

Any advice provided under this service is given on the basis of the professional opinion of the officer(s) concerned, based on the information provided and the planning policies and site constraints prevailing at the time, and any views expressed are not intended to prejudice the Council's determination of any subsequently formal planning application.

This pre-application advice has been specifically prepared for Infinergy Limited as the applicant/agent for the proposed development at Land Between Lochluichart And Loch Glascarnoch Garve.

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Pre-Application Advice Pack

Reference No: 16/04865/PREAPP

Date Issued: 13 December 2016

Confidentiality Requested: No

1. Proposed Development

Proposed Wind Farm of up to 6 turbines with a potential installed capacity of 20MW (subject to turbine type, 3MW+modelled); and related infrastructure including internal access tracks, borrow pits and substation and control building known as Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II (LXX).

2. Summary of Key Issues

The Council is generally supportive of renewable energy in appropriate locations subject to environmental impacts being satisfactorily addressed. While the Council is yet to complete its work in relation to landscape sensitivity and strategic capacity, required to inform the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, experience from elsewhere indicates that capacity will likely be found through sensitive extension to existing schemes rather than identifying whole new areas. An extension to this scheme may therefore be acceptable in principle.

Having said that, a theme picked up by both SNH and the Council's Landscape Officer is that an extension within the area proposed is likely to undo a significant aspect of the mitigation secured with the amendments to the original scheme, and raised again as an issue when Lochluichart Extension I was consented. It is recognised that the scheme is at an early stage and that your landscape advisor is yet to consider the scheme in more detail however, the impact regardless is likely to focus within those areas/those receptors that the mitigation sought to resolve first time around; specifically Ben Wyvis (route to/from) and the A835; particularly heading west between Inchbea and Altguish which is of concern.

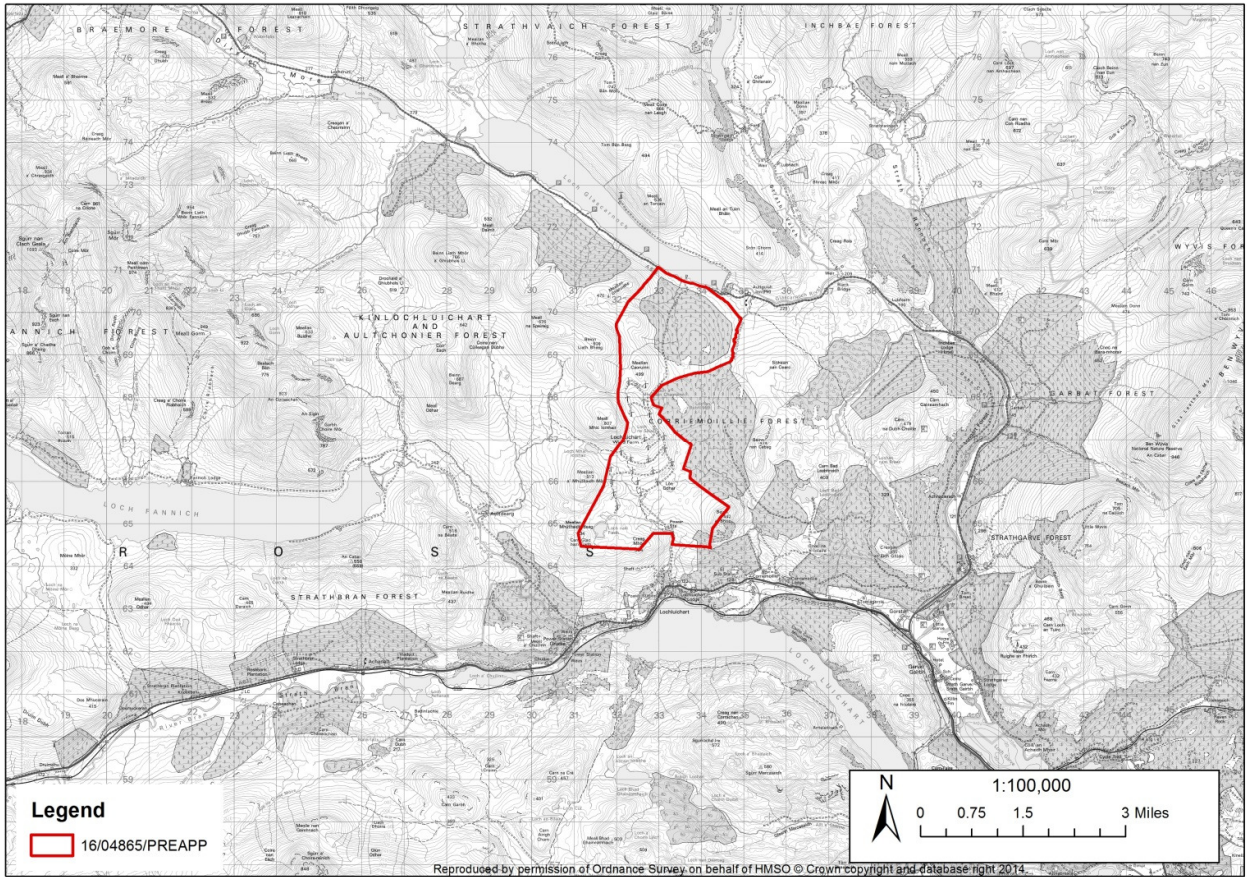
The Council, and SNH, is disappointed that this mitigation is effectively being undone by this latest proposal. From a landscape/visual impact perspective there is greater potential to revisit locating turbines within what had become the buffer area around Loch na Sallach. Turbines were originally removed from this area in the interest of protecting a breeding pair of Red Throated Diver. Given the lack of success that the pair have had in this regard in recent years it may be something that you would wish to explore further.

As a result of the positioning of the turbines, the proposal as presented is unlikely to be supported.

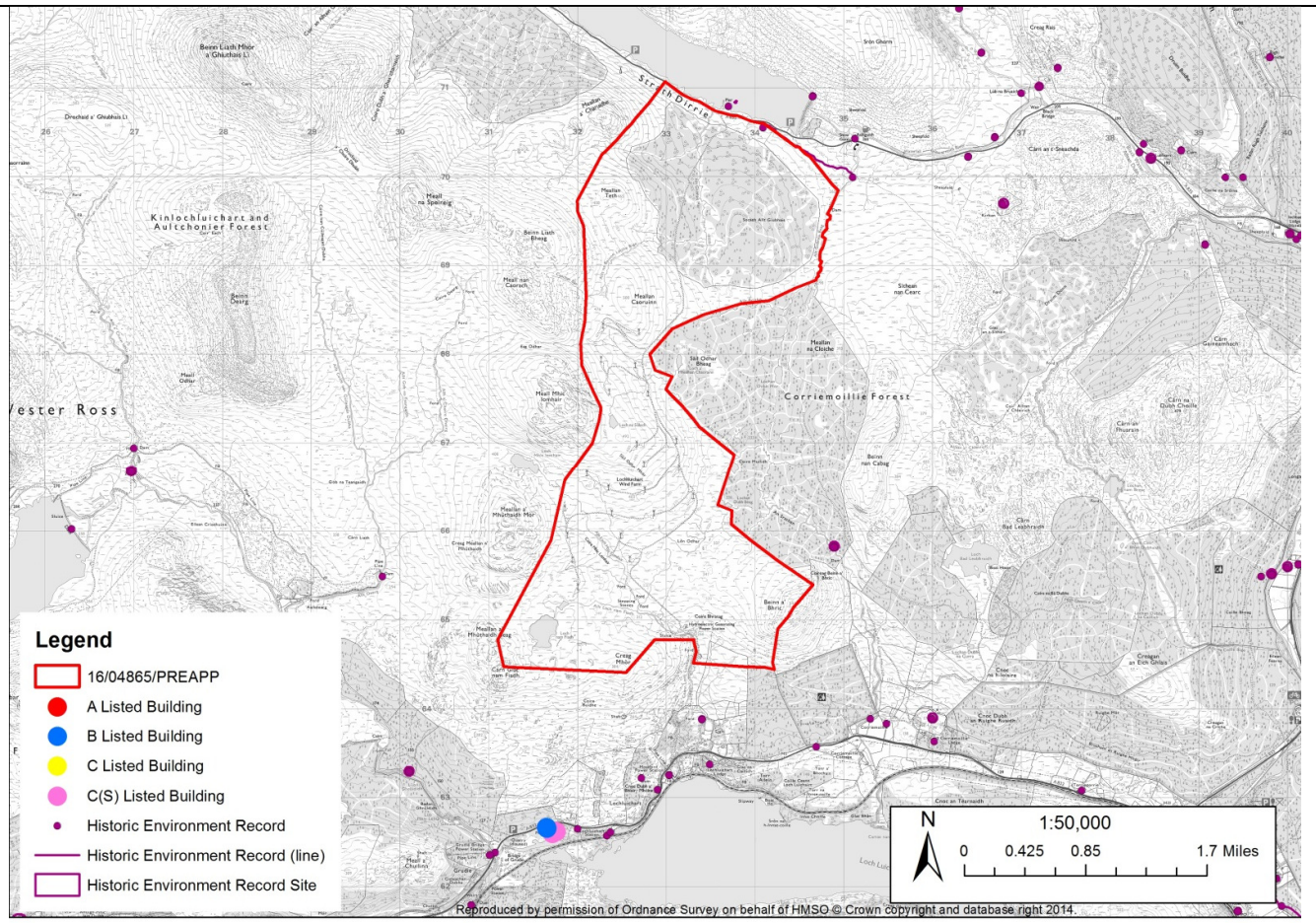
3. Background Information

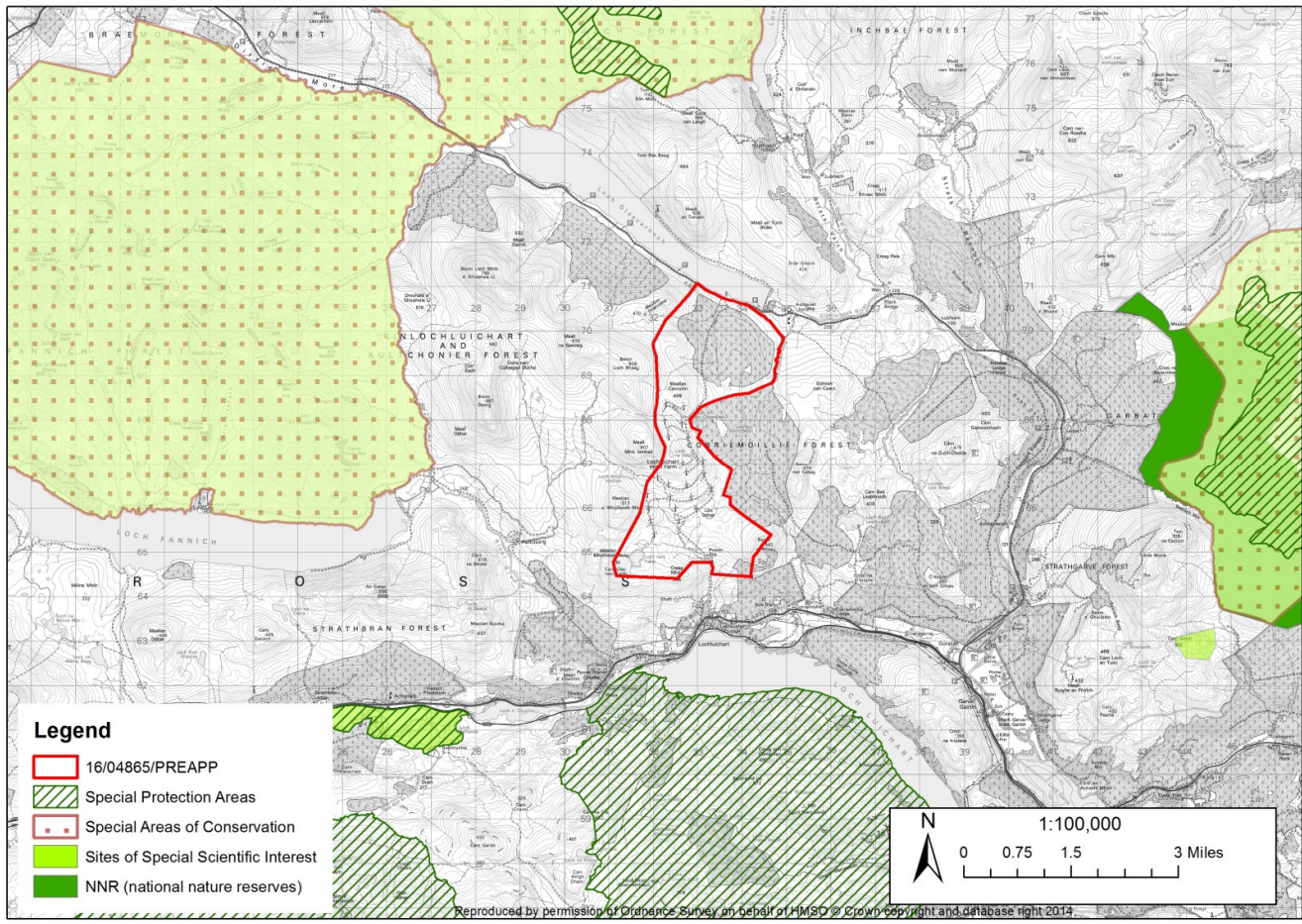
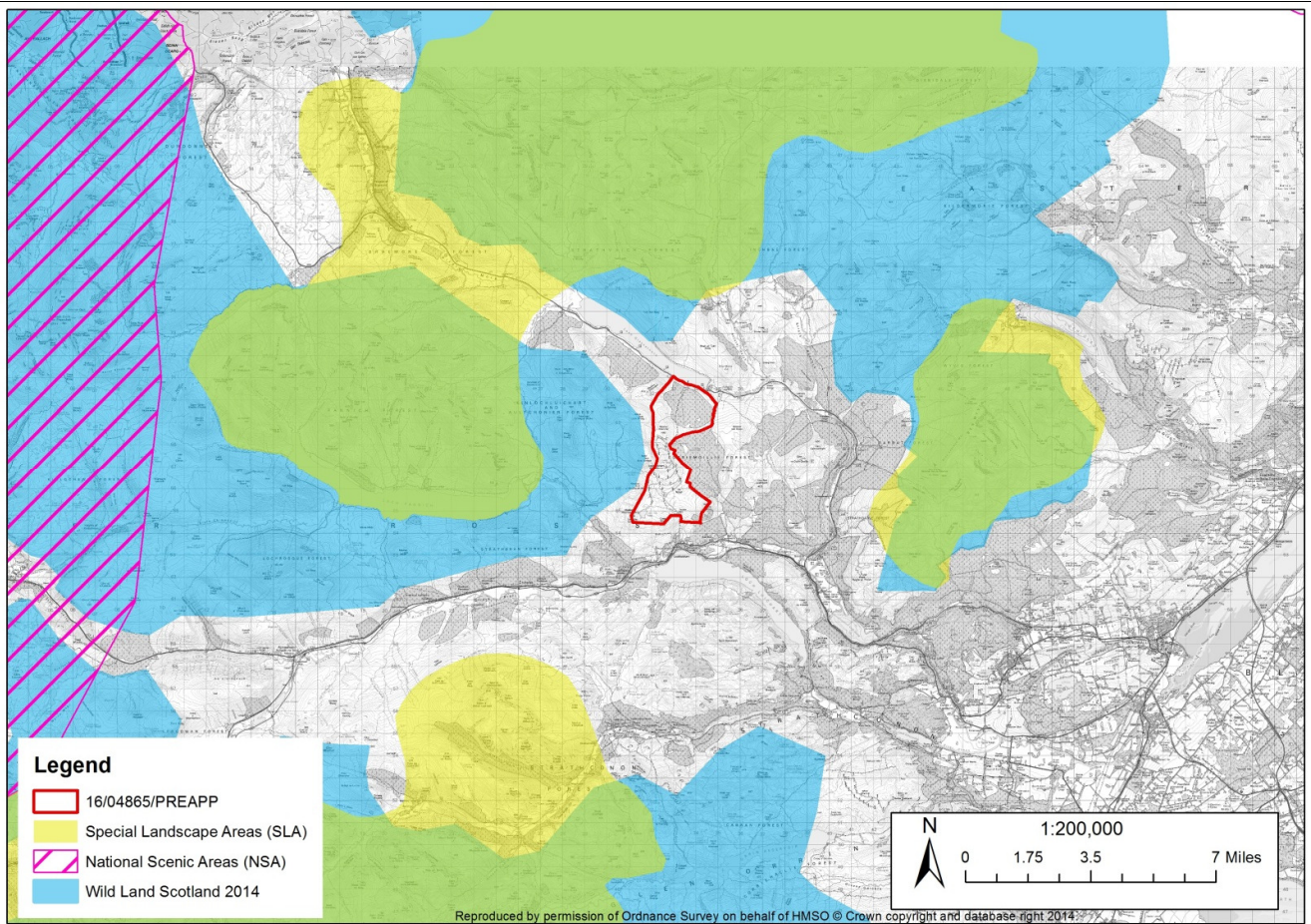
Site area	1311.30ha	
Land Ownership	Lochluichart Estate - Leslie Melville Family	
Existing Land Use(s)	Sporting estate/grazing/forestry	
Grid Reference	X: 232548	Y: 868627

4. Location © Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. 100023369 2013

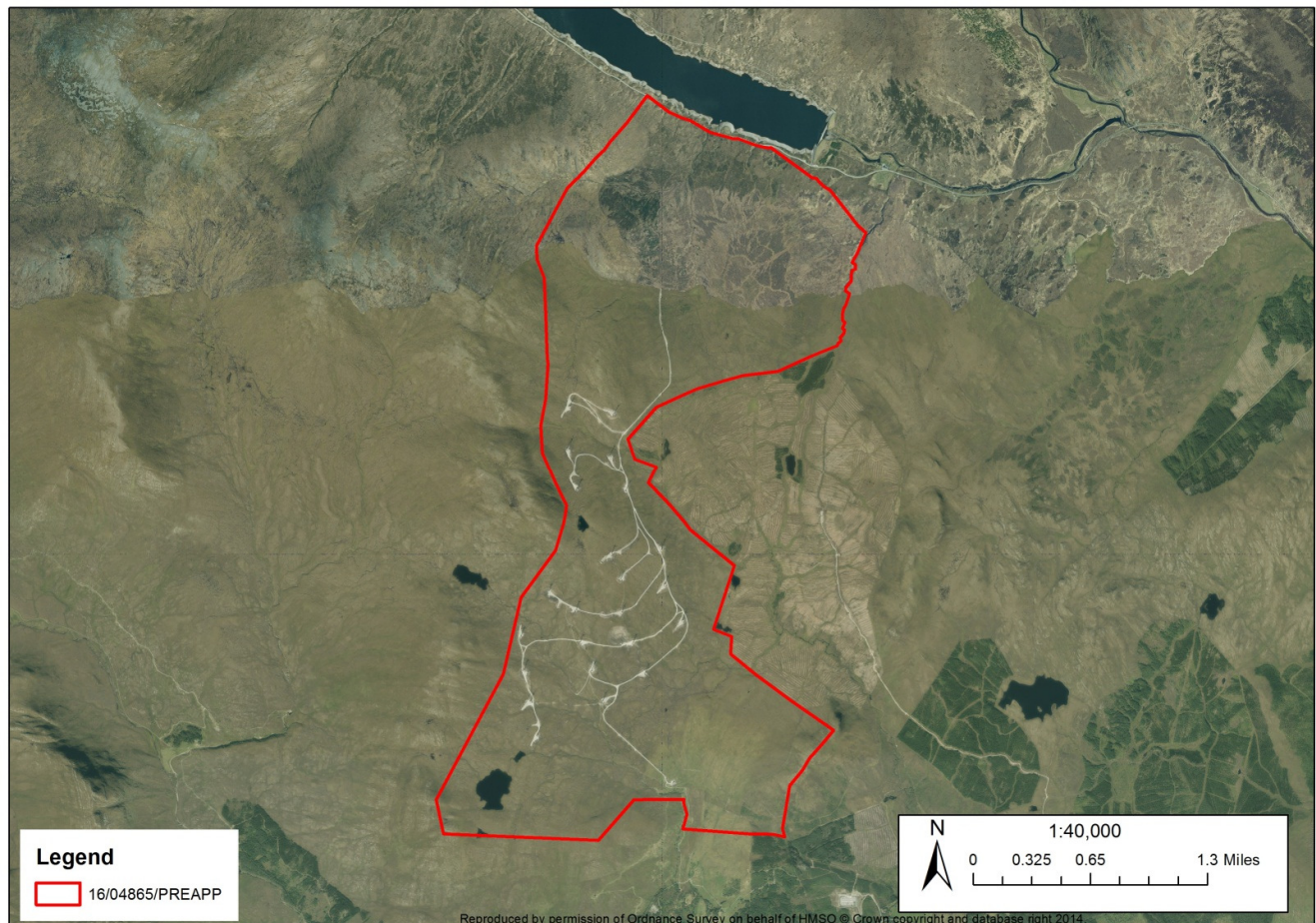


5. Constraints © Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. 100023369 2013





6. Photographs of site



7. Development Plan Designation and Planning Policy Appraisal

Response from Policy, Rhiannon Barbour

Policy Overview

The Development Plan comprises the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (2012) and the [Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan \(as continuing in force, July 2015\)](#) together with certain Supplementary Guidance including the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (2016).

Highland-wide Local Development Plan adopted 2012

The [Highland-wide Local Development Plan \(HwLDP\)](#) (2012) sets out the general policies for the Highland Council area. Key policies relating to this proposal set out at the meeting include:

Policy 55 Peat and Soils – This policy requires development proposals to demonstrate how they have avoided the unnecessary disturbance of peat and soils. Disturbance of peat must be clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits. The Council may require that a peatland management plan be submitted which shows how impacts have been minimized and mitigated. Given that indicative mapping of the site has shown that the proposal may occur on Carbon Rich Soils, Deep Peat and Priority Peatland Habitat, the application must be accompanied by a peat survey and assessment and peatland management plan. Further information on peat and soils will be provided by SEPA and SNH within the pre-application pack.

Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage – This policy considers impacts on natural, built and cultural heritage designations and features. These are split into three categories of importance: international, national and local/regional. Key features and designations relevant to this proposal include the following (the constraints map illustrates key features and designations):

- Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area
- Achanalt Marshes Special Protection Area
- Beinn Dearg Special Protection Area
- Ben Wyvis Special Protection Area
- Ben Wyvis Special Area of Conservation
- Ben Wyvis Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Fannich Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Beinn Dearg Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Carn Gorm Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ben Wyvis National Nature Reserve
- Rhidorroch - Beinn Dearg - Ben Wyvis Wild Land Area
- Fisherfield - Letterewe - Fannichs Wild Land Area
- Central Highlands Wild Land Area
- Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glencalvie Special Landscape Area
- Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch Special Landscape Area
- Ben Wyvis Special Landscape Area
- Kinlochluichart Listed Buildings

Further information on Wild Land Assessments can be found in the SNH response within this pack. [SLA Citations](#) should also be considered.

Policy 61 Landscape – This policy requires new development to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the relevant [Landscape Character Assessments](#) (LCAs). The LCAs are a starting point to base assessment of landscape and visual impact on. It is key to set out *who* the visual receptors of the development are, *what* the landscape impacts are and *how* these two factors relate.

This proposal is in a potentially prominent location visible from the A835 and in close proximity to a range of landscape sensitivities. Therefore development has potential to contribute to the perception of the area as well as impact more broadly on the area's landscape character. There is also potential for cumulative impacts due to the presence of a number of other constructed and consented wind farms close to this proposal. It is therefore fundamental that landscape and visual impacts are fully assessed through a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

As this proposal moves forward it will be important to continue discussions with the various stakeholders about the intended layout, design and siting.

Visualisations should be provided that accord with the Council's latest [Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments](#). Assessments should cover impacts of all elements of the development, not just the turbines, where they are not covered under a separate application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide information on all aspects of their proposal as far as possible at application stage, including information on intentions for connection to the grid, in order that the Council has the fullest understanding of the scheme.

Policy 67 Renewable Energy Developments – This policy notes the Council's support in principle for renewable energy developments. This support is subject to addressing important key issues and other criteria. The Council must be satisfied that the development is located, sited and designed in a way that will not be significantly detrimental to a number of considerations as set out in the Policy. This includes both individual impacts and cumulative impacts with other renewable energy developments.

As the project progresses, it will be important to maintain an up to date picture of development in the wider area, particularly for informing cumulative impact assessment. A starting point for this is the Council's [Highland Wind Map](#). A separate section is provided below on the Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance.

Policy 68 Community Renewable Energy Developments – This policy sets out that all proposals' acceptability will be tested to the same standards regardless of ownership. However if the community with an ownership interest is the only community impacted by the development, this will be a material consideration that may mean greater impacts to that community's amenity may be considered acceptable.