some differing characteristics. This LCT has therefore been subdivided into two areas, to account for more fine-grained differences within the character of this LCT. These are referred to within the assessment as:
- LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber – Sub-type A
 - LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber – Sub-type B
- 7.6.24 Following initial appraisal and site visits, the following six LCTs were scoped out of the assessment due to the limited extent of theoretical visibility which results in the potential for significant effects being very unlikely:
- LCT 220: Rugged Massif – Inverness;

- LCT 230: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks - Inverness;
- LCT 236: Smooth Moorland Ridges;
- LCT 360: Stepped Moorland;
- LCT 365: Rugged Massif - Skye & Lochalsh; and
- LCT 369: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks - Skye & Lochalsh.

7.6.25 The LCTs are described in further detail in **Appendix 7.3**, along with the key characteristics which have been identified by NatureScot. Characteristics of specific note and relevance within the study area have also been identified.

7.7 Baseline Conditions: Visual

Interpretation of the ZTV

- 7.7.1 The ZTV (see **Figures 7.1a-c**) indicates that theoretical visibility of the Fearna and Coire Dubh dams would be relatively widespread around Loch Quoich, covering surrounding, facing slopes and summits of the mountains of Gleouraich, Spidean Mialach and Gairich which contain potential visibility further to the north and south. Around Loch Quoich, the ZTV coverage stretches westwards to cover southern and western / north-western shoreline areas of Loch Quoich and elevated summits and ridgelines as well the loch itself. Potential visibility of the dams along the northern shoreline of the loch would be more restricted, with only occasional views of the Fearna dam indicated. To the east and south-east, intervisibility is mostly limited to the Fearna dam within Glen Garry and across slopes to the south. Visibility of the Coire Dubh dam is largely focused to the south-western part of the study area. More distant visibility of both dams is also indicated from the ridgeline of hills to the south, above Loch Arkaig, although in reality, the Fearna dam would be likely to conceal most of the Coire Dubh dam in views from the more easterly areas.
- 7.7.2 The ZTV of the powerhouse indicates that potential visibility would be more contained, around the eastern part of Loch Quoich, including the surrounding shorelines and slopes on the opposite side of the loch, up to the summit of Gairich. Potential visibility is also indicated within some views along Loch Quoich from shoreline and elevated areas around its western end and a few higher areas within the more easterly landscape. The Quoich Dam and landform would be likely to conceal the powerhouse from lower lying areas within and around Glen Garry.
- 7.7.3 The ZTV of the access track between the lower works and upper reservoir (see **Figure 7.1c**) suggests that the track, and vehicles using it would be seen to the west, south and south-west within the study area, from many of the areas where the dams are also theoretically visible. However, this ZTV is likely to over-estimate visibility, as vehicles would be unlikely to be present on the full length of track at one time and the ground model does not contain sufficient detail to show local landform which would often conceal the track itself. From lower ground, the running surface of the track would be less likely to be visible, and with reinstatement of vegetation on cuttings and embankments the track would be less noticeable in the longer term.

Visual Receptors

- 7.7.4 Visual receptors within the study area comprise residents or others present in and around buildings and settlement areas and those using routes (including transport and recreational routes) through the study area.

Building-based Visual Receptors

- 7.7.5 Building-based receptors within the study area comprise residents and visitors occupying various small settlement clusters and scattered buildings within Glen Garry, mainly along the C1144 minor road to the east of the Quoich Dam. The closest building-based receptors are located at Kingie, approximately 4 km to the east of the Proposed Development. Ten receptor groups have been identified for inclusion within the visual assessment and are shown on **Figure 7.5**, described in detail in **Appendix 7.2** and summarised below.

7.7.6 Building groups identified can be broadly sub-divided into three groupings as follows:

Properties located along the C1144 Minor Road

7.7.7 Receptor Locations B1 to B4, and B6 and B7 comprise a range of small property groups strung along the C1144 minor road. Properties in these groupings are typically orientated with southerly, slightly elevated views overlooking Loch Garry or Loch Poulary and the forested hill-slopes beyond, often contained by or filtered by surrounding woodland. There are occasional filtered views to the west. Receptor Locations in this grouping include:

- B1 (Kingie);
- B2 (Poulary and Aultnaslat);
- B3 (Tomdoun);
- B4 (Inchlaggan);
- B6 (Ardochy); and
- B7 (Properties at junction of A87 and Kinloch Hourn road).

Properties on the south side of Loch Garry

7.7.8 Receptor Location B5 (Torr na Carraidh and Halcyon Manor) comprises a small group of properties including a large recently built manor house situated on the southern shore of Loch Garry with predominant north-westerly and westerly views across and up Loch Garry.

7.7.9 Receptor Locations B8 (Garrygualach) and B9 (Greenfield) comprise small, more isolated groupings of residential or farm properties in semi-wooded situations to the south of Loch Garry with relatively contained, partially filtered views of Loch Garry and surrounding hills and forest areas.

Properties on the outskirts of Invergarry

7.7.10 Receptor Location B10 includes a grouping of residential properties, a camping / caravan site, hotel and other buildings on the westerly outskirts of Invergarry with a variety of orientations and views. These are largely contained by landform and woodland within Glen Garry, but there are more open and elevated views from Faichem towards Ben Tee to the south.

Route-based Visual Receptors

7.7.11 Potential route-based visual receptors within the study area include those using public roads and recreational users of paths, tracks and other established walking routes. Views from the following routes have been identified within the study area for inclusion within the assessment (see **Figure 7.5** and **Appendix 7.2**).

Public Roads

7.7.12 Travellers on one public road have been included within the assessment:

- **R1 – C1144 Minor road:** Single track public road though Glen Garry, along the northern shores of Loch Garry and Loch Quoich leading to Kinloch Hourn. Views are variable, being more contained by woodland alongside Loch Garry and Loch Poulary, but typically more open alongside Loch Quoich, featuring the loch and surrounding mountains.

Recreational Routes

7.7.13 Walkers or other recreational users of the following recreational routes have been included within the assessment:

- **R2 – Mountain route to Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach:** Circular recreational ascent/descent route of two Munros to the north of Loch Quoich starting from the C1144 minor road. Views are variable, typically elevated and panoramic across Loch Quoich and surrounding mountains and valleys.

- **R3 – Mountain route to Gairich:** Recreational route from Quoich Dam to the Munro summit of Gairich. Views are westwards up Loch Quoich from the lowest reaches, elevated and predominantly south and east from the mid reaches and expansive in all directions from the summit.
- **R4 – Mountain Route to Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich:** Recreational route up to the Munro summit of Sgùrr Mhaoraich via Sgùrr Coire nan Eiricheallach, starting from the C1144 minor road. Views across Loch Quoich become elevated and expansive across surrounding mountains and valleys from the ridge and summit.
- **R5 – Mountain Route to Sgùrr Mòr and Sgùrr an Fhuarain:** Recreational route ascending two mountain summits situated to the south of Loch Quoich from Glendessarry to the south. Views are variable, generally across the southern hills but more expansive from the ridgeline and summits in other directions, including across Loch Quoich to the north-east.
- **R6 – Scottish Hill Track 257a from Glen Garry to Glen Shiel:** Recreational route through Glen Loyne starting from the C1144 minor road in Glen Garry at Allt na Ghobhainne. Views from this route are generally low vantage, across moorland and through the valleys, framed and focused on surrounding mountains.
- **R7 – Scottish Hill Track 247 from Strathan (Loch Arkaig) to Tomdoun (Glen Garry):** Recreational route from Tomdoun through Glen Kingie towards Strathan with views predominantly within woodland and forest, and some open views through the glens.
- **R8 – Scottish Hill Track 249a and 249b from Loch Quoich to Inverie (Loch Nevis):** Recreational route from the C1144 minor road following the north-western shore of Loch Quoich with open views across and down the loch to the south and east.
- **R9 – Scottish Hill Track 238b - The Dark Mile (Loch Arkaig) to Loch Garry / Scottish Hill Track 239 - Loch Garry to Laggan Locks:** Recreational route starting from the C1144 minor road and heading south-east through forestry with views largely contained within forest.
- **R10 – Scottish Hill Track 238a - The Dark Mile (Loch Arkaig) to Invergarry:** Recreational route through the south-eastern part of Glen Garry with views largely contained within forest.
- **R11 – Core Paths and other walking routes around Invergarry:** Recreational routes and informal woodland routes, including Core Path LO11.01 (Glenfinnan Estate Road), LO11.05 (Black Bridge to Mandally Road) and LO11.08 (Access to Whitebridge waymarked trails from Mandally) with woodland and river-side views.
- **R12 – The Cape Wrath Trail** is a long-distance route which follows parts of other routes through the study area including Route R9 and R10 - through Glen Garry and R6 towards Glen Loyne. These sections of route are linked by an additional section of rough path alongside the River Garry and a small section of the C1144 Public Road (Route R1).

Future Baseline

- 7.7.14 The baseline landscape and visual resource of the study area is not anticipated to alter noticeably in future years through the introduction of consented developments or other land use changes. Whilst there may be some continued changes to forestry or tree cover, this is not anticipated to lead to any very noticeable change to the wider landscape characteristics of the study area or visual amenity.

7.8 Mitigation by Design

- 7.8.1 Much of the mitigation for landscape and visual purposes has been embedded in the design for the Proposed Development. This is discussed in detail within **Chapter 2: The Proposed Development** and **Appendix 2.1: Sustainable Design Statement**.
- 7.8.2 Key design decisions which have been taken to mitigate landscape and visual effects are summarised as follows:
- The lower works have been targeted towards an existing brownfield area, a disused quarry previously used in the construction of the Quoich Hydroelectric Scheme. Within the upper reservoir area methods such as the location of borrow pits, compound areas and temporary

tracks within the area to be inundated would limit the influence of temporary works as far as possible.

- The positioning of dams has tried to minimise their prominence within the terrain including stepping back the Fearna dam from the crest of the ridge and applying a curved footprint to this dam. This would reduce the potential for a straight line on the skyline when seen from below and would help to tie the dam profile to the adjacent topography. Further refinements would be considered through detailed design to try and create profiles and shapes for the reservoir and dams that tie into the surrounding topography in as natural a way as possible.
- The front face of the dams would be too high and steep to turf but would be composed of local excavated rock which should reflect the similar tones and textures of scree areas on the surrounding mountain sides. As far as is practicable, rock for the visible front faces would be mixed to prevent changes in colour through excavated horizons giving a striped appearance. Weathering and growth of moss and lichens would be encouraged to soften the appearance of the dams over time, in a similar way to the existing Quoich Dam.
- Vegetation would be re-instated across all areas disturbed by the works and not required for operational use. A high standard of re-instatement would be key to re-establishing vegetation types appropriate to the receiving landscape. This would include the careful stripping, storage and replacement of existing turves and peat / soils to allow natural regeneration to occur. A suitable upland seed mix may be used to supplement natural regeneration and help to reduce erosion, whilst the native seed bank establishes, if considered necessary. Further details of reinstatement proposals are included in **Appendix 2.2: Outline CEMD**.
- Access tracks to the upper reservoir and powerhouse would be narrowed on completion to the minimum width that operational requirements would allow to reduce their visible footprint within the landscape. Narrowing of tracks would provide the opportunity to incorporate landform to help these assimilate into the surrounding landscape, including mounding on the lower side to reduce visibility of the running surface. The existing access track for Allt a' Mheil hydro scheme would also be narrowed to an ATV track with verges and cuttings reinstated to minimise the cumulative effects of multiple tracks leading up from the north shore of Loch Quoich.
- The re-aligned footpath to Spidean Mialach would be constructed with care and attention, using locally sourced materials to reflect existing mountain footpaths and stalkers' paths within the area. Special consideration would be given to the detailing of the route across the Fearna Dam to try to create an engaging experience where the Proposed Development can be experienced positively as part of the journey into the mountain environment.
- Planting of native woodland and scrub is proposed around the powerhouse and switchyard site, as well as earthworks to tie it into the surrounding topography in a natural way, which would help accommodate this area into the wider landscape.
- Planting is proposed alongside the Gearr Garry and landform is proposed where appropriate alongside the new section of the SAR which would help to minimise the appearance of this new section of track within the valley below Quoich Dam and set it within the landscape context.
- Landform is proposed adjacent to the site compound to reduce temporary visual impacts and effects of lighting on receptors within Glen Garry. Lighting mitigation such as shielding would also be used to minimise effects of lighting on residents at these properties and surrounding landscape areas during construction.
- Other measures for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and habitat mitigation including peatland restoration, rhododendron management and riparian planting would also help to improve aspects of the wider landscape setting within which the Proposed Development would be situated and may offset some landscape and visual effects (see **Chapter 8: Terrestrial Ecology** and **Appendix 8.7 – Outline BEMP**).

Programme of Landscape Mitigation Proposals

- 7.8.3 The LVIA assumes a scenario whereby all landscape mitigation planting would be planted at the end of the construction period, and therefore would have established by around 15 years of operation, as illustrated on the visualisations (**Volume 3a** and **Volume 3b**). The effects of mitigation could be enhanced by planting some areas earlier in the construction period, which is anticipated to be 5 - 6 years long. This could allow planting to provide a level of screening from the beginning of the

operational phase. The details of the planting programme would relate in detail to the construction programme, and if deemed possible, could be resolved and detailed in conjunction with the principal contractor. This scenario has not been assessed in the LVIA, but would be recommended, where possible, for areas providing particular landscape and visual benefits, including some areas around the powerhouse and along the new section of the SAR beside Gearr Garry.

7.9 Potential Significant Effects: Landscape

- 7.9.1 This section provides the key findings of the assessment of effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character and designated and protected landscapes within the study area during construction, and during the operational phase, in accordance with the effects criteria outlined in **Table 7.6**. The assessment of landscape character is presented first, as this is used to feed into the assessment of effects on designated and protected landscapes.
- 7.9.2 The detailed assessment of effects for LCTs is provided in **Appendix 7.3** and for designated and protected landscapes in **Appendices 7.4** and **7.5**.

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

- 7.9.3 The detailed assessment of landscape character has focused on four LCTs (one of which has been split into two sub-areas). Predicted effects are summarised below with an emphasis on predicted significant effects.

Landscape Character Effects during Construction

- 7.9.4 During construction, significant effects are predicted to occur within two LCTs which would contain the majority of construction activity for the Proposed Development:
- LCT 237: Rocky Moorland – Lochaber; and
 - LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type A)

LCT 237: Rocky Moorland – Lochaber

- 7.9.5 This LCT would be affected directly by the main construction compound and existing sections of track which would form part of the SAR which would be set within a managed, forested area. There would also be direct effects from the construction and use of a new section of track for the SAR and public road widening within a more open, valley area below the Quoich Dam. It would also be affected indirectly by the appearance of construction activities within the landscape context to the north. These would include the powerhouse area, which would feature at relatively close proximity on the opposite shore of Loch Quoich (see VL2, **Figure V3a-2d** and **V3b-2b, 2f and 2g**), and works at the upper reservoir area above, typically affecting open and elevated areas more widely across the LCT.
- 7.9.6 The main direct effects on this area would be localised to the valley area below Quoich Dam where the new section of track and road upgrading would take place. This is an area where existing infrastructure around the Quoich Dam, including the public road and OHL monopoles are already influential. However, this would add to these features, creating a busier and more construction focused setting within the open valley during this temporary phase. The effects of the main construction compound and traffic using existing sections of the SAR would also contribute to this effect but would not appear very out of place within the forested setting.
- 7.9.7 Elsewhere, construction activities associated with the lower and upper works within the adjacent LCT would contribute to a greater sense of development in the wider landscape context. This would generally be experienced within the context of existing development and landscape management, including the Quoich Dam and associated drawdown around Loch Quoich, and OHL transmission towers. However, the upper access track and dam works would draw development to higher elevations and would lead to infrastructure being experienced more widely. Construction works would appear noticeable in long views and would introduce a new focus of activity, particularly at the upper reservoir area, which would reduce the sense of remoteness within this LCT.

- 7.9.8 The landscape effect is predicted be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction.

LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type A)

- 7.9.9 The majority of the Proposed Development, including the upper reservoir, dams, access tracks (including widening of a section of the C1144 minor road), and powerhouse and switchyard would be located within and directly affect this LCT.
- 7.9.10 The level of effect would vary greatly within this LCT, with direct effects in some parts, and other more distant areas being indirectly affected or not affected at all. Direct effects during construction would be focused within the area surrounding the Proposed Development, including the corrie areas and surrounding slopes and summits containing the upper reservoir works, and loch shore areas around the proposed powerhouse area and widened section of the public road. These two areas of activity would be linked by the proposed access track.
- 7.9.11 At the upper reservoir in particular, the character would be changed from one generally defined by undeveloped, mountainous terrain to a busy area of activity and excavation. Construction works would be less out of place at the powerhouse area in the context of the more managed and developed loch shore and would be situated partially on an existing brownfield site used during the construction of the Quoich hydro scheme. However, the scale of these works would lead to them being prominent and distracting within the local landscape. These activities would lead to further, indirect effects across a wider area, notably the facing slopes up to the summit area of Gairich on the opposite side of the loch and would form a focused, but noticeable feature (see VL5, **Figure V3a-5d** and **Figure V3b-5b, 5f and 5g**). This may form a distraction more extensively across parts of the southern and western shoreline of Loch Quoich, and elevated slopes and summits to the south-west, likely to affect the sense of remoteness and wildness (refer to **Appendix 7.4**, and paragraph 7.9.32).
- 7.9.12 A localised **Major Adverse** (significant) effect is predicted within the immediate context of the Proposed Development site during construction. This is predicted to contribute to a wider **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect across this LCT in general.

Other Effects which would be Not Significant

- 7.9.13 All other construction period effects on LCTs would be not significant:
- 7.9.14 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for LCT 235 (Broad Forested Strath), where there would be some direct effects due to the upgrade works associated with the SAR and construction traffic along this route, as well as the main construction compound. However, due to the forested character of this LCT, this would be experienced within a relatively localised area and would not appear dissimilar to existing forestry activities. Indirect effects associated with construction activities at the Fearn dam may also be experienced within the wider context of some more westerly parts of this LCT, likely to create a localised focus in views along the valley. However, this would be small and distant, and unlikely to noticeably change the character of this LCT.
- 7.9.15 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is also predicted within LCT 238 (Rugged Massif – Lochaber), where construction activities associated with the upper works and traffic on the track to the upper works would affect a relatively small part of the northerly / north-westerly context, introducing movement and activity. Although these effects would be indirect, they would form a noticeable feature in this context, likely to increase the sense human intervention in the landscape and slightly reduce some of the remote qualities of this LCT. However, this is not likely to lead to any fundamental change to the intrinsic landscape character.
- 7.9.16 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is also predicted within LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks) – sub-type B, where there would be indirect effects resulting from the appearance of construction works associated with the upper reservoir, dams, track and powerhouse within the eastern landscape context. This would result in an increased sense of development and activity and slightly reduced remoteness within the wider context. However, this would be relatively small and distant within the backdrop of the wider LCT where the local landform and features contribute a greater influence to the character of the area.

Landscape Character Effects during Operation

- 7.9.17 During the operation of the Proposed Development, with the absence of the activities and movement associated with construction works, significant effects would reduce in extent and magnitude and would become more localised. A localised significant effect is predicted to continue within LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber) - Sub-type A, where the main constructed parts of the Proposed Development would be located, but effects to all other LCTs are predicted to be non-significant.

LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type A)

- 7.9.18 During operation, the dams and reservoir, including drawdown areas, would become a noticeable feature from elevated locations around the surrounding corrie and ridge of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, and areas on the opposite shore, up to the summit of Gairich, giving an impression of a much more managed landscape in the local context, and affecting the sense of remoteness and wildness (see VL3 (**Figures V3a-3a-f** and **V3b-3a-i**), VL4 (**Figures V3a-4a-f** and **V3b-4a-i**) and VL5 (**Figures V3a-4a-f** and **V3b-5a-k**)).
- 7.9.19 The dams and/or powerhouse area would also be seen more distantly in some panoramic views from summits and along Loch Quoich from the west and south, where their scale and linear appearance would contrast with the surrounding rugged landform. However, this is a large scale landscape which is able to accommodate this type of change to some degree and the prominence of these features would reduce at greater distances, where the characteristics of the landscape would start to be more associated with the wider context of surrounding peaks (see VL8 (**Figures V3a-8a-e** and **V3b-8a-h**) and VL10 (**Figures V3a-10a-e** and **V3b-10a-h**)). In some areas to the north-west of Loch Quoich, the Fearna Dam would occasionally modify the skyline, although the slightly curved shape of the dam seen at this angle would generally tie smoothly into the existing terrain and help to minimise its prominence (see VL9 (**Figures V3a-9a-3** and **V3b-9a-h**)). The appearance of the dams would be expected to weather slightly over time.
- 7.9.20 The powerhouse and switching station would largely be experienced in low level views from the glen floor and the shore of Loch Quoich, and facing slopes and summit areas of Gairich, although these effects would be relatively localised. They would most often be seen in the context of Quoich Dam and would partly occupy an existing brownfield quarry area which was used during the construction of the existing dam. Mitigation measures are proposed around these areas to reduce the prominence of the permanent elements, including planting and earthworks and a considered design for the building, which would feature facing with rock excavated for the Proposed Development and a green roof. Over time, these measures would help this area become well accommodated within the surrounding landscape context (see VL1 and VL2 (**Figures V3a-1a-e** and **V3b-1a-h** and **Figures V3a-2a-f** and **V3b-2a-k**)) and would minimise wider effects (see **Appendix 2.1: Sustainable Design Statement**).
- 7.9.21 A *localised Moderate Adverse* (significant) effect during operation (after 15 years) is predicted within the area around the Proposed Development, including the containing corrie area up to the summits and ridge of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, and within around 4 km towards the summit area of Gairich. The effect on the wider LCT as a whole is predicted to be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant).

Other Effects which would be Not Significant

- 7.9.22 With the completion of construction activities, effects during operation are predicted to be non-significant for all other LCTs.
- 7.9.23 There would be a **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect within LCT 237 (Rocky Moorland – Lochaber) during operation. The Fearna dam would become a permanent feature within the wider landscape setting to the north and north-west of this LCT and may slightly reduce the sense of remoteness from some areas. The powerhouse and switching station would also form new features within the context of existing infrastructure seen on the north side of Loch Quoich, affecting relatively localised areas to the south of the loch. Over time, proposed mitigation planting would soften the appearance of this area, and the permanent features would not appear noticeably out of

place within the context of other, existing development in this area (see VL2 (**Figures V3a-2a-f and V3b-2a-k**)). While there would be a noticeable increase in infrastructure within a localised part of the context of this LCT, the Proposed Development is not predicted to lead to a noticeable change to its intrinsic qualities.

- 7.9.24 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted within LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber) – Sub-type B. Although the dams would become a new permanent feature within the wider landscape context to the east, the dam faces would weather over time and at this distance would reflect the tones and colours of other rock and scree areas of the mountain backdrop. The Fearn Dam would slightly alter the easterly skyline when seen from some areas, however its curved profile would help tie it into the adjacent terrain (see VL7, **Figures V3a-7a-e and V3b-7a-h**). Overall, the Proposed Development is likely to appear distant, within a different landscape area and likely to have limited effect on the characteristics in the local context.
- 7.9.25 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is also predicted for LCT 238 (Rugged Massif – Lochaber), where the dams would introduce new man-made structures into the north or north-westerly landscape context in the longer term. Their horizontal structure and large scale may appear somewhat out of place against the more rugged landscape backdrop. However, they would not encroach on the skyline and would affect only a small part of a very expansive landscape context, experienced from elevated areas.
- 7.9.26 The effect within LCT 235 (Broad Forested Strath) would be **Negligible**, as the Proposed Development is considered unlikely to lead to any perceptible change to the key characteristics of this LCT in the longer term.

Assessment of Effects on Designated and Protected Landscapes

Knoydart NSA

- 7.9.27 Within the study area, the NSA (see **Figure 7.3**) sits within LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber) – Sub-type B, which comprises the landscape type most representative of the Special Landscape Qualities of the NSA. A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect has been predicted within this LCT during both construction and operation. Construction activities would introduce movement and activity into a relatively focused part of the wider landscape, drawing attention to the area of the Proposed Development in easterly views. In the longer term, the dams would form a new permanent feature within the wider landscape context and may become a focus due to their horizontal structure which would contrast with the rugged surrounding landform. However, the Proposed Development is likely to appear distant, within a different landscape area and likely to have little effect on the characteristics in the local context.
- 7.9.28 A review of the Proposed Development in relation to the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the NSA is provided in **Table 7.8** below:

Table 7.8: Review of Effects on SLQs of the Knoydart NSA

SLQ	Likely Effects
One of the remotest places on mainland Britain	The Proposed Development would introduce man-made structures into the wider landscape context to the east. This may slightly increase the presence of human activity and influence within the wider setting of a localised part of the NSA. However, it is likely to appear relatively distant, would not improve physical accessibility into the NSA, and would be experienced in a different context from the more remote landscapes to the west. The effect on this SLQ during construction or operation is therefore not predicted to be significant.
One of Scotland's last great wild areas	The introduction of large man-made structures within the wider landscape context to the east would increase the presence of contemporary land use and may detract from some of the wild qualities of this landscape (see Appendix 7.4). However, it would usually be seen within the context of other existing man-made features within the NSA (such as the overhead transmission line to Skye) and other indirect influences outwith the NSA including drawdown around Loch Quoich. It would be experienced in relatively distant, easterly views from a localised part of the NSA. There is therefore not predicted to be any significant effect on this SLQ during construction or operation
Some of the grandest coastal and mountain scenery on the west coast	The Proposed Development would be experienced in views from a localised part of the eastern edge of the NSA out towards surrounding mountains to the east, which form part of the wider landscape context. This would affect the setting of mountains which are experienced within these views. However, it would appear relatively distant and would not affect the core mountain or coastal areas within the NSA. The effect on this SLQ during construction or operation is therefore not predicted to be significant.
The majesty and extent of the mountains experienced from sea level	The Proposed Development would not have any influence on this SLQ.
Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis, dramatic but contrasting sea lochs	The Proposed Development would not have any influence on this SLQ.
Views across to the Inner Hebrides	The Proposed Development would not have any influence on this SLQ.

- 7.9.29 As detailed above, no significant effects are predicted within the study area for any of the identified SLQs of the NSA. Taking account of the landscape character effects which have been identified for LCT 239 (Sub-type B) within the NSA, the effect is therefore anticipated to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during both construction and operation.

WLA 18. Kinlochhourn – Knoydart - Morar

- 7.9.30 Detailed assessment of WLA 18 is included in **Appendix 7.4** which considers the potential for effects on the overall strength of wildness within the WLA and the Wild Land Qualities (WLQs) identified by NatureScot. In agreement with NatureScot, three of the five WLQs were included for detailed assessment with WLQs 4 and 5 being scoped out due to being geographically focused on parts of the WLA outwith the study area.
- 7.9.31 The upper reservoir area including dams, reservoir and drawdown, and most of the access track leading to this area would be within the WLA, close to its eastern edge. The powerhouse and switchyard area on the shore of Loch Quoich would be just outside the WLA, as the loch is predominantly excluded from the WLA, except for its westernmost end.
- 7.9.32 During construction, the increased activity and presence of large scale plant, excavations, working areas and structures would affect the sense of naturalness, increase presence of modern artefacts and contemporary land use and reduce the perceptual responses of sense of solitude, accessibility and remoteness. This is predicted to lead to significant effects to parts of the WLA where direct

- effects, and close indirect effects would occur. On the northern side of Loch Quoich, a **Major Adverse** (significant) effect to the strength of wildness is predicted within and around the areas directly affected by works at the upper reservoir. This includes the close summit and ridge areas of Spidean Mialach where the works at the upper reservoir and dams would interrupt the connection to the remainder of the WLA to the west. This would graduate to a **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect around the summit ridge of Gleouraich where the Proposed Development would be very prominent, but the connection to the wider WLA would be maintained uninterrupted. A **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is also predicted on the southern side of Loch Quoich, up to the summit area of Gairich, where the works would be slightly more distant, but very prominent, and the baseline strength of wildness is slightly lower.
- 7.9.33 Effects on the remaining parts of the study area where there would be intervisibility with the Proposed Development are not predicted to be significant during construction. A **Moderate – Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for other summit and elevated areas along the southern side of Loch Quoich beyond around 4 – 5 km from the upper reservoir area and up to around 10 km, and at the head of the loch. In these areas, occasional intervisibility with the construction works across facing slopes and higher summits would reduce the sense of remoteness, and draw the perceived edge of the WLA closer, but within a context where other contemporary land use is already seen, either locally around northern Loch Quoich or more distantly but clearly beyond the WLA boundary to the east (including the Beinneun Wind Farm) (see VL10: Sgùrr Mòr (**Figure V3a-10a-e and V3b-10a-h**)). In these areas, the closer connection to a wider expanse of wild land experienced to the west and south would be retained and therefore this effect is not predicted to be significant.
- 7.9.34 The effect would be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) across other elevated areas to the north of Loch Quoich, and areas to the south-east, where the Proposed Development would be less visible, forming a more localised feature within a wider context, and where existing built artefacts and contemporary land use are already more noticeable, reducing the baseline strength of wildness.
- 7.9.35 During operation, the reduced level of human activities at the reservoir and dam sites would lead to less notable effects on contemporary land use and sense of solitude, and mitigation measures would help to localise some of the effects of features such as tracks. However, the presence of the dams and management of the inundation area, and to some extent, the appearance of the powerhouse would still lead to very noticeable modern artefacts, contemporary land use and consequent effects on perceived naturalness. This would lead to a localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect within the localised corrie area contained by the enclosing ridgeline of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach and also around the summit area of Spidean Mialach where the Proposed Development may lead to a sense of separation from the wider WLA. This significant effect would also cover the north facing slopes of Giarich, up to around 4 km from the Proposed Development but would graduate to a **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect on the summits of Gairich and Glouraich where the connection to the wider WLA to the south and west would be maintained, and there is already a strong sense of being at the eastern edge of the WLA due to the proximity of forestry areas to the east.
- 7.9.36 For more distant areas, including slopes and summits to the west of Loch Quoich, and more isolated summits to the south, the effect is predicted to be no greater than **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) and generally **Minor Adverse** (not significant). The Proposed Development would sometimes be prominent and may be seen to more clearly define the eastern edge of the WLA, but it would affect a part of the context where generally existing artefacts and contemporary land use (including drawdown areas around Loch Quoich) are already present. It would be a localised feature within this context, where surrounding mountains in other directions provide more of an influence to the presence of the physical attributes and perceptual responses which contribute to wild land.
- 7.9.37 These effects are predicted to lead to localised significant effects on two of the three WLQs assessed during construction and one during operation. These effects are summarised as follows:
- WLQ 1: Mountain ranges and glens of varying landform, but all arresting, with towering, steep and rugged slopes and striking physical features:*
- 7.9.38 Significant effects on this WLQ are predicted during construction within the localised area surrounding the Proposed Development, which is strongly characterised by mountains. However, the

extent of significant effects is expected to reduce during operation to areas more directly affected, and more contained by surrounding slopes. The perceptual responses associated with wild land are likely to remain generally strong on the higher slopes and summits, where the wider mountain landscape and rugged terrain to north, south and west has a greater influence. Significant effects are predicted as follows:

7.9.39 During construction:

- A *localised* **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect around the upper reservoir facing slopes of Gleouraich and Gairich (up to around 4 - 5 km from the upper reservoir area), and around the summit area of Spidean Mialach, which would be somewhat disconnected from the main body of the WLA to the west; and
- A *localised* **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect across summit areas of Gleouraich and Gairich, where construction activities would be very prominent within the setting of Spidean Mialach, but connection to the wider WLA in other directions would be retained.

7.9.40 During operation:

- A *localised* **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect within the area containing the upper reservoir including the slopes of Glouraich and Gairich (up to around 4 km from the upper reservoir area), and summit area of Spidean Mialach.

WLQ 3: Spectacular deep glens and lochs cut through the high mountains and hills, strongly influencing visibility, remoteness and access through the landscape:

7.9.41 Significant effects to this WLQ are predicted during the construction phase only. These would be experienced within a localised area on the south side of Loch Quoich, where the activities at the upper reservoir site and dam area, linked to the works at the powerhouse, would draw contemporary land use higher into the mountain setting of Loch Quoich. This may diminish the perceived height of the mountain backdrop of Spidean Mialach and affect the deep setting of the loch in this localised area. Significant effects are predicted as follows:

7.9.42 During construction:

- A *localised* **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect around the north facing slopes of Gairich where the lower and upper works would be seen concurrently; and

7.9.43 During operation:

- The effect without the added activities of construction is predicted to be not significant.

7.9.44 All other effects on WLQs would not be significant.

7.9.45 Considering the effect on the WLA as a whole, the longer-term significant effects associated with the operation of Proposed Development would be localised, affecting an area close to the edge of the WLA where there are already some influences which reduce the physical attributes of perceived naturalness, absence of modern artefacts and contemporary land use. The area affected comprises a group of mountains which define the easterly extent of the WLA around Loch Quoich through a distinct change in physical terrain. It is considered that this area would continue to be perceived as part of the WLA, despite the presence of the Proposed Development and associated significant effects because of the distinction formed by the rugged and challenging terrain of these mountains and associated sense of risk and awe. Although some degree of disconnect has been identified to the summit areas of Spidean Mialach, the attributes and perceptual responses of wild land would still characterise this peak, which would continue to be viewed as a part of the WLA due to its connection via the rugged ridgeline to Gleouraich, visual connection to other mountains to the north, and by its clearly established position as the most easterly of the mountain group around Loch Quoich, forming a defined edge to the WLA.

Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA

7.9.46 Effects on the SLA are described in detail within **Appendix 7.5** and are summarised below.

- 7.9.47 Most of the Proposed Development, apart from the Southern Access Route (SAR) and construction compound would be situated within the SLA. Significant effects are predicted to the landscape character within the SLA during both construction and operation within close proximity of the Proposed Development, as detailed within the Landscape Assessment (**Appendix 7.3** and summarised in paragraphs 7.9.3 to 7.9.21 above). These landscape effects would be likely to lead to similar significant landscape effects to the character of the SLA, largely focused around the eastern end of Loch Quoich and mostly relating to effects on wild qualities and remoteness.
- 7.9.48 The Proposed Development also has potential to affect the sense of arrival within the SLA from the east, where the Fearna dam would be seen on the skyline when approaching along the C1144 minor road, and the powerhouse and switchyard area would be passed at close proximity. However, this edge of the SLA is already affected by the Quoich Dam and associated areas of drawdown around the shore of Loch Quoich, which provide a precedent for hydro development, as well as other features such as the Skye transmission line, which contribute to a relatively managed character in this localised area. The powerhouse and switchyard would be partially situated within a brownfield quarry area used in the construction of the Quoich Dam. Although the features would be large, with proposed earthworks and growth of planting over time, this would not lead to a very noticeable change in the landscape characteristics of this area.
- 7.9.49 The scale and distinctive topographical change of the mountains which define the eastern edge of the SLA at this point would still be present and it is considered that, although there would be a significant effect to the landscape character within this localised, easterly part of the SLA, the area would still form an important contribution to the SLA as a whole.
- 7.9.50 These effects are predicted to lead to locally significant effects on the following two SQs:
- “Much of the area represents the “back door” into Knoydart, Glenshiel and Kintail. At Kinlochhourn and the junction of Glen Dessary and Glen Pean at Strathan, long distance walking routes proceed west. Apart from the sporting estates and a limited number of forestry and hydro workers, the main users of this area are hillwalkers and wilderness enthusiasts who typically engage in multi-day treks”; and
 - “Quiet, uninhabited glens and isolated peaks create a landscape experience where the sense of wildness, and tranquillity are key qualities.”
- 7.9.51 During operation, with the completion of activities associated with construction, the level of effects and area likely to be significantly affected would reduce. During this phase, without the additional movement, noise and activity of construction works, the effect on the SQ “...the “back door” into Knoydart...” is not predicted to be significant, as the experience of journeying westwards towards a more remote and wild landscape would not be substantially changed by the Proposed Development, and the relationship to the more remote landscapes of Knoydart would generally be uninterrupted by the Proposed Development.
- 7.9.52 A localised significant effect is predicted to continue during operation for the SQ “*Quiet uninhabited glens and isolated peaks...*” affecting an area close to the edge of the SLA where the upper reservoir and dam would be prominent. However, overall the contribution of this effect on the SLA as a whole is not predicted to be significant. Although the Proposed Development would change this localised area, leading to a greater influence of development and management, the strong topographical distinction of the mountains would continue to establish the boundary of the SLA, with very limited change to the approach to the SLA from the east.
- 7.9.53 The overall effect of the Proposed Development on the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA is predicted to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction. There would be a localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect during operation but the operational effect on the SLA as a whole would be **Minor Adverse** (not significant).

Summary of Landscape Effects

- 7.9.54 Predicted landscape effects are summarised in **Table 7.9** below:

Table 7.9: Summary of Landscape Effects

LCT or Designated / Protected Landscape	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Operation)					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
LCTs												
LCT 235: Broad Forested Strath		•					•					
LCT 237: Rocky Moorland - Lochaber				•					•			
LCT 238: Rugged Massif - Lochaber		•						•				
LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type A)				•		L			•	L		
LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type B)		•						•				
Designated and Protected Landscapes												
Knoydart NSA		•						•				
WLA 18. Kinlochhourn - Knoydart - Morar		L	L	L	L	L		L	L	L		
Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA				L				•		L		

Notes:

All effects are adverse

L denotes an effect which would be localised only.

7.10 Potential Significant Effects: Visual

- 7.10.1 The detailed assessment of effects on the visual receptors is presented in **Appendix 7.2**. Predicted effects are summarised below with an emphasis on predicted significant effects.

Assessment of Effects on Building-based Receptors

- 7.10.2 Ten building-based receptor locations have been included in the visual assessment (see **Figure 7.5**), comprising individual buildings or groups of buildings and associated outdoor spaces where a view of the Proposed Development would potentially be obtained. These receptor locations are all situated to the east of the Quoich Dam, with effects primarily associated with the SAR and temporary main site construction compound. Only two building receptor locations (B1 (Kingie) and B2 (Poulary and Aultnaslat)) would have theoretical views of the Fearn Dam which would be peripheral and mostly filtered by trees. Effects would therefore be mostly temporary, and none are likely to be significant.
- 7.10.3 Predicted effects are summarised below:

Building-based Receptors during Construction

- 7.10.4 During construction, there would be no significant effects for building-based receptors. The following non-significant effects are predicted:
- A **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for receptors at B2 (Poulary and Aultnaslat). The site compound area (potentially including lighting during hours of darkness) and SAR would feature in southerly views across Glen Garry from some of these properties, occasionally filtered by woodland. There would also be some views west towards the Fearna dam on the relatively distant skyline, with potential views of cranes and other construction equipment around the dam site.
 - A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for receptors at B1 (Kingie). There would be filtered main views of track construction and traffic along the SAR south of the glen from these properties, and possible side views of construction of the Fearna dam on the skyline to the west from westernmost properties, but these views would be relatively limited due to surrounding trees.
- 7.10.5 Effects are predicted to be **Negligible** for all other building-based receptors, with only some glimpsed views towards the SAR likely, limited by a combination of trees and landform. Any visibility of the works at the Fearna dam would be very distant. This is considered unlikely to lead to any adverse effect on the visual amenity.

Building-based Receptors during Operation

- 7.10.6 During operation, the effects on Receptor Locations B2 (Poulary and Aultnaslat) and B1 (Kingie) are expected to both be **Minor Adverse** (not significant). There would be limited side views of the Fearna dam from these locations (see VL6 (**Figures V3a-6a-e and V3b-6a-h**)), but any traffic using the SAR would be unlikely to be distinguishable from existing forest traffic and the site compound area would be reinstated.
- 7.10.7 All other potential visual effects for building-based receptors would be **Negligible**.

Assessment of Effects on Route-based Receptors

- 7.10.8 Eleven routes have been considered in the visual assessment (see **Figure 7.5**), comprising one minor road and a variety of recreational routes where a view of the Proposed Development would potentially be obtained.
- 7.10.9 Predicted effects are detailed in **Appendix 7.2** and summarised below with an emphasis on predicted significant effects.

Route-based Receptors during Construction

- 7.10.10 During construction, significant effects are predicted for one public road and users of two recreational routes which would either be partly used for construction access and/or would be located in close proximity to the construction of the Proposed Development:
- 7.10.11 A **Major Adverse** (significant) effect during construction is predicted for users of Route R2 (Mountain Route to Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach). Users of this route would obtain close views of construction activities at the upper reservoir, overlooking from the ridge above, and seen when ascending parts of the route on the approach to the upper reservoir. Part of this route would also be diverted around the construction works (see **Figure 14.3**). The detailed effects on this route are discussed in detail in **Appendix 7.2, Annex A**.
- 7.10.12 A **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect during construction is predicted for travellers on Route R1 (C1144 Minor road, between the A87 and Kinloch Hourn). Around 2.2 km of this road would be directly affected where it would be widened between the meeting with the SAR and upper access track, and there would also be more open views of the SAR between Kingie and Quoich Dam leading to close views of construction works and traffic. Construction works at the powerhouse and

switching station would also be seen in close proximity, and construction at the Fearna dam area would be visible intermittently on the skyline when approaching from the east and west.

- 7.10.13 A **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect during construction is predicted for users of Route R3 (Mountain Route to Gairich). There would be changing views of the Proposed Development from different parts of this route. Although views towards the Proposed Development would be partly or fully concealed by landform from some sections, the lower works area and Fearna dam would be noticeable in views across Loch Quoich from some lower parts of the route (see VL2, **Figure V3a-2d** and **Figure V3b-2b, f and g**), whilst construction of the dams and reservoir area would be more prominent from the highest parts of the route approaching the summit (see VL5, **Figure V3a-5d** and **Figure V3b-5b, f and g**).
- 7.10.14 All other construction effects for route-based receptors would not be significant:
- A **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect during construction is predicted for users of Route R4 (Mountain Route to Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich), Route R5 (Mountain Route to Sgùrr Mòr and Sgùrr an Fhuarain), and Route R8 (Scottish Hill Track 249a and 249b from Loch Quoich to Inverie (Loch Nevis). Construction at the upper reservoir area would feature in easterly views from parts of these routes situated towards the western part of Loch Quoich, including views from elevated summits of Routes R4 and R5, and framed views along Loch Quoich from Route R7 and to some extent R5.
 - A **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect during construction is also predicted for users of Route R7 (Scottish Hill Track 247 from Strathan (Loch Arkaig) to Tomdoun (Glen Garry)). This route through managed forest plantation is of lower sensitivity but would be directly affected for around 4 km as part of the SAR and also passes close to the main construction compound, leading to close up, short-term views of construction works and traffic. Construction works at the Fearna dam may also be perceptible on the skyline to the north-west from two short sections of this route.
 - A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted during construction for Route R9 (Scottish Hill Track 238b - The Dark Mile (Loch Arkaig) to Loch Garry / Scottish Hill Track 239 - Loch Garry to Laggan Locks), Route R10 (Scottish Hill Track 238a - The Dark Mile (Loch Arkaig) to Invergarry) and Route R11 (Core Paths and other walking routes around Invergarry)). All of these routes would be directly affected to some extent by the SAR leading to close up views of upgrading works and / or construction traffic sharing the route.
 - A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is also predicted for Route R12 (Cape Wrath Trail) which follows parts of Routes 9 and 10 as well as other paths through Glen Garry, with users obtaining similar views.
 - The construction phase effect for Route R6 (Scottish Hill Track 257a from Glen Garry to Glen Shiel), would be **Negligible** because construction works would be perceptible only from a very short section of this route.

Route-based Receptors during Operation

- 7.10.15 Significant visual effects are predicted to continue into the operational phase for one of the eleven routes included in the assessment:
- A **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is predicted for Route R2 (Mountain route to Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach) in the longer term where close up views of the dams and upper reservoir would be obtained (see Annex A). The dams would be very prominent from sections of this route whilst parts of the ridgeline would overlook the reservoir area at close proximity (see VL3, **Figures V3a-3a-f** and **Figures V3b-3a-i** and VL4, **Figures V3a-4a-f** and **Figures V3b-4a-i**). The route would also be diverted to follow the top of the Fearna dam or optionally a route around the foot of the dam. Although the permanent features of the Proposed Development would remain very visible during operation, and drawdown would form a likely detracting feature in elevated views, without the added distraction of construction activities the level of effect would be reduced. Expansive views would continue to be obtained of surrounding mountainous areas and the diverted section across the Fearna dam would enable new, elevated views over Loch Quoich to be experienced. A more detailed sequential analysis of

visual effects from this route is provided in **Appendix 7.2, Annex A: Sequential Analysis of Mountain Route to Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach**.

7.10.16 All other effects for route-based receptors during operation would not be significant:

- A **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted during operation for recreational users of Routes R2 (Mountain route to Gairich), R5 (Mountain Route to Sgùrr Mòr and Sgùrr an Fhuarain), and R7 (Scottish Hill Track 249a and 249b from Loch Quoich to Inverie (Loch Nevis)) where the dams would form noticeable new features but would only be seen from parts of the routes where expansive and panoramic views are seen in other directions.
- The effect on travellers on Route R1 (C1144 Minor Road) is predicted to reduce to **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation. Widened sections of road would be expected to soften over time and appear unexceptional within the context whilst planting around the powerhouse area and new section of SAR would soften and reduce the visibility of these features over time (see VL1, **Figures V3a-1a-e** and **Figures V3b-2a-h**). There would be some limited visibility of the Fearna dam from short sections of the route, but its curved profile would tie into the adjacent landform and would reduce its prominence within the wider view, as illustrated by visualisations from VL6 (see **Figures V3a-6a-e** and **Figures V3b-6a-h**), VL7 (see **Figures V3a-7a-e** and **Figures V3b-7a-h**) and VL9 (see **Figures V3a-9a-e** and **Figures V3b-9a-h**).
- A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for Route R4 (Mountain Route to Sgùrr a' Mhaoraich), where the Fearna dam would become a visible feature on the easterly skyline, and Routes R7 (Scottish Hill Track 247 from Strathan (Loch Arkaig) to Tomdoun (Glen Garry)) and R12 (Cape Wrath Trail) where it would appear on the west or north-westerly skyline. The dam would be seen from short sections of these routes but is considered unlikely to form any noticeable distraction as it would be relatively distant and the curved profile of the dam would help it sit more naturally in the landscape and appear less prominent.
- Effects for users of all other routes are predicted to be **Negligible** during operation because it is predicted that the Proposed Development would be a barely perceptible, or unremarkable feature within views from these routes.

Summary of Visual Effects

7.10.17 Visual effects are summarised in **Table 7.10** below:

Table 7.10: Summary of Visual Effects

Visual Receptor Location	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Operation)					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
Building-based Receptors	8	1	1	-	-	-	8	2	-	-	-	-
Route-based Receptors	1	4	4	1	1	1	4	4	3	1	-	-
Totals	9	5	5	1	1	1	12	6	3	1	-	-

Note: All effects are adverse

7.11 Potential Significant Effects: Cumulative Landscape and Visual Assessment

- 7.11.1 Cumulative effects are those which occur where the effects of more than one development of a similar type within a particular landscape or view combine to produce a greater level of effect.
- 7.11.2 A search for similar development types with the potential to affect the landscape character and visual amenity within the study area was undertaken. The following developments were identified for inclusion within the Cumulative Assessment:
- The Consented Coire Glas pumped Storage Hydro Scheme (Application ref: ECU00000577 / 18/01564/S36), on the western shore of Loch Lochy;
 - The Proposed Coire Glas Grid Connection Overhead Line (Application ref: ECU00004736 / 23/02874/S37), east of Loch Garry;
 - The Proposed Skye Reinforcement Project (Application ref: ECU00003395 / 22/04580/S37), which would run along the northern side of Loch Quoich and Glen Garry;
 - The Proposed Quoich Tee OHL Replacement and Switching Station near Kingie (various components) (Application ref: ECU00005024 / 24/03323/S37 and 24/01302/FUL); and
 - The Beinn Bheag Wind Farm (currently at Scoping Stage and therefore assessed as a theoretical development with turbines up to 230 m in height but with no fixed design) (Application ref: 24/03581/SCOP).
- 7.11.3 The cumulative assessment has considered effects during operation only, as it is difficult to predict when construction works would take place and what these would involve. Only those receptors expected to experience Minor effects or greater from the Proposed Development have been included in the cumulative assessment as it is considered that a Negligible effect could not contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

Landscape Character

- 7.11.4 Most components of the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme would be located outside of the study area, mainly within LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks), with some of the access tracks located within the eastern end of the study area within LCT 235 (Broad Forested Strath). While LCT 239 would also be directly affected by the Proposed Development, with the upper reservoir and lower works area located within this LCT, these effects would occur within a separate part of the LCT, unconnected to that where Coire Glas would be located. As such, there would be limited potential for intervisibility with the main constructed elements of the Proposed Development (the dams and powerhouse) from this part of the LCT. Any shared intervisibility with both developments is likely to be very limited due to the distance between them (18km). The consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme would be located east of the Ben Tee ridgeline, with most intervisibility focused to the north and east within the Great Glen whilst the Proposed Development would affect areas mostly around Loch Quoich. Similarly, potential sequential effects would also be limited, due to the distance that would be required to travel to experience the effects of both developments. Therefore, although the presence of both of these large scale developments within parts of LCT 239 may result in a greater sense of development within this landscape type overall, they would be very unlikely to be experienced together. They would be located in different landscape contexts, with the part of the LCT in which Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme would be located being more associated with the Great Glen, and that where Proposed Development would be located being more associated with the remote glens to the west.
- 7.11.5 The Coire Glas Grid Connection would connect the pumped storage scheme to the grid via an overhead line which would pass to the east of Loch Garry. This would lead to some greater sense of development within areas which would be affected by the Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme. However, the presence of this development would be unlikely to result in any further potential for cumulative effects with the Proposed Development due to the distance between the areas affected.

- 7.11.6 Closer to the Proposed Development, the proposed Skye Reinforcement Project would run on the northern side of Glen Garry and Loch Quoich, north of the C1144 minor road. It would pass relatively close to the powerhouse within LCT 239 and would be experienced in combination with the Proposed Development. The Quoich Tee OHL Replacement and Switching Station would be located in the valley to the west of Kingie within LCT 235 (Broad Forested Strath). Both of these developments would involve the replacement of existing, similar OHLs, with some localised additional infrastructure relating to the Quoich Tee development. They would therefore have very little effect on landscape character, other than being in a slightly different location. These developments are therefore unlikely to lead to any noticeable change from the existing baseline and are therefore unlikely to result in any increased cumulative effects with the Proposed Development.
- 7.11.7 Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would be located near the south-eastern shore of Loch Quoich, opposite the lower works of the Proposed Development, and would have relatively extensive shared intervisibility with the powerhouse and dams of the Proposed Development within LCT 237, where the wind farm would be located and within LCT 239 where the Proposed Development would be located. Both developments would to some extent also affect LCT 235 to the east. The wind farm would lead to a much more developed character within the area around the eastern end of Loch Quoich where the greatest effects of the Proposed Development would also be experienced. It would affect the qualities of wildness and remoteness and potentially affect perceptions of scale and height within the landscape. The addition of the Proposed Development to this baseline scenario would be likely to result in further increased sense of development and presence of man-made infrastructure, extending to new areas on the north side of Loch Quoich and indirectly affecting some shoreline areas and hills further to the west which would not be affected by the wind farm. This is predicted to lead to some locally significant cumulative effects on the landscape character around Loch Quoich within LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks). However, when considering the changed baseline scenario that would be created by the wind farm, the cumulative effect resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development is not likely to be greater than the effects of the Proposed Development alone.
- 7.11.8 Cumulative effects to LCT 237 and LCT 235 are not expected to be significant due to the greater effect of the wind farm on the area south-east of Loch Quoich which would reduce the sensitivity of the parts of these LCTs which would be affected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be seen through the wind farm from these landscapes to the south and south-east and would therefore be less noticeable in comparison.

Designated and Protected Landscapes

Knoydart NSA

- 7.11.9 The Skye Reinforcement Project would pass through the NSA within the study area but would replace the existing OHL. This is unlikely to lead to a very obvious change in the baseline. The Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would also distantly affect a few parts of the NSA, seen in the easterly context down Loch Quoich and may slightly reduce the sense of remoteness from development. The Proposed Development would be of similar visibility to the Wind Farm and would increase the impressions of development in this context slightly further. However, the addition of the Proposed Development to this baseline scenario is not predicted to be significant, because the qualities of remoteness that would be affected, would already be compromised by the proposed wind farm.

WLA 18 (Kinlochourn – Knoydart - Morar)

- 7.11.10 Of the cumulative baseline developments, the Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would have the greatest effect on WLA 18, as the Skye Reinforcement would have a similar effect to the existing OHL it would replace, and the other developments are all relatively distant from the WLA. The Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would be located adjacent to the WLA boundary, to the east of Gairich, with the greatest areas of effect within the WLA being around north-eastern and eastern areas of Loch Quoich and through Glen Kingie. The wind farm would be expected to very noticeably increase the presence of modern artefacts and contemporary land use within these areas and reduce the sense of remoteness. This would lead to a baseline where the existing strength of wildness was at much lower levels within many of the areas where the Proposed Development would affect the landscape.

- 7.11.11 The Proposed Development would lead to effects on some additional areas; notably on the southern side of Loch Quoich. However, the lower strength of wildness resulting from the presence of the wind farm within most of the areas which would be likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development, such as the summit areas of Gleouraich, Gairich and Spidean Mialach would lead to less likelihood for cumulative effects to be significant.
- 7.11.12 Overall, it is considered that there would be some *localised significant cumulative effects* within close proximity to the Proposed Development, around Coire Dubh and Loch Fearn where the wind farm would be less visible. These effects are also likely to be significant in relation to WLQ 1 (*Mountain ranges and glens of varying landform, but all arresting, with towering, steep and rugged slopes and striking physical features*), but when considering the change to the baseline that the wind farm would bring to the majority of areas affected, the wider cumulative effect on the strength of wildness would not be significant.

Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA

- 7.11.13 Of the developments included within the cumulative baseline, Beinn Bheag Wind Farm and Skye Reinforcement Project would be situated within the SLA. As described above, the Skye Reinforcement Project would replace an existing overhead line, and as such it is not considered that it would result in a noticeable change from the existing baseline within the SLA and is therefore unlikely to result in noticeable cumulative effects with the Proposed Development.
- 7.11.14 Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would be located at the eastern boundary of the SLA and would have a wide extent of visibility across areas around the east and north-east of Loch Quoich and within Glen Kingie. The Proposed Development would affect some additional areas of the SLA and increase sense of development within mountains on the north side of Loch Quoich. This is predicted to lead to some localised significant cumulative effects to landscape character within this area as described in paragraph 7.11.7 which are also predicted to be significant in relation to the SLA.
- 7.11.15 When considering the SQs of the SLA, the effects to the SQ “...the “back door” into Knoydart...” is not predicted to be significant, because the wind farm will have a much greater effect on this journey than the Proposed Development, and the journey towards the more westerly landscapes would not be changed by the wind farm which is set within the east of the SLA. However, a *localised significant cumulative effect* is predicted for the SQ, “Quiet uninhabited glens and isolated peaks...” as discussed in paragraph 7.11.12 above for the WLA.

Summary of Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 7.11.16 Predicted cumulative effects to LCTs and designated / protected landscapes are summarised in **Table 7.11**.

Table 7.11: Summary of Cumulative Landscape Effects

Area	Cumulative Effect
LCT 237: Rocky Moorland - Lochaber	Negligible
LCT 238: Rugged Massif - Lochaber	Negligible
LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type A)	<i>Localised Moderate Adverse</i> (significant)
LCT 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber (Sub-type B)	Minor Adverse (not significant)
Knoydart NSA	Minor Adverse (not significant)
WLA 18: Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar	<i>Localised Moderate Adverse</i> (significant)
Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA	<i>Localised Moderate Adverse</i> (significant)

Cumulative Visual Effects

Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Building-based Receptors

- 7.11.17 No significant effects are predicted for building-based receptors within the study area during operation, and as such there is limited potential for cumulative effects. Effects during operation are related to the limited appearance of the Fearna dam on the skyline. Where these views are obtained, the Beinn Bheag wind farm would also be likely to have a notable effect. There could also be some very limited effect from the Skye Reinforcement and Quoich OHL replacement, where they take slightly different alignments to the OHLs they would replace, but these changes are generally considered unlikely to be perceptible.
- 7.11.18 When seen in addition to the Beinn Bheag Wind Farm, the Proposed Development would slightly increase the extent of the view affected by built infrastructure. However, the Fearna dam would be seen on the relatively distant skyline in westerly views and would occupy a relatively small part of the overall view, while the Beinn Bheag Wind Farm is likely to become a more noticeable focal point in views to the south-west in relatively close proximity, particularly from Kingie. The cumulative effect resulting from the addition of the Proposed Development is therefore not predicted to be significant for these receptors.

Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Route-based Receptors

- 7.11.19 It is unlikely that there would be any noticeable sequential effect of the Proposed Development with the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme or Grid Connection due to the distance between these developments and the Proposed Development.
- 7.11.20 The Proposed Skye Reinforcement Project and Quoich Tee OHL Replacement and Switching Station would be visible from Route R1 (C1144 Minor Road) with potential for combined and sequential effects with the Proposed Development. However, as these developments would have very similar effects to the OHLs that they would replace, they are expected to lead to minimal visual change from the existing situation. The Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would form a more notable feature seen from extensive parts of the minor road, both to east and west of Quoich Dam. The operational effects of the Proposed Development by comparison would be less noticeable and very localised. Although the Proposed Development would be occasionally visible in combination with the wind farm, this is unlikely to result in an increased cumulative effect.
- 7.11.21 Routes R2 (Mountain route to Gleouraich / Spidean Mialach), R3 (Mountain route to Gairich), R4 (Mountain Route to Sgùrr Mhaoraich) and R6 (Scottish Hill Track 247 from Strathan (Loch Arkaig) to Tomdoun (Glen Garry)) would be affected by the Skye Reinforcement Project (which would cross Routes R2 and R4) and Beinn Bheag Wind Farm. However, other than crossing at a slightly different location, it is unlikely that the Skye OHL would lead to effects that would be noticeably different to the existing OHL and therefore, the assessment of these routes concentrates on cumulative effects with the Beinn Bheag Wind Farm only.
- 7.11.22 From Route R2, the Proposed Development would form a notable foreground feature but would be seen within a backdrop of the wind farm from most of the route. This may reduce the visual sensitivity to some extent with the appearance of constructed development being a prominent existing feature of the southerly and south-easterly view. Nevertheless, the greater prominence of the Proposed Development within the foreground, particularly on the ascent / descent of Spidean Mialach, is likely to lead to significant cumulative effects. However, these effects are not likely to be greater than those which would occur from the Proposed Development alone.
- 7.11.23 Walkers on Routes R3 and R6 would be required to walk through the wind farm, and this would lead to wind turbines dominating foreground views from sections of these routes. The Proposed Development by comparison, would likely be less noticeable, seen through or beyond the wind farm. However, the cumulative effect would be more noticeable from the higher parts of Route R3 where the Proposed Development would increase the part of the view occupied by infrastructure, drawing it into more northerly views. Although the wind turbines would become more of a focus from this route

as a whole where predominant views are to the east, the presence of the wind farm in the easterly context may increase the importance of views to the north and south. Therefore, the effects of the Proposed Development on higher parts of the route are predicted to lead to a significant cumulative effect due to a greater sense of being surrounded by development.

- 7.11.24 From Route R4, the Proposed Development would be seen in the context of the Beinn Bheag Wind Farm to the east. The wind farm would establish the appearance of development within this direction, and act as a focus at the end of Loch Quoich. The Proposed Development would add to this effect and extend the appearance of development within the view, but its horizontal profile is likely to be less noticeable than the vertical structures of the wind turbines. This is not predicted to lead to a significant cumulative effect.
- 7.11.25 Beinn Bheag Wind Farm would also affect some parts of Route R5 (Mountain route to Sgùrr Mòr and Sgùrr an Fhuarain), mainly to the south of the mountains, within Glen Kingie. The Proposed Development would add additional visibility of development to this route within north-westerly views from the summit and ridges where the wind farm would be less visible. The two developments would be in a similar easterly landscape context of the route with the wind farm likely to reduce sensitivity to the appearance of development within this context as it would be seen enroute to the summits. Although visibility would be mostly sequential, the appearance and understanding of development within this context would already be established and the addition of the Proposed Development is not predicted to lead to a significant cumulative effect.

Summary of Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 7.11.26 Predicted cumulative effects to LCTs and designated / protected landscapes are summarised in **Table 7.12**.

Table 7.12: Summary of Cumulative Visual Effects

Visual Receptors Location	Cumulative Effect
B1 – Kingie	Negligible
B2 – Poulary and Achnaslat	Negligible
R1 – C1144 Minor Road	Minor Adverse (not significant)
R2 – Mountain route to Gleouraich / Spidean Mialach	Moderate Adverse (significant)
R3 – Mountain route to Gairich	Moderate Adverse (significant)
R4 – Mountain Route to Sgùrr Mhaoraich	Minor Adverse (not significant)
R5 – Mountain Route to Sgùrr Mòr and Sgùrr an Fhuarain	Minor Adverse (not significant)
R6 – Scottish Hill Track 247 from Strathan (Loch Arkaig) to Tomdoun (Glen Garry)	Negligible

7.12 Residual Effects

- 7.12.1 The assessment of operational effects takes into account the likely benefits of Mitigation by Design (see **Section 7.8**) and these effects are therefore representative of predicted residual effects.

7.13 Conclusion

Landscape Effects

- 7.13.1 The landscape assessment has established that during construction, there would be temporary, *localised* significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development, mostly occurring within an

area contained by the surrounding ridgeline of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach to the north of Loch Quoich and extending to areas within around 5 km from the Proposed Development on the southern side of Loch Quoich. A small area to the east of the Quoich Dam would also be affected by access. Construction phase significant effects would largely relate to the presence of large-scale construction, excavations and movement of plant and personnel within a relatively remote upland landscape which would affect the sense of wildness and remoteness.

- 7.13.2 By 15 years post construction, once restoration of vegetation has taken place and planting proposals have been allowed to establish, the area of significant effects would reduce. These effects would be mostly focused around the permanent features of the Proposed Development at the upper reservoir, contained by the horseshoe ridge of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach to the north, and the facing slopes and summit of Gairich to the south (within around 4 km of the Fearna Dam), where the upland landscape would become noticeably more characterised by an increased sense of management and development.
- 7.13.3 The Proposed Development is also predicted to lead to significant effects during construction and operation within a corresponding *localised* area of WLA 18 (Kinlochhourn - Knoydart – Morar) and the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA. There would be no significant effects on the Knoydart NSA during construction or operation.

Visual Effects

- 7.13.4 No significant visual effects are identified for any residential or other building-based receptors during the construction or operation of the Proposed Development, although some non-significant effects may occur during construction where visibility of the SAR and main construction compound is obtained.
- 7.13.5 Significant visual effects during construction have been identified for users of the minor public road to, and alongside, Loch Quoich and recreational users of two mountain walking routes: a circular route ascending the mountains of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, which would be diverted for the Proposed Development; and a route ascending Gairich, on the opposite side of Loch Quoich. Users of these routes would obtain close views of construction activities at the powerhouse and / or upper reservoir area, likely to be distracting, during this period.
- 7.13.6 During operation, after 15 years, the effects on the minor road and route ascending Gairich are predicted to reduce to levels that would not be significant because the visual appearance of the Proposed Development would only affect parts of these routes and wider, valued views would continue to be obtained. Mitigation earthworks and planting around the powerhouse and switchyard area would also help in reducing the visual effects on these routes.
- 7.13.7 A significant effect is predicted to continue during operation for the route ascending Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach where visibility of the Proposed Development would be more constant and detracting. This route would be diverted to cross the top of the Fearna dam, leading to close and direct views of the Proposed Development, although this new section of route would also enable new elevated panoramic views over Loch Quoich.

Cumulative Effects

- 7.13.8 The Proposed Development is also predicted to lead to some cumulative landscape and visual effects when the proposed Beinn Bheag Wind Farm, which would be located within an area to the south-east of Loch Quoich, is considered within the baseline. Under this scenario, one additional significant effect is predicted during operation, for recreational users ascending Gairich. No other effects are predicted to be greater than those which would occur under the current baseline.

Conclusion

- 7.13.9 The LVIA has identified that there would be localised significant landscape and visual effects occurring during the construction of the Proposed Development, largely related to the introduction of large scale construction activities within an upland area with limited human intervention. This is also expected lead to some significant effects on the landscape character and identified Special Qualities of the Moidart Morar and Glen Shiel Special Landscape Area, and Wild Land Qualities of Wild Land

Area 18: Kinlochourn – Knoydart – Morar within a localised area up to around 5 km, reaching up to the surrounding peaks of Gairich, Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach. However, there would be no significant effects to the Knoydart National Scenic Area.

- 7.13.10 Significant visual effects are also predicted for users of a minor road, the C1144, and recreational users of two upland routes within this area.
- 7.13.11 During operation, once vegetation has been restored and planting around the proposed powerhouse and switchyard area has been allowed to establish, these effects would reduce and would become more localised, associated with the dams and upper reservoir area of the Proposed Development only. Significant landscape effects are predicted to continue within the containing corrie areas immediately surrounding the upper reservoir, and across opposing slopes within around 4 km up to the summits and ridge of the containing mountains. A significant visual effect is also expected to remain for recreational users on the surrounding mountain walking route to the Munros, Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, which would be diverted to follow the top of one of the dams. Although the Proposed Development would form a visible feature within other parts of the landscape and from other routes, this is not predicted to lead to significant effects, because the overriding panoramic and mountainous character of the landscape would remain present. However, an additional significant cumulative effect is predicted for those accessing the Gairich walking route if the proposed Beinn Bheag Wind Farm was also operational.
- 7.13.12 Whilst some longer term significant effects within this localised area are predicted to some qualities of the Special Landscape Area and Wild Land Area within which the Proposed Development would be situated, the wider effect on these areas as a whole would not be significant.