



Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II S42 SEIR

Non-Technical Summary

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ha	Hectares
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
MW	Megawatt
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
PP	Planning Permission
SEIR	Supporting Environmental Information Report
THC	The Highland Council



1.0 Introduction

This document is a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the Supplementary Environmental Information Report (SEI Report) which has been prepared in support of an application under Section 42 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 by Bluebell Wind Farm Limited ('the Applicant') in relation to Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II ('the Development').

The Development was granted planning permission by The Highland Council (THC) in July 2020 to construct five wind turbines. This permission was updated in January 2023 to reflect design changes when the Applicant was granted permission to increase the height of the turbines, adjust the position of one of the access tracks and one turning head, and extend the operational lifetime of the development from 25 to 40 years. The Applicant is applying for permission to construct the Development other than in accordance with planning conditions attached to the planning permission. Put simply, the Applicant is seeking to amend one of the planning conditions attached to the planning permission (21/02985/FUL).

The SEIR outlines environmental issues that are relevant to the proposed amendment. No physical changes to the consented Development are proposed as part of this application.

Electronic copies of the SEIR are available to view on the project website <https://www.lxxwindfarm.co.uk/downloads/> or via THC planning portal at <https://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam>. Previous environmental assessment reporting is also available on the project website, including that related to the 2021 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report and 2022 Further Environmental Information Report (FEIR).

1.1 Site Location and Description

The development site is approximately 18 km north-west of Dingwall and immediately due south of the A835. The approximate site centre is at British National Grid (BNG) 232984 868776.

The site occupies an area of 595 hectares (ha) and comprises upland habitats, including blanket bog, heathland and pockets of plantation woodland. The elevation of the site ranges from 260 m to 500 m above ordnance datum (AOD). There are a number of watercourses and a small lochan on the site.

2.0 Proposed Variations to the Current Planning Permission

This application is seeking to vary the wording of Condition 27 of the planning permission which sets a time limit for starting construction of the development. As planning permission was granted on the 30th January 2023, the development must begin by 30th January 2026.

Bluebell Wind Farm Limited is seeking to extend the implementation period by five years from the date of the new consent.

This Section 42 application does not include any changes to the size or layout of the approved Development. The Development comprises 5 wind turbines with a blade tip height of up to 149.9 m and an installed capacity of approximately 24 MW. The site location and site layout are shown in Figure 2.1 and Figure 3.1 of Volume 2 of the 2021 EIA Report. These figures are also included within this SEIR NTS as **Figures 2.1** and **2.2**.

3.0 Summary Technical Assessments

The SEIR provides a general update to the previous assessment of the Development as a whole, including a review of baseline site conditions and updates where appropriate. As this application must be assessed in accordance with current planning policy, it is important to



note that the original planning permission was granted shortly before the adoption of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). This Section 42 application therefore includes an assessment of how the Proposed Development aligns with NPF4 and any other relevant policy or guidance introduced since the original permission was granted.

An updated Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was undertaken, while ecology baseline site walkovers and surveys were undertaken to confirm that the baseline has not materially changed from what was presented in the 2021 EIA Report and 2022 FEIR. Both found no material change in the baseline, and concluding the following:

- The Landscape and Visual Assessment conducted for the 2021 EIA Report (Chapter 6) has been updated for this Section 42 Application. It comes to the same conclusions as the 2021 EIA Report:
 - Significant visual effects are likely to be contained within a maximum of 12.2 km from the Proposed Development turbines; and
 - Significant effects on landscape character are likely to be contained within a maximum radius of 8.2 km.

The cumulative wind farm review has been updated and considers the Kirkan Wind Farm (consented in 2023) and the Carn Fearna Wind Farm (a proposed wind farm development). It concludes that the two developments would not materially change the level of cumulative effects previously assessed in 2021.

- Extensive ecological surveys were carried out for the 2019 and 2021 EIA Reports and have been updated in 2023 and 2024 for this S42 application. Since the Development was granted planning permission, the UK Biodiversity Framework has been published (2024) as well as NPF4 in 2023. The updated ecological assessments have taken into account the policy changes in these documents. In summary, the updated surveys have identified no material change to the baseline, and therefore no anticipated changes to the assessed significance of effects on ecological receptors, as presented in the 2021 EIA Report and 2022 FEIR. Significant biodiversity enhancement will be delivered through implementation of a Habitat Management Plan (HMP), which will be submitted to THC prior to commencement of the Development. The HMP will provide detailed proposals for habitat enhancement and mitigation, ensuring long-term ecological benefits.
- Ornithology surveys were carried out for the 2019 and 2021 EIA Reports and the moorland breeding bird surveys, breeding raptor surveys, breeding diver surveys and black grouse surveys have been updated in 2023 and 2024 for this S42 application. No new bird species of conservation importance have been recorded in the study area. Since the Development was granted planning permission, the UK Biodiversity Framework has been published (2024) as well as NPF4 in 2023. The updated ornithological surveys have taken into account the policy changes in these documents. A Breeding Bird Protection Plan (BBPP) was produced in 2023, and updated in 2024 following the updated surveys. The updated surveys have identified no material change to the ornithological baseline in the 2019 and 2021 reports, and there is no anticipated change to the significance of effects of the Development.
- With regard to Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils, as there are no proposed changes to the design or layout of the Development, no additional surveys or updates to Technical Appendices from the 2021 EIA Report have been undertaken, and the study area for assessment of receptors is unchanged. Embedded mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design of the Development, which are outlined within the 2021 EIA Report. Embedded design measures include the avoidance of peat where practicable, and implementation of 50 m watercourse buffers. Additionally, best practice mitigation measures to be



adopted during construction are outlined within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (2019 EIA Report, Appendix 13.A). Conditions attached to the extant permission require submission of an updated CEMP and a construction-stage Peat Management Plan (PMP), and it is anticipated that these conditions will remain unchanged. Chapter 12 of the 2021 EIA Report, taking account of mitigation measures, assessed there to be no significant effects on hydrological, hydrogeological, geological and soil receptors. As there are no proposed changes to the Development layout or design, there is therefore no change to the assessment of effects on hydrology, hydrogeology, geology and soils. Residual effects on these receptors are therefore considered to be not significant in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Given that there is no proposed change to the Development layout or design, there is also no change to the assessment of noise; cultural heritage; transport; socio-economics and tourism; shadow flicker; aviation and radar; and telecommunications. There is a minor change to the Carbon Calculator tool output as a result of several updates to the tool, including revised fixed input values. Regarding these topics, the SEIR review findings from the 2021 EIA Report and 2022 FEIR, conclude the following:

- The noise assessment concluded that predicted wind turbine noise levels associated with operation of the Development meet the relevant daytime and night-time noise limits.
- The 2019 EIA Report and 2021 EIA Report concluded that there would be no significant adverse effects on cultural heritage assets within the Development Site boundary or on heritage assets within 20 km of the site. The archaeology and heritage assessment has been reviewed against NPF 4, with a site visit being undertaken in November 2023. The SEIR concludes that the Development will have no additional significant effects on archaeology or cultural heritage, and that there is no change to the conclusions of the 2019 EIA Report and 2021 EIA Report.
- The transport assessment found that whilst the Development would lead to a temporary increase in traffic volumes during construction, this would decrease considerably outside peak periods of construction. With the implementation of appropriate mitigation, no significant residual effects are anticipated.
- The socio-economic assessment found that the Development aligns with THC's Community Wealth Building Strategy and is expected to deliver local socio-economic benefits, including job creation during construction and operation, including an annual community benefit fund.
- Shadow flicker effects were assessed for the 2019 and 2021 EIA Reports. The assessment found that since the nearest residential property is 2 km from the turbines, shadow flicker effects are not anticipated. As there is no change to the layout or design of the Development, the assessment of shadow flicker effects is unchanged – no shadow flicker effects are anticipated.
- The aviation and radar assessment found that, after committed mitigation, there are no residual effects upon aviation and defence interests.
- The telecommunications assessment confirms that, through implemented design changes and embedded mitigation, the Development will have no residual effects on telecommunications or broadcasting installations.
- The forestry assessment confirms that given that there is no proposed change to the Development layout, design or candidate turbine model, there is no change to the assessment of forestry impacts.



- Carbon balance analysis calculates that the Development is expected to take 2.1 years of operation (i.e. renewable electricity generation) to repay the carbon emitted through construction and development of the Development. This is broadly similar to the 1.7 years estimated in the 2019 EIA Report, with the slight increase likely being attributable to the changes to fixed input values used in the model (as noted above).





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