

FEARNA STORAGE

Fearna Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme EIA Report

Chapter 14 – Recreation

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14. Recreation and Access

14.1 Executive Summary

- 14.1.1 The assessment addresses only direct impacts on recreation and access, with those associated with visual amenity assessed in **Chapter 7 - Landscape and Visual**, with transport and access on the public road network in **Chapter 15**, with Noise and Vibration in **Chapter 16**, and with tourism in **Chapter 17 - Socioeconomics and Tourism**.
- 14.1.2 The Proposed Development has the potential to impact upon recreational use and access within the proposed site and surrounding area. Most effects relate to construction disturbance. Construction and operational disturbance would be managed by provision of the measures outlined in **Appendix 14.1 – Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**.
- 14.1.3 The most significant impacts on recreation and access during both construction and operation have been assessed as Minor, and as such are considered not to be significant.

14.2 Introduction

- 14.2.1 This chapter uses publicly available information to assess the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the population in terms of public recreation and access.
- 14.2.2 The forms of public recreation known to take place within and around the site of the Proposed Development, and which are considered in this Chapter are as follows:
- Walking and running;
 - Cycling;
 - Camping and backpacking;
 - Canoeing;
 - Angling; and
 - Swimming.
- 14.2.3 This Chapter considers the potential effects, including cumulative effects, of the Proposed Development on public recreation and access during construction and operation. Such effects generally include disruption to the use of recreational facilities/sites. The proposed scheme may also result in changes to the perceived amenity value of recreational facilities/sites. These however generally relate to visual and noise effects which are assessed in **Chapter 7 - Landscape and Visual** and **Chapter 16 - Noise and Vibration**. Effects on tourism are covered separately in **Chapter 17 - Socioeconomics and Tourism**.
- 14.2.4 As detailed in **Chapter 2 - The Proposed Development**, with proper maintenance the Proposed Development should remain functional for over a hundred years. If the project were to be decommissioned, it is anticipated that the potential effects on public recreation and access would be less than the construction impacts. As such, a separate assessment of potential decommissioning effects on public recreation and access is not included in this chapter. Where likely significant effects are predicted during construction and operation, appropriate mitigation measures are proposed, and the significance predicted residual effects are assessed.
- 14.2.5 This assessment has been carried out by Gilkes Energy Ltd. 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**.

14.3 Scope of Assessment

Study Area

- 14.3.1 The Study Area comprises Glen Garry, and more specifically the area including and surrounding the Proposed Development, together with the waterbodies and watercourses downstream from the Proposed Development.

Consultation Responses

- 14.3.2 To inform the scope of the assessment for the Proposed Development, consultation was undertaken with statutory and non-statutory bodies. **Table 14.1** summarises the scoping and consultation responses relevant to the Recreation and Access Assessment and provides information on where and/or how points raised have been addressed in this assessment.
- 14.3.3 Full details on the consultation responses and scoping opinion can be reviewed in **Chapter 5 - Assessment Methodology, Scoping and Consultation**, and its associated appendices.

Table 14.1 Consultation Responses

Consultee	Issue Raised	Response/Action Taken
The Highland Council Pre-application Report 7 June 2023	An Outdoor Access Plan or Access Management Plan is required to address the proposed development's potential impact on public access during preparatory works, construction works and once the scheme is operational. All the local public rights of way shall be included for the baseline study along with a Red (Specification) path survey.	A draft Outdoor Access Management Plan including all local public rights of way has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 14.1.
	The baseline information for public access can be much improved. The Access Officer recommends that Scotways be consulted for a full listing of public rights of way as Scottish Hill Tracks does not cover all the local public rights of way.	Scotways have been consulted for a full listing of public rights of way, and these are included in this assessment.
	The construction of the haul/access road will cut across the path to and from Spidean Mialach, a popular Munro often completed in a round with Gleouraich. Additionally, it will cut across an old stalkers' path and then across the broader, less well-defined line taken to and from Spidean Mialach. This presents several issues: - How will public access be accommodated along the stalkers' path while building the haul road? - How will the path be physically incorporated into the construction and crossing of that road and to what standard? - How will public access be managed where it will cross that haul road further up the hill? - Once complete how will access be managed along that haul road? For instance, there will be a temptation for some walkers to continue up or down that road during the construction and operational periods. That could lead to conflict with construction traffic and people following the haul road for longer than intended taking them closer to the hill loch or leading them further down the hill, further from their cars and mean more walkers along the public road. Policy 77 also says that "Where a proposal affects ... an access point to water, or significantly affects wider access rights, then The Council will require it to either: .	All of these points have been addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.

Consultee	Issue Raised	Response/Action Taken
	· retain the existing path or water access point while maintaining or enhancing its amenity value; or · ensure alternative access provision that is no less attractive, is safe and convenient for public use, and does not damage or disturb species or habitats.	
	Should this proposal affect access to Loch Quoich during the construction and/or operational phases then mitigation should be built into any proposal at the application stage.	This is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
	Since this proposal will significantly affect wider access rights the Access Officer recommends that an Access Management Plan includes a Red (Specification) path survey, as defined here Upland Path Management (nature.scot) for the mountain route from the public road up to the high point of the haul/access road, acknowledging that much of the work will be reinstatement of the original route to equivalent modern design and standards. If the public is to be encouraged to follow the stalkers' path across the lower length of haul/access road the pathwork at that point should be completed at the same time as the haul road is built. It should be retained and/or adapted when and if that road is reduced to serve as the permanent access road. The reinstatement of the rest of the original stalkers' path should be completed, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority before the site comes into operation.	This is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
	The Access Officer notes that the Cape Wrath Trail Long Distance Route from Barrisdale – Kinloch Hourn – Invershiel is in the wider surrounding area and will be impacted by the proposal.	The Cape Wrath Trail has been included in this assessment.
The Highland Council Scoping Response 17 July 2024	The Access Officer notes there are two aspects of the project to consider from the Access Authority's perspective. One is the impact which the construction phase and permanent works have on existing access routes. The other is what opportunity exists in terms of access improvements as a legacy of the project.	Both of these aspects are addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
	The Access Officer is pleased that the Environmental Scoping Report states that a Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan will be included within the detailed planning submission. They ask that this is developed in line with Appendix 6 of NatureScot's Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook and that it is submitted as a stand-alone document, or clearly indexed within the EIA, so that it is easy to identify. Additionally, all points raised in the Access Officer consultation response for the preapplication 23/1810/PREMAJ shall be taken into consideration except those that have been superseded by the enlargement of the planned reservoir.	The draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1 has been developed in line with Appendix 6 of NatureScot's Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook. This addresses the points raised in the Pre-application report 23/1810/PREMAJ (included in this table above)
	The Access Officer recommends that the Outdoor Access Management Plan (OAMP) includes a Red (Specification) path survey, as defined here (Upland Path Management (nature.scot) for any diversion of this well used route and that the OAMP indicates how the developer proposes to manage mountaineering access both around the inundation area and where the path is crossed by any newly built access roads, as well as the visual impact of any diversion route. This may require a further series of visualisations from	This is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1. The Applicant is happy to develop the proposed new and upgraded paths to the Red Specification.

Consultee	Issue Raised	Response/Action Taken
	where the path is severed by the proposed reservoir, and from points along any suggested alternative diversionary routes. Any route proposal should consider whether there is a significant increase in the steepness of the ground covered, an increase in the length of the path, and whether the route necessitates a longer return along the public road. Consultation with stakeholders and the Outdoor Access Officer is recommended as this proposal is developed.	
	The Access Officer is pleased to note that existing land use and recreational routes and points of interest within the study area will be mapped and presented, including the Munro circuit discussed above, as well as other mountain routes, Rights of Way, Scottish Hill Tracks, and popular camping/recreational spots in the area around Loch Quoich.	Noted.
	Policy 77 also states that “Where a proposal affects ... an access point to water, or significantly affects wider access rights, then The Council will require it to either: • retain the existing path or water access point while maintaining or enhancing its amenity value; or • ensure alternative access provision that is no less attractive, is safe and convenient for public use, and does not damage or disturb species or habitats.	This is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
	Should this proposal affect access to Loch Quoich during the construction and/or operational phases then mitigation should be built into any proposal at the application stage.	This is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
	The Access Officer would recommend that data from Strava Heat maps and information on Rights of Way held by Scotways are included in the proposed review of existing access routes, and that consultation takes place with stakeholders, at a local and national level.	Data has been obtained. Consultation with Mountaineering Scotland THC Access Officer, Glengarry Community Council.
	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.	Discussed at site visit THC/Mount Scot/ GEL on 24 June 2024.
Mountaineering Scotland Scoping Response 3 July 2024	Mountaineering Scotland's concern at this stage is ensuring that the proposed viewpoints will allow a comprehensive assessment of the proposed development from a mountaineering perspective, and that popular recreational access routes are identified and managed should an application be made.	Noted.
	We support the Proposed Visualisation Locations indicated in Figure 5.1. The three mountain summit viewpoints adequately represent hillwalking destinations in the surrounding area.	Additional VLS added at Sgurr Mor and Sgurr Mhurlagain.
	Hillwalkers generally make a round of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach in a clockwise direction from a parking area beside the single track road along Loch Quoich. The Munro Guide indicates the descent from Spidean Mialach follows “...a path southwest down easy slopes, leading towards a point about 400m north of Loch Fearna...”. This route between the summit and the parking area would be severed by the proposed Coire Dubh Dam. We request the applicant to indicate	The proposed management of mountaineering access is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1. This was also discussed at the site visit THC/Mount

Consultee	Issue Raised	Response/Action Taken
	how they propose to manage mountaineering access around the inundation area, and the visual impact of the diversion. 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. Mountaineering Scotland request involvement with the development of any diversionary route proposed to assess its feasibility for walkers taking in the round of the two Munro summits.	Scot/ GEL on 24 June 2024.
	We expect the applicant to make clear in an Access Management Plan the generally accepted principle that any constraints on access would be of minimal extent and minimal duration to achieve the work safely, and that it is accepted that these parameters may change location during the different phases of construction.	Agreed and included in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
Scotways Scoping Response 3 July 2024	The enclosed map shows that rights of way HL11, HL12, HL21 and HL22 as recorded in the National Catalogue of Rights of Way (CROW) cross or are close to the application site as shown on Figure 3.1 Site Location Plan. The enclosed map shows the Heritage Paths project promotes a route, Gleann Cia-aig Drove Road [HP167], for its historic interest. This old route crosses or is close to the application site as shown on Figure 3.1 Site Location Plan. The enclosed map shows that our book Scottish Hill Tracks describes route numbers 238 The Dark Mile (Loch Arkaig) to Invergarry or Loch Garry, 239 Loch Garry to Laggan Locks and 247 Strathan (Loch Arkaig) to Tomdoun (Glen Garry) which cross or are close to the application site as shown on Figure 3.1 Site Location Plan. In searching our records at this scoping stage, we have focussed solely on the immediate area of the proposed application and the proposed Southern Access Route (SAR). If required by the applicant to inform their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), maps of a wider search area are available from ScotWays, alongside a more detailed response.	These paths and tracks have been indicated in the Figures accompanying this chapter, and have been addressed in the impact assessment.
	You should be aware that other forms of public access to land may affect the planning application site. More detail about these other types of access is set out in the enclosed Catalogue of Rights of Way Guidance Notes.	Noted.
	As well as direct impacts of development upon public access, ScotWays has an interest in impacts on recreational amenity, so this includes the impact of developments on the wider landscape. We anticipate that the applicant will take into account both recreational amenity and landscape impacts in developing their proposals for this site. We will consider these issues further should this scoping stage lead to a planning application.	This chapter of the EIA and the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1 addresses the direct impacts on recreation and access. Landscape and visual impacts are addressed separately in Chapter 7 of the EIAR.
Glengarry Community Council	We wish to note that tourism and recreation generally are the major economic activity of the area, due to the remote, wild nature. Many walkers go via the glen and the impact upon these people should not be underestimated.	Noted.

Consultee	Issue Raised	Response/Action Taken
Scoping Response 3 July 2024	We have recently been approached by a local business to express dissatisfaction that the C1144 road is often closed, such that walkers (using their business) are unable to walk the various paths and Munros in the glen.	Noted and addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.
	There are often canoeists from local tourist businesses taking advantage of the 'white water' in and around Whitebridge. They would need to be reassured that the use of Whitebridge (on the preferred SAR) for access would not disrupt their business.	This point is addressed in the draft Outdoor Access Management Plan attached at Appendix 14.1.

Issues Scoped out of Assessment

14.3.4 None.

14.4 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

14.4.1 This assessment has taken account of national, regional and local legislation, policy and guidance relating to recreation and access which is relevant to the proposal. Detailed information on planning policy is contained within **Chapter 5 - Planning Policy Context** and the Planning Statement accompanying the planning application for the Proposed Development. The following provides a summary with respect to recreation and access.

Legislative and Policy Context

- The following legislation and policy has been considered in the assessment:

National

- The Third National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4) (2023);
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014); and
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Regional

- The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), 2012; and
- The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan 2019 (WestPlan).

Technical Guidance

14.4.2 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) indicate that a development's potential significant effects on population should be considered and described in an ES, however there are few prescribed methodologies or standard guidelines for this. The following technical guidance documents have informed this assessment:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook, Appendix 6 (NatureScot, 2018);
- Upland Path Management: Standards for delivering path projects in Scotland's Mountains (NatureScot, 2016); and
- A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor Access Plan (NatureScot, 2010)

14.5 Methodology

Desk Study

- 14.5.1 A desk study to identify the key components of recreational use in the local area has been undertaken to establish the existing conditions.
- 14.5.2 The following sources of data have been used in the preparation of this assessment:
- Ordnance Survey mapping;
 - The Scottish Mountaineering Club guidebook “The Munros”¹;
 - Walkhighlands website²;
 - The Cape Wrath Trail website³;
 - Strava Global Heatmap⁴;
 - The Cycling UK website⁵;
 - The SCA Guidebook Scottish White Water – 3rd Edition, 2018⁶;

Field Study

- 14.5.3 Feedback has been sought from hillwalkers on the site of the Proposed Development. Additional information has been volunteered by attendees at the Public Consultation meetings held in Invergarry in December 2023 and December 2024.
- 14.5.4 The circuit of the Munros Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach was walked in order to assess the views of the Proposed Development from the route given in the Scottish Mountaineering Club Munro guidebook, which coincides with the route published on the Walkhighlands website, and which further accords with the most heavily used routes recorded on the Strava Global Heatmap (an internet service for tracking physical exercise using GPS). The same was done for the walk up the Munro Gairich. This allowed an assessment to be made of the sections of the walks from which various features of the Proposed Development would be visible to be assessed.

Assessment Methodology

- 14.5.5 There are few published guidelines for assessing development effects upon recreational activities. The method adopted in this assessment is one of determining the baseline through desk-based analysis and consultation. Potential effects are identified and the scale of changes they may cause to the baseline are then determined and assessed for their significance in respect of the sensitivity of the affected feature. Mitigation measures are then identified where relevant, before an assessment of the significance of any residual effects.
- 14.5.6 The assessment has involved the following key tasks:
- Consultation with organisations and landowners concerned with recreational interests in the area;
 - Site survey and recording;

¹ “The Munros” – Scottish Mountaineering Press, 2021

² Walkhighlands: <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/> , accessed November 2024

³ <https://www.capewrathtrail.org.uk> , accessed November 2024

⁴ Strava Global Heatmap: <https://www.strava.com/heatmap#7.00/-120.90000/38.36000/hot/all> , accessed November 2024

⁵ The Cycling UK website: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/route/weekender-badger-divide> , accessed November 2024

⁶ The SCA Guidebook Scottish White Water – 3rd Edition, 2018: <https://www.pesdapress.com/index.php/product/scottish-white-water/>

- Reference to relevant Local Development Plans and other literature to obtain baseline information; and
 - Evaluation of impacts based on land take, severance and disruption during construction.
- 14.5.7 The establishment of the degree of effect is based on the evaluation of sensitivity of the recreation activity which may be affected, and the potential magnitude of change which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development.

Sensitivity

- 14.5.8 Sensitivity concerns the potential for recreational activities to be affected by the Proposed Development. Recreational activities have been evaluated for their sensitivity based on a four point scale as follows:
- High: important recreational routes or resources within the area of the Proposed Development.
 - Medium: less frequently used recreation routes or resources which represent a common resource locally within or adjacent to the area of the Proposed Development or more important routes or resources within the nearby context.
 - Low: less frequently used recreation routes or resources within the nearby context or more important routes or resources within the wider context.
 - Negligible: less important or infrequently used recreation routes or resources within the wider context.

Magnitude

- 14.5.9 Magnitude of effect concerns the degree of change which would be expected to take place to existing recreational activities. Magnitude has been measured on a four point scale as follows:
- High: complete loss or obstruction to a route or amenity resource.
 - Medium: partial loss or direct disruption to a route or amenity resource, compromising but not preventing the ability of an activity to take place;
 - Low: small disruption to a route or amenity resource which does not affect the ability of an activity to take place;
 - Negligible: negligible disruption to a route or amenity resource which does not affect the ability of an activity to take place;

Significance of Effect

- 14.5.10 The degree of effect significance is calculated by comparison of the magnitude of impact to recreational resource in relation to its sensitivity. Effect significance is assessed using the following criteria:
- Major: where the Proposed Development would prevent an existing activity from continuing;
 - Moderate: where the Proposed Development would lead to a significant compromise to a recreational activity;
 - Minor: where the Proposed Development would lead to a minor compromise to a recreational activity; and
 - Negligible : where the Proposed Development would have no discernible influence on existing recreational activity.
- 14.5.11 For the purposes of this assessment impacts of Major or Moderate are considered to be significant.
- 14.5.12 The assessment considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on recreational activities during both the construction phase and the longer-term operation.

Assumptions and Limitations

- 14.5.13 Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information on public recreation and access from the desk study, consultation and fieldwork described above is comprehensive, it is possible that other less well known or used access routes may exist. Furthermore, there may be less common

forms of recreation pursued at the site of the Proposed Development, that have been overlooked and have not been considered in this assessment.

14.6 Baseline Conditions

Existing Baseline

- 14.6.1 Recreation and tourism are key activities within the area. The site of the Proposed Development lies within an area which is used by walkers and runners, cyclists, campers and backpackers, canoeists, anglers, and swimmers.

Walking and Running

- 14.6.2 The principal walking / running routes within the wider area, including the SAR, are shown in **Figure 14.1 - Existing Access Routes and Footpaths SAR** and **Figure 14.2 - Existing Access Routes and Footpaths SAR (Strava)**. Those within the main construction area of the Proposed Development are indicated in **Figure 14.3 - Existing Access Routes and Footpaths PSH Area** and **Figure 14.4 - Existing Access Routes and Footpaths PSH Area (Strava)**.
- 14.6.3 There are a number of Scottish Hill Tracks within the area: 238b, 239, 247, 249a, 256, 257a and 257b. These are shown in **Figure 14.5 - Scottish Hill Tracks**.
- 14.6.4 The unofficial, unmarked long-distance walk between Fort William and Cape Wrath, The Cape Wrath Trail, includes two options from Fort William, one up the West Coast and the other via Glen Garry. The Glen Garry Option shares a section of the Southern Access Route (SAR) approximately 7km long within the Glen Garry forest. The route of the Cape Wrath Trail in the area of the Proposed Development is shown in **Figure 14.6 - Cape Wrath Trail**.
- 14.6.5 Under direction of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, The Highland Council has produced Core Path Plans with the aim of creating a framework of paths linking with other access provision. There is a stretch of approximately 850m of waymarked core path between Mandally Road and Whitebridge, Ref. LO11.08, which shares the route of the SAR. This is shown in **Figure 14.7 - Core Paths**.
- 14.6.6 In addition to the above there are a number of other rights of way. These are shown in **Figure 14.8 - Rights of Way**.
- 14.6.7 There is a heritage path, the Gleann Cia-Aig Drove Road, which crosses the route of the SAR. This is shown in **Figure 14.9 - Heritage Paths**.
- 14.6.8 An indication of the relative popularity of the walking various routes can be understood from the Strava Heatmap, which is included at **Figure 14.2 - Existing Access Routes and Footpaths SAR (Strava)**.
- 14.6.9 The closest Munros to the Proposed Development are Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, usually done as a circuit, which are located to the north of the proposed Fearna upper reservoir. On the south side of Loch Quoich and slightly west of the proposed development is the Munro Gairich, which is usually approached over the Quoich dam and thereafter up its east ridge. Some other summits further to the west of these and south of these Munros would also have visibility of parts of the Proposed Development, including the Munro Sgurr Mor and the Corbett Sgurr Mhurlagain. Visualisations have been produced for the view towards the Proposed Development from these summits.
- 14.6.10 The most popular outings in these hills and those closest to the Proposed Development are the circuit of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach and the ascent of Gairich from the Quoich dam. To assist with appreciating how the views from this walks would be affected by the construction of the Proposed Development, a photographic record of views from locations along these routes has been prepared and attached at **Appendix 14.1.1 - Photographic Record of Views from the Circuit of Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach** and **Appendix 14.1.2 – Photographic Record of Views from the Ascent of Gairich from Quoich Dam**.
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- 14.6.11 Whilst the majority of walkers on these hills tend to follow the routes published in the Scottish Mountaineering guidebook “The Munros” or the very similar routes published on the Walkhighlands website, there are many variations to these routes, with differing popularity. The Strava Heatmap gives an indication of the key routes and the variations thereon, together with their relative popularity amongst users of Strava.
- 14.6.12 Whilst Gairich and the hills to the north of Loch Quoich are generally accessed from the C1144 road between Invergarry and Kinloch Hourn, others to the south and west of Loch Quoich may be approached up Glen Kingie to the east, from Loch Arkaig to the south, or from Knoydart to the west.

Cycling

- 14.6.13 Evidence from Strava indicates that cycling is popular on the C1144 as well as the unsurfaced tracks within the Garry Forest. The location and relative popularity of these routes can be gauged from the cycling Strava Heatmap at **Figure 14.10 – Strava Heatmap for Cycling**.

Camping and Backpacking

- 14.6.14 The area is used by campers and backpackers, particularly in the more inaccessible areas to the south and west of Loch Quoich. There is roadside camping and campervan use by the C1144, but there don't appear to be any particularly popular spots within the site of the Proposed development based on observation during site visits. Some roadside camping spots are understood to exist to the west of the site near to the bridge over Loch Quoich. Campervans have been observed using the large layby overlooking the powerhouse site.

Canoeing

- 14.6.15 No canoeing is recorded on Strava on Loch Quoich, although it is known that canoes are sometimes used to cross Loch Quoich from the C1144 to access the hills to the south and west.
- 14.6.16 The River Garry downstream of Invergarry dam is used by canoeists and white water rafters during scheduled water releases from Loch Garry.

Angling

- 14.6.17 None of the burns within the main PSH site are used for fishing, and there are no fish in Loch Fearn. It is understood that Loch Quoich is occasionally fished, with records posted on the internet of sizeable trout having been caught there.
- 14.6.18 There is fishing on sections of the the River Garry, Loch Garry and its feeder rivers. This is an important contributor to the local economy.

Swimming

- 14.6.19 Open water swimming in is currently a popular activity, but an internet search has not identified any popular swimming spots within the local area.

Future Baseline

- 14.6.20 There is no indication from the information acquired that the baseline is in the process of any significant transition that will affect this assessment.

14.7 Mitigation by Design

- 14.7.1 Design features and embedded mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design and construction of the Proposed Development to prevent, avoid or minimise significant adverse environmental effects and to enhance beneficial effects.
- 14.7.2 The following design principles have been applied minimise the effect of the Proposed Development on recreation and access:

- Where any existing recreational access would be restricted during either construction or operation of the Proposed Development, alternative access arrangements would be provided in advance of any such restriction;
- Construction of the Proposed Development would comply with the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2017. These regulations require the Developer and Contractor to establish and operate a safety management system encompassing risk assessment, design measures and management instructions to ensure the safety of construction workers and the public;
- Wherever practicable, infrastructure would be underground; and
- Where infrastructure is required to be above ground, this would be designed to minimise the impact on recreational access and on the landscape as far as practicable.

14.8 Potential Significant Effects

- 14.8.1 This section considers the potential impacts and associated effect significance of the construction, and operation of the Proposed Development based on the typical activities described in Chapter 3: Description of Development.

Construction Effects

Access via Public Roads and Parking

- 14.8.2 The C1144, a single track road with passing places, is the only public access to Glen Garry and Kinloch Hourn by vehicle. This access would not be impacted during construction, as the C1144 would not be used for construction traffic except for over a section of 2.3km around the Quoich dam. It would however be widened to allow two way traffic over this length, and measures would be put in place to allow for the safe use of the road by the public and construction traffic, which are detailed in **Appendix 14.1 – Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**. Further details of traffic on the C1144 and in the wider area are covered in **Chapter 15 - Transport and Access**.
- 14.8.3 Based on ad-hoc site survey during the spring and summer of 2024, there does not appear to be an issue with the current capacity of the parking areas used. These could however, if established to be inadequate for peak parking requirements, be improved to afford greater capacity, subject to agreement with the relevant landowners, to provide an access improvement. Sensitivity for public road access and parking is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on public road access and parking is therefore considered to be **Minor** during construction.

Walking and Running

- 14.8.4 A number of the principal walking / running routes in the area would be affected by the construction activity. Some of the access tracks currently comprising parts of walking and running routes would be used for construction traffic. The proposals for maintaining access for walking and running are outlined in **Appendix 14.1 - Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan** and shown in **Figure 14.11 - Access Routes and Footpaths During Construction PSH Area**. These arrangements would maintain access within the site, except for areas which are the locations for construction of the infrastructure for the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.5 The closest Munros to the Proposed Development are Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach, usually done as a circuit, which are located to the north of the proposed Fearna upper reservoir. The current route between the summit of Spidean Mialach and the stalkers track in Coire Dubh, or the Allt Mheil hydro access track – both routes are used, passes through the area which would become the Coire Dubh dam and the Fearna Reservoir. In order to avoid this area during the construction period, it is proposed to divert this path to the east and south of the proposed Fearna dam, as shown in **Figure 14.11**. The proposed diversion would have the effect of increasing the length of this 12km walking circuit by approximately 1.2km. There would be some steeper ground in the section from the Fearna dam to rejoining the existing path, but this would be a made path to the Red Specification so it should not be uncharacteristically steep or difficult within the context of the overall walk.

- 14.8.6 On the south side of Loch Quoich and slightly west of the proposed development is the Munro Gairich, which is usually approached over the Quoich dam to follow a path southwards across the west flank of Beinn Bheag, before following a stalkers path up the east ridge of Gairich. The first kilometre of the path to the south of the Quoich dam is very boggy, with a braided series of paths crossing the sloping bog in that area. Subject to permission from the landowner, it is proposed to construct a formal footpath across this area.
- 14.8.7 There are a number of Scottish Hill Tracks (SHTs) within the area: 238b, 239, 247, 249a, 256, 257a and 257b. Of these, there is an overlap of approximately 4km between SHT 247 and the SAR to the west of Poulary and an overlap of approximately 7km SHT 238b and the SAR between the Whitebridge area and Greenfield Wood. The 7km of SHT 238b also forms part of the Cape Wrath Trail. In addition, there is a stretch of approximately 850m of waymarked core path between Mandally Road and Whitebridge, Ref. LO11.08, which shares the route of the SAR.
- 14.8.8 It is not practicable to arrange for diversion of walkers from the stretches of track shared with the SAR. The measures to facilitate safe co-existence of construction traffic and walkers would include safety signage and a 15mph speed limit for vehicles - this is covered in detail in **Appendix 14.1 – Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**.
- 14.8.9 Sensitivity for walking and running is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Medium**. The effect on walking and running is therefore considered to be **Minor** during construction.

Cycling

- 14.8.10 Evidence from Strava indicates that cycling is popular on the C1144 as well as the unsurfaced tracks within the Garry Forest. The location and relative popularity of these routes can be gauged from the cycling Strava Heatmap at **Figure 14.10 – Strava Heatmap for Cycling**.
- 14.8.11 There would be little effect on cycling on the C1144 during construction, with only 2.3km of this shared by construction traffic. Some routes within the Glen Garry forest would also be shared by the SAR.
- 14.8.12 As for walking, it is not practicable to arrange for diversion of walkers from the stretches of track shared with the SAR. The measures to facilitate safe co-existence of construction traffic and walkers would include safety signage and a 20mph speed limit for vehicles - this is covered in detail in **Appendix 14.1 – Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**.
- 14.8.13 Sensitivity for cycling is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on cycling is therefore considered to be **Minor** during construction.

Camping and Backpacking

- 14.8.14 The area is used by campers and backpackers, particularly in the more inaccessible areas to the south and west of Loch Quoich. It is not considered that there are any particularly popular camping spots in the areas that would be affected by construction of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.15 Sensitivity for camping and backpacking is considered to be **Low** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on backpacking is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during construction.

Canoeing

- 14.8.16 No canoeing is recorded on Strava on Loch Quoich, although it is known that canoes are sometimes used to cross Loch Quoich from the C1144 to access the hills to the south and west. There would be no effect on this activity during construction of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.17 The River Garry downstream of Invergarry dam is used by canoeists and white water rafters during scheduled water releases from Loch Garry. This activity would be unaffected by the construction of the Proposed Development.

- 14.8.18 Sensitivity for canoeing is considered to be **Low** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on canoeing is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during construction.

Angling

- 14.8.19 There would be no effect on angling during construction of the Proposed Development, unless by a pollution event. This risk would be controlled by the measures outlined in **Appendix 2.2 – Outline CEMD**. Access to put boats into Loch Quoich would be maintained.
- 14.8.20 Sensitivity for angling is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on angling is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during construction.

Swimming

- 14.8.21 Open water swimming in is currently a popular activity, but an internet search has not identified any popular swimming spots within the local area. It is considered that there would be no material effect on the opportunity for swimming in the area as a result of construction of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.22 Sensitivity for swimming is considered to be **Low** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on swimming is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during construction.

Operational Effects

Access via Public Roads and Parking

- 14.8.23 During operation, vehicles accessing the Proposed Development would use the C1144, except during any major maintenance or refurbishment works, in which case the SAR would be used. This operational traffic has been assessed in **Chapter 15 - Transport and Access**. There would be a moderate increase in traffic on the C1144 during operation of the Proposed Development compared with the baseline.
- 14.8.24 Based on ad-hoc site survey during the spring and summer of 2024, there does not appear to be an issue with the current capacity of the parking areas used. These could however, if established to be inadequate for peak parking requirements, be improved to afford greater capacity, subject to agreement with the relevant landowners, to provide an access improvement. Sensitivity for public road access and parking is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on public road access and parking is therefore considered to be **Minor** during operation.

Walking and Running

- 14.8.25 A number of the principal walking / running routes in the area would be affected by the operation of the Proposed Development. The proposals for maintaining access for walking and running are outlined in **Appendix 14.1 - Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan** and shown in **Figure 14.12 - Access Routes and Footpaths During Operation PSH Area**. These arrangements would maintain access within the site, except for areas which are the locations of the infrastructure for the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.26 Access on Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach would be as for during construction, except that an additional option for walking between the summit of Spidean Mialach and Coire Dubh would be to use the access road across the top of the Fearna dam, which would connect to the existing stalkers path in Coire Dubh or to the Allt Mheil hydro track with a new section of mountain footpath.
- 14.8.27 There would be no operational impact on access to Gairich, except for the improvement to the first 1km of path beyond the Quoich dam, which would have a formal constructed path installed, subject to approval of the landowner.
- 14.8.28 During operation, vehicles accessing the Proposed Development would use the C1144, except during any major maintenance or refurbishment works, in which case the SAR would be used. This operational traffic has been assessed in **Chapter 15 - Transport and Access**. As the SAR would be used only very occasionally during operation, the routes within the Glen Garry forest (Scottish hill tracks, Cape Wrath Trail, core path LO11.08) that were affected during construction would effectively revert to their original level of traffic.

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- 14.8.29 Sensitivity for walking and running is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Medium**. The effect on walking and running is therefore considered to be **Minor** during operation.

Cycling

- 14.8.30 During operation, vehicles accessing the Proposed Development would use the C1144, except during any major maintenance or refurbishment works, in which case the SAR would be used. This operational traffic has been assessed in **Chapter 15 - Transport and Access**. There would be a moderate increase in traffic on the C1144 during operation of the Proposed Development which would increase the interface between cyclists and vehicles compared with the baseline.
- 14.8.31 The routes within the Glengarry forest that were affected during construction would revert to their original level of traffic.
- 14.8.32 Sensitivity for cycling is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on cycling is therefore considered to be **Minor** during operation.

Camping and Backpacking

- 14.8.33 The area is used by campers and backpackers, particularly in the more inaccessible areas to the south and west of Loch Quoich. It is not considered that there are any particularly popular camping spots in the areas that would be affected by operation of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.34 Sensitivity for camping and backpacking is considered to be **Low** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on backpacking is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during operation.

Canoeing

- 14.8.35 No canoeing is recorded on Strava on Loch Quoich, although it is known that canoes are sometimes used to cross Loch Quoich from the C1144 to access the hills to the south and west. There would be nothing to prevent on this activity during operation of the Proposed Development, although the more rapid change in water levels, up to 3.2m in 20 hours (0.16m per hour) due to operation of the Proposed Development would need to be managed in the context of boats exiting and entering the water.
- 14.8.36 The River Garry downstream of Invergarry dam is used by canoeists and white water rafters during scheduled water releases from Loch Garry. This activity would be unaffected by operation of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.37 Sensitivity for canoeing is considered to be **Low** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on canoeing is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during operation.

Angling

- 14.8.38 There would be no effect on angling during operation of the Proposed Development, unless by a pollution event. This risk would be controlled by operational environmental management processes. Access to put boats into Loch Quoich would be maintained by construction of an improved slipway and other facilities by the powerhouse which would allow access by boats to the water at all operational levels of Quoich reservoir, including allowing for the proposed more rapid change in water levels than under operation of the existing Quoich hydro scheme.
- 14.8.39 Sensitivity for angling is considered to be **High** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on angling is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during operation.

Swimming

- 14.8.40 It is considered that as for during construction, there would be no material effect on the opportunity for swimming in the area as a result of operation of the Proposed Development.
- 14.8.41 Sensitivity for swimming is considered to be **Low** and the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. The effect on swimming is therefore considered to be **Negligible** during operation.
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Cumulative Effects

- 14.8.42 There is windfarm, Beinn Bheag, in the early stages of the planning process (Scoping Opinion issued) at the south east end of Loch Quoich within Kingie Estate. If it proceeds to be developed, there could be a cumulative visual impact from some hilltops. This is considered in **Chapter 7 - Landscape and Visual**. It is also possible that this development could use the SAR for access, but information on access is not available at the time of writing of this document.

14.9 Mitigation and Enhancement During Construction and Operation

- 14.9.1 Mitigation and enhancement during construction and operation is as outlined in **Appendix 14.1 - Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**.
- 14.9.2 The Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with The Highland Council.
- 14.9.3 The following access improvements, shown in **Figure 14.14 – Proposed Access Improvements**, are proposed as part of the Proposed Development:
- Upgrading the existing footpath to modern standards between the C1144 and Coire Mheil.
 - Upgrading approximately 1km of the footpath from the south end of the Quoich dam towards Gairich
 - Potential increase in size of Munro parking areas (subject to landowner agreement).

14.10 Residual Effects

- 14.10.1 Potential residual effects and associated effect significance of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development following the implementation of mitigation measures are outlined in paragraph 14.8 above.
- 14.10.2 A summary of the proposed scheme's residual effects is provided in Table 14.2 below.

Table 14.2 – Summary of Residual Effects

Effect	Type of Effect	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Effect	Significance
Construction				
Road access / parking	Negative	High	Low	Minor
Walking / running	Negative	High	Medium	Minor
Cycling	Negative	High	Low	Minor
Camping / backpacking	Negative	Low	Low	Negligible
Canoeing	Negative	Low	Low	Negligible
Angling	Negative	High	Low	Negligible
Swimming	Negative	Low	Low	Negligible
Operation				
Road access / parking	Negative	High	Low	Minor
Walking / running	Negative	High	Medium	Minor

Effect	Type of Effect	Sensitivity of Receptor	Magnitude of Effect	Significance
Cycling	Negative	High	Low	Minor
Camping / backpacking	Negative	Low	Low	Negligible
Canoeing	Negative	Low	Low	Negligible
Angling	Negative	High	Low	Negligible
Swimming	Negative	Low	Low	Negligible

14.11 Conclusion

- 14.11.1 The assessment addresses only direct impacts on recreation and access, with those associated with visual amenity assessed in **Chapter 7 - Landscape and Visual**, with transport and access on the public road network in **Chapter 15**, with Noise and Vibration in **Chapter 17**, and with tourism in **Chapter 17 - Socioeconomics and Tourism**.
- 14.11.2 The forms of public recreation known to take place within and around the site of the Proposed Development, and which have been assessed in this Chapter are as follows:
- Walking and running,
 - Cycling;
 - Camping and backpacking;
 - Canoeing;
 - Angling; and
 - Swimming.
- 14.11.3 The Proposed Development has the potential to impact upon recreational use and access within the proposed site and surrounding area. Most effects relate to construction disturbance. Construction and operational disturbance would be managed by provision of the measures outlined in **Appendix 14.1 – Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan**, which has been prepared in consultation with the Highland Council.
- 14.11.4 The most significant impacts on recreation and access during both construction and operation have been assessed as Minor, and as such are considered to be not significant.