

EARBA STORAGE

A GILKES ENERGY COMPANY

Earba 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 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development within a study area of 10 km. The LVIA has been undertaken 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 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.
- 7.1.3 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 within the study area.
- 7.1.4 Potential effects have been considered during the construction phase of the Proposed Development and during operation, in approximately year 1 and year 15 of operation, to illustrate the change associated with proposed landscape mitigation and regeneration. This includes the narrowing of access tracks, vegetated front faces to the Shios and Shuas Dams and woodland planting around the lower reservoir area and lower access track areas.

Summary of Effects

Landscape Effects

- 7.1.5 The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development to Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified by NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment of Scotland² and designated and protected landscapes within the area including the Cairngorms National Park, Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area (SLA), and Wild Land Area (WLA) 14: Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder.

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 January 2024]

- 7.1.6 The landscape assessment has established that during construction, there would be temporary, localised significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development, focussed around the upper and lower reservoir areas and dams, and areas to the west of the Shuas Dam and south and east of the Leamhain Dam towards the summit area of Càrn Dearg and Loch Pattack, for up to around 3 – 4km. These effects would lead to some corresponding localised significant effects on the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA, and WLA 14: Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder.
- 7.1.7 After completion of construction and following restoration, the extent of significant effects would reduce to a more localised area around the permanent features of the Proposed Development: the upper and lower reservoirs, the dams, surge shafts and powerhouse. Over time, with the growth of planting around the lower reservoir tracks, and particularly the powerhouse, the extent of significant effects would continue to reduce and after 15 years, whilst some localised significant effects on wild land are predicted around the powerhouse and Shuas Dam, wider significant effects on landscape character would be largely limited to an area within around 1 - 2 km of the upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam.
- 7.1.8 These effects would also result in a localised significant effect to WLA 14 during operation, although the wider effect on the WLA as a whole is not predicted to be significant.
- 7.1.9 No significant effects are predicted on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorm National Park.

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 areas, using transport and recreational routes and taking advantage of the views at defined outdoor viewing locations. Significant effects have been identified for recreational receptors using six upland walking routes during construction of the Proposed Development, where recreational users would pass adjacent to the reservoirs and dams, would overlook the key areas of construction from surrounding mountains, or where works would feature prominently in the hills above. In some cases, parts of these routes would also be upgraded and used by construction traffic.
- 7.1.11 During operation, the visual effects would reduce and would be limited to users of tracks directly alongside the upper and lower reservoir, and hill routes immediately overlooking the reservoirs. Over time, proposed woodland planting around Lochan na h-Earba would reduce the visual effects to recreational users in this area and these effects are predicted to become not significant after 15 years. Long term significant effects are therefore only expected to occur for recreational receptors within close proximity to the upper reservoir, Loch a' Bhealach Leamhain.
- 7.1.12 There would be no significant effects to the visual amenity of residents or other building-based visual receptors within the study area.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

- 7.1.13 The cumulative assessment has not identified any areas where the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would be increased if other proposed developments were considered within the baseline.

Conclusion

- 7.1.14 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 around the Proposed Development up to around 3 – 4 km also affecting the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA and WLA 14: Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder. However, during operation, these effects would reduce and significant effects would become more localised, associated with the main permanent structures of the Proposed Development at the upper and lower reservoirs. Over time, and after 15 years, mitigation measures, including woodland planting proposed as part of the Proposed Development would lead to significant effects becoming further localised, mostly focussed around the Leamhain Dam and proposed upper reservoir, with some very localised effects to wild land characteristics around the Shuas Dam and powerhouse. Although other elements of the Proposed Development, including operational drawdown would be perceptible, and in some cases more noticeable in the wider landscape, the overriding qualities of the surrounding landscape would remain present and these effects are not predicted to significantly change the existing characteristics of the landscape or lead to significant visual effects being experienced in the wider area.
- 7.1.15 By 15 years post construction, with the growth of proposed planting and other vegetation, the effect on the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA is predicted to be not significant. Whilst localised significant effects are predicted for Wild Land Area 14, this is not predicted to lead to a significant effect on the Wild Land Area overall. No significant effects are predicted to the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park.

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 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 and visiting in the area, and to the wider landscape resource, and the residual predicted significance of effects after mitigation.
- 7.2.2 As detailed in **Chapter 3: Description of Development**, 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 would be equal to [and/or] lesser than the construction impacts. As such, a separate assessment of potential decommissioning effects on Landscape and Visual is not included in this Chapter.
- 7.2.3 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 Highland Council (THC) 27th April 2023. 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 5: Scoping and Consultation, and associated appendices.

Table 7.1: Scoping Responses

Consultee	Response	Comment
THC	Landscape and visual effects should be considered separately in the assessment.	Landscape and visual effects 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	Photomontages have been produced to both Highland Council and NatureScot guidance, and are

Consultee	Response	Comment
	visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance.	included in Volume 3a and Volume 3b.
	This assessment should include the expected impact of all aspects of the development including any borrow pits, tracks, cable routes, lochside infrastructure and landscaping.	All aspects of the Proposed Development have been assessed, including temporary and permanent elements as well as landscape mitigation.
	Photomontages are required at different stages to consider the impacts of the proposal and any landscaping. THC recommend that the montages are produced at a range of intervals, including during and post construction.	In agreement with THC and NatureScot, photomontages have been produced at a range of intervals, including showing the Proposed Development during construction and at Year 1, 5 and 15 post-completion.
	The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints should be identified and stated in the supporting information.	The purpose of chosen visualisation locations is detailed in Table 7.2 .
	The finalised list of Viewpoints (VP) and wireframes for the assessment of effects of a proposed development must be agreed in advance of preparation of any visuals with THC.	Visualisation locations have been agreed with both THC and NatureScot (see paragraph 7.3.4).
	Request from the THC Landscape Officer for the inclusion of viewpoints from the Lochan na h-Earba access track, suggested locations being in the vicinity of the existing reservoir and from the Shios Dam end.	Two visualisation locations were included from the access track: VL6 (see Figure V3a-6a-f and Figure V3a-7a-f); and VL7 (see Figure V3b-6a-k and Figure V3b-7a-k).
	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, the national cycle network, long distance trails should be included in the assessment.	Core paths, the national cycle network and long distance trails have been included where relevant.

Consultee	Response	Comment
	Agree that a 10km study area is appropriate.	This has been taken forward as the study area.
	In addition to effects on the Landscape Character Types identified by NatureScot, the Landscape Assessment should consider the effect on the local landscape character composition which is formed where these LCTs come together, and which contributes to the individual sense of place in the locality.	The detailed landscape assessment gives consideration to local characteristics within the landscape where relevant (refer to Appendix 7.3).
	Cumulative assessment should give consideration to other energy development types including electricity network infrastructure and windfarms.	These development types were considered in cumulative searches but at the time of searching (November 2023) none were identified within the study area.
	Ardverikie Wall should be included as a visual receptor for the EIA.	A visualisation from Binnein Shuas (the Ardverikie wall) is included as VL9 (see Figure V3a-9a – 9f and Figure V3b-9a – 9k) and recreational users have been considered within the assessment as Route R16.
CNPA	There should be consideration of potential effects on the Special Landscape Qualities as part of the EIA process. Advice should be sought from NatureScot on assessment following draft NatureScot guidance.	Potential effects on the CNP and SLQs have been assessed in Appendix 7.4 taking consideration of the latest available NatureScot Guidance ³
	The boundary of the Cairngorms National Park should be clearly marked on location, layout, ZTV and view point location figures.	The CNP boundary has been included on figures where relevant.
NatureScot	A Wild land Assessment for WLA 14 (Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder) should be included, considering all elements of the proposed development Cumulative effects on WLA 14 should be included in the Wild Land Assessment as should impacts from lighting and details of mitigation measures to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of the Rannoch-Nevis-Mamores-Alder WLA (WLA14).	An assessment of WLA 14 has been included within Appendix 7.5 , and is summarised in Section 7.9 of this chapter. There would be no lighting other than emergency lighting included as part of the proposal and this has therefore not been considered.

³ Scottish Natural Heritage and Cairngorms National Park Authority (2010): The special landscape qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No.375

Consultee	Response	Comment
	Separate ZTVs for the track leading from the lower reservoir to the upper reservoir should be included.	Track ZTVs are included as Figures 7.2a - b .
	Given the pattern of visibility displayed on the scoping stage ZTV we advise that the locations for visualisations should also be used as assessment points. NatureScot advise that visuals should be produced for post-construction (1 year) and 10 years after completion to show the likely effect of proposed mitigation tree planting and welcome further consultation on viewpoint/ assessment point locations particularly with respect to WLA 14.	Locations used for visualisations have all been assessed as part of the assessment of route-based receptors. Visuals have been produced for 15 years after completion following subsequent consultation (see paragraph 7.3.4).
	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 at a range of intervals including during construction and in year 1, 5 and 15 of operation, including both temporary and permanent infrastructure and landscape mitigation proposals, where relevant. All elements of the Proposed Development are included on the photomontages where relevant. A section of the powerhouse showing indicative planting is included as Figure 2.19.
	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. (see paragraphs 7.3.13 – 7.3.16)
	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 7.7 of this chapter. Mitigation specifically relating to the WLA is discussed in Appendix 7.5 .
Mountaineering Scotland	Proposed viewpoints should allow a comprehensive assessment of the Proposed Development from a mountaineering	Visualisation locations have been agreed with THC and NatureScot and chosen to show a

Consultee	Response	Comment
	perspective, and recreational access routes should be identified and managed.	representation of elevated and lower level views. Recreational routes within the study area which have potential for effects have been included within the visual assessment (see Appendix 7.2 and Section 7.8 of this chapter).
	Suggest two additional viewpoints (visualisation locations) for inclusion: the east top of Beinn a' Chlachair at 977m (NN486790) and the top of the popular climbing crags of Ardverikie Wall (NN467827)	An additional visualisation location was included at Binnein Shuas (the Ardverikie Wall). With the agreement of THC the location on the east of Beinn a' Chlachair was relocated to Bealach Leamhain where a good representative view of the upper reservoir would be obtained.

Post Scoping Consultation

- 7.3.4 Post scoping consultation was undertaken with THC and NatureScot to agree the locations and scope for visualisations. A meeting was held with THC and NatureScot to discuss this on the 13th of September 2023, and further consultation was undertaken by email. The agreed list of visualisations is included in **Table 7.2**. It was agreed through this consultation that visualisations would be shown at three stages during operation: year 1, year 5 and year 15. It was also agreed that visualisations showing the construction stage would be included. These have been prepared for two of the visualisation locations: VL4 (see **Figure V3a-4a-f** and **Figure V3b-4a-k**); and VL10 (see **Figure V3a-10a-f**, and **Figure V3b-10a-k**).
- 7.3.5 It was also agreed during consultation that VL8, requested by Mountaineering Scotland would be relocated from the eastern summit area of Beinn a' Chlachair to a position overlooking Loch a' Bhealach Leamhain to provide a better overview of the upper reservoir.

Study Area

- 7.3.6 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 7.3.7 - 7.3.11 below), and professional judgement. In agreement with THC and NatureScot, a study area of 10 km from the Proposed Development has been adopted for the LVIA.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 7.3.7 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-b**. 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.
- 7.3.8 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:
- Shios and Shuas Dams: 378m AOD;
 - Leamhain Dam: 711m AOD
 - Powerhouse: 17m above proposed ground level; and
 - Tracks: 4m above running surface, representative of use by trucks during construction.
- 7.3.9 The ZTV takes account of earth curvature and light refractivity, set to 0.075 in accordance with NatureScot guidance⁴.
- 7.3.10 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 land form 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.
- 7.3.11 Further details on the technical parameters of the ZTV production are included in **Appendix 7.1**.

Visualisations

- 7.3.12 Visualisations have been produced to support the LVIA work, in accordance with both THC⁵ and NatureScot⁴ visualisation standards. These show the predicted appearance of the Proposed Development during operation, upon completion, and after 15 years, once planting is expected to be established. The locations and purpose of visualisations are outlined in **Table 7.2**.

Table 7.2: Visualisation Locations

VL	Name	Reason for selection
VL1	Càrn Liath summit	Munro summit to the north of the development, representative of views obtained from Munro summits to the north of Loch Laggan.
VL2	Beinn a' Chaorainn summit	Munro summit to the north-west of the development suggested in Scoping Report, representative of views obtained from Munro summits to the north of Loch Laggan.

⁴ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017): Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2.

⁵ The Highland Council (2016): Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments.

VL	Name	Reason for selection
VL3	Càrn Dearg summit	Munro summit to the south of the development located in Rannoch-Nevis-Mamore-Alder Wild Land Area (WLA 14) and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area (SLA). Representative of views of the upper reservoir which would be obtained by hill walkers.
VL4	Creag Pitridh summit	Munro summit to the east of the development suggested located in WLA 14 (Rannoch-Nevis-Mamore-Alder) and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA. Representative of views of the lower reservoir which would be obtained by hillwalkers. A visualisation during construction has also been provided from this VL.
VL5	Beinn a' Chlachair summit	Munro summit to the south of the development located in WLA 14 Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA. Representative of views of the Shuas Dam area which would be obtained by hillwalkers
VL6	Proposed access track to north-east of Lochan na h-Earba	Requested by THC as indicative of views obtained by visual receptors alongside the proposed lower reservoir. Also, within WLA 14 and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA.
VL7	Proposed access track to south-east of Lochan na h-Earba	Requested by THC as indicative of views obtained by visual receptors alongside the proposed lower reservoir. Also, within WLA 14 and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA.
VL8	North-east of Beinn a' Chlachair	Location agreed with THC on the stalkers path over Bealach Leamhain as representative of views by walkers on the nearby 3 Munros route between Beinn a' Chlachair and Creag Pitridh and indicative of the landscape effects on Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain. Also, within WLA 14 and Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA.
VL9	Binnein Shuas, near summit	Intended to be representative of the view obtained by rock climbers at the top of the Ardverikie Wall crag. Illustrating the setting of the proposed powerhouse in the landscape.
VL10	Track to Loch Pattack	Located WLA 14 and representative of views of the Leamhain Dam obtained by walkers and cyclists using recreational routes around Loch Pattack,
VL11	Geal-charn summit	Munro summit on the edge of the Cairngorm National Park and within WLA 14, representative of elevated views of the Leamhain Dam from the south-east west facing slopes of the mountains along Loch Erich.

Consideration of Drawdown Fluctuations within the LVIA

- 7.3.13 The maximum water level of the lower reservoir (Lochan na h-Earba) would be 376 m AOD and the minimum water level would be 355 m AOD, giving a maximum vertical drawdown extent of 21 m. The maximum water level of the upper reservoir (Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain) would be 710 m AOD and the minimum water level would be 640 m AOD, giving a maximum vertical drawdown extent of 70 m.
- 7.3.14 Based upon an installed generating capacity of up to 1800 MW, it would take approximately 22 hours of continuous electricity production at maximum output to move the maximum volume of water from the upper to lower reservoir. This would fill the lower reservoir but would not fully draw down the upper reservoir if starting from full. It would take approximately 30 hours of pumping to move this volume of water from the lower to upper reservoir, which would lead to maximum drawdown appearance in the lower reservoir.
- 7.3.15 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 either of the reservoirs to be fully drawn down or fully filled at any given time would be rare because this would usually occur 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, judgements have been made based on a varying situation and an assumption of the more likely scenario being, that reservoirs would be partially filled for the majority of the time.
- 7.3.16 The photomontages have been prepared to show water level at half full, as this is considered to be most representative picture of how the reservoirs would appear for the majority of the time.

Issues Scoped out of Assessment

- 7.3.17 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.
- 7.3.18 Assessment of Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh WLA (WLA 19) has been scoped out in agreement with NatureScot as the potential for significant effects is unlikely.

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

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

Supplementary Guidance

7.4.3 The following Supplementary Guidance (SG) 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 the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3)⁶ 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

⁶ Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013): Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Effect Assessment (Third Edition). Routledge.

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.

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 the following general documents and sources:
- National Planning Policy and Guidance, including Scottish Planning Policy, the Third National Planning Framework, and Revised Draft Fourth National Planning Framework (refer to Chapter 6: Planning and Energy Policy for further discussion on planning policies relevant to the Proposed Development)
 - The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (THC, 2012) and West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) (THC, 2019).
 - 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 National Library of Scotland.
 - The ZTV for the Proposed Development (see **Figures 7.1a-b**); and
 - Site survey undertaken in May and August 2023.

- 7.5.9 In addition, the following specific baseline activities were undertaken for the two differing assessments of landscape and visual effects:

Landscape Assessment Baseline Tasks

- 7.5.10 The desk review for the landscape assessment has included review of the following additional documents and resources:
- Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + Maclellan and Wood, 2011)⁷; and
 - NatureScot Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Descriptions (SNH, 2019 [online])².

Identification of Baseline Landscape Value

- 7.5.11 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.
- 7.5.12 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.
- 7.5.13 Criteria for the allocation of perceived landscape value are outlined in **Table 7.3** below:

⁷ Horner + Maclellan (2011): Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas. The Highland Council.

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

- 7.5.14 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.
- 7.5.15 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]⁸;

⁸The Highland Council, Core Paths Interactive Map [ONLINE]:
<https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2fd3fc9c72d545f7bcf1b43bf5c8445f> [accessed November 2023].

- Scottish Hill Tracks (Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways), 2011)⁹ ; and
- Other web based and published sources providing information on local resources and activities within the study area.

7.5.16 Site visits were undertaken in May and August 2023 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, including information on the types 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.

Appreciation of the Development Proposed

7.5.17 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.

7.5.18 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 of other, similar development types.

Identification of Key Landscape and Visual Receptors

7.5.19 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:

7.5.20 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.

7.5.21 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.

⁹The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) (2011): Scottish Hill Tracks (Fifth Edition) Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

Identification of Potential Effects

- 7.5.22 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.
- 7.5.23 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.
- 7.5.24 Where it is established that potential effects could be limited by mitigation measures, these are also given consideration.
- 7.5.25 Potential effects are evaluated through the allocation of criteria for sensitivity and magnitude.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

- 7.5.26 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.
- 7.5.27 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; 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.
- 7.5.28 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; • roads and transport routes where the changed aspect is an important element in the view and there are no detracting features present; and
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

7.5.29 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).

7.5.30 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, three ratings for magnitude of change have been included: during the construction of the Proposed Development, in the first year following completion, and approximately 15 years post construction, 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.

Magnitude Rating	Landscape	Visual
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

- 7.5.31 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.
- 7.5.32 In recognition of the potential for effects to vary over time, the assessment has been undertaken at three different stages: during the construction phase, following completion 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.
- 7.5.33 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.
- 7.5.34 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.
- 7.5.35 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.

Significance of Effect	Landscape	Visual
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

7.5.36 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 around Lochan na h-Earba and across Binnein Shuas and Binnein Shios is proposed as part of biodiversity net gain proposals within Chapter 8: Terrestrial Ecology (see Appendix 8.6). 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, reference has been made to how this may alter longer term landscape character and visual effects where relevant. It is assumed for this purpose that this planting would appear as naturalised, native woodland with the minimum of formal and mechanised planting and maintenance techniques being used.

- Planting proposals developed for landscape and visual purposes and integrated into the design of the Proposed Development are 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 7.3.7 to 7.3.11 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 (May and August 2023) 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 within Ardverikie Estate, to the north of Loch Laggan. This landscape comprises forested slopes rising from the loch shore into a complex structure of rocky crags and knolls, which transitions into a more remote upland landscape of large mountain masses and sweeping moorland valleys populated by burns and lochs. Loch a' Bhelaich Leamhain, which would comprise the upper reservoir, is located within a bowl-shaped corrie set within the prominent summits of Creag Pitridh, Geal Charn and Beinn a' Chlachair. Vegetation consists mainly of heather moorland, with areas of exposed rock, crag and scree, particular on higher ground. The lower reservoir would be located within a scooped, U-shaped valley, characterised by the two separate lochs of Lochan na h-Earba and contained by rough, rocky crags to north and south. This area shows a smaller-scale, enclosed and intimate feel with tracks and small weirs present on the lochs. The slopes surrounding Lochan na h-Earba are covered by rough grassland, with scattered mature trees accommodating a range of species. The wider setting consists largely of remote upland, with settlement concentrated around Loch Laggan and the A86, to the north of the Proposed Development. Hydro development is relatively common within the wider landscape, with River Pattack, Loch Laggan and Loch Ericht being used for hydro development within the study area. The area is also popular for recreation with a number of tracks and paths leading through the valleys and towards the mountain summits.

Designated and Protected Landscapes

- 7.6.2 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.

- 7.6.3 The following designated or protected landscapes fall within the study area (see **Figure 7.6**):

National Context:

- Cairngorms National Park (CNP);
- Wild Land Area (WLA) 14. Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder; and
- WLA 19. Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh;

Regional / Local Context:

- Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area (SLA).

- 7.6.4 In agreement with NatureScot, WLA 19 has been scoped out of further assessment due to very limited potential intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
- 7.6.5 Those areas identified for inclusion are described below and their Special Qualities are listed in **Table 7.6**. Further baseline description of the parts of the CNP falling within the study area is included in **Appendix 7.4**.

Cairngorms National Park

- 7.6.6 National Park is a national, statutory designation allocated to landscapes of substantially high quality in which the primary objective is the conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. The boundary of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) is located around 3.5km to the west of the Proposed Development Area at its closest point.
- 7.6.7 Special landscape qualities of the CNP are outlined in the document, 'The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park' (SNH/CNPA, 2010)³. Special Landscape Qualities are defined as being, "...the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery".
- 7.6.8 Within the study area, the CNP covers Strath Mashie and Glen Shirra to the north of the Proposed Development, and some mountain summit areas on the eastern side of Loch Ericht.

WLA 14. Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder

- 7.6.9 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.
- 7.6.10 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.

- 7.6.11 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.
- 7.6.12 The Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder WLA (WLA 14), covers a very extensive area (1180 km²) of mountains, glens and peatlands, stretching from the Cairngorms National Park and A9 at its eastern extent, and including Ben Nevis, east Glen Coe and Rannoch moor within its western extent. Within the study it covers most of the southern area, including Lochan na h-Earba and areas south and west, and it is defined by a group of complex and diverse craggy mountains, separated by long, enclosed, sweeping glens, lochs and corries. Limited areas of human intervention include tracks and small forest plantations which are more prevalent to the north and east with the strength of wildness becoming progressively stronger when moving further to the south-west.
- 7.6.13 NatureScot has identified WLA Qualities (WLQs) for each of the WLAs. Those for WLA 14 are listed in **Table 7.6**. Further baseline description of the WLA is contained in **Appendix 7.5**.

Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA

- 7.6.14 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 of Highland SLAs are identified in the publication, *Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas* (Horner + MacLennan and Wood, 2011)⁷.
- 7.6.15 Within the study area, this SLA covers Loch Laggan and, Strath Mashie and Glen Shirra, the mountain slopes and corries of Creag Meagaidh, to the north of Loch Laggan, and stretches across the mountain and moorland areas to Ben Alder and part of Loch Ericht in the south. This includes a range of landscapes from wooded and forested glen and loch shore areas, to rising moorland that leads to distinctive craggy summits and mountain plateaus.
- 7.6.16 The Special Qualities of the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA are detailed in **Table 7.6**. Further baseline description of the SLA is contained in **Appendix 7.6**.

Table 7.7: Special Qualities of Designated and Protected Landscapes

Designated / Protected Area	Special Qualities* (*Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of CNP, WLA Qualities (WLQs) and Special Qualities of SLAs)
CNP	General Qualities: • Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath • Vastness of space, scale and height • Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes • A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland • ‘The harmony of complicated curves’ • Landscapes both cultural and natural The Mountains and Plateaux: • The unifying presence of the central mountains • An imposing massif of strong dramatic character • The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulderstrewn high ground • The surrounding hills • The drama of deep corries • Exceptional glacial landforms • Snowscapes Moorlands: • Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops • A patchwork of muirburn Glens and Straths: • Steep glens and high passes • Broad, farmed straths • Renowned rivers • Beautiful lochs Trees, Woods and Forests: • Dark and venerable pine forest • Light and airy birch woods • Parkland and policy woodlands • Long association with forestry Wildlife and Nature: • Dominance of natural landforms

Designated / Protected Area	Special Qualities* (*Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of CNP, WLA Qualities (WLQs) and Special Qualities of SLAs)
	• Extensive tracts of natural vegetation • Association with iconic animals • Wild land • Wildness Visual and Sensory Qualities: • Layers of receding ridge lines • Grand panoramas and framed views • A landscape of many colours • Dark skies • Attractive and contrasting textures • The dominance of natural sounds Culture and History: • Distinctive planned towns • Vernacular stone buildings • Dramatic, historical routes • The wistfulness of abandoned settlements • Focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges • The Royal connection Recreation: • A landscape of opportunities • Spirituality (SNH and CNPA, 2010)
WLA 14. Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder	• WLQ1: Mountain ranges and glens of varying landform, but all arresting, with towering, steep and rugged slopes and striking physical features • WLQ 2: A strong contrast of wide open peatland, lochs and steep-sided mountains that highlight the visibility and awe-inspiring qualities of each • WLQ 3: An extensive and remote mountain and peatland interior with a strong sense of sanctuary, appearing even larger due to distant views to surrounding wild land areas • WLQ 4: A large area which is visited by many people to experience wild land qualities in different ways, whilst maintaining a sense of remoteness, sanctuary, challenge and risk

Designated / Protected Area	Special Qualities* (*Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of CNP, WLA Qualities (WLQs) and Special Qualities of SLAs)
	• WLQ 5: An extensive pattern of lochs, lochans, burns and bog that highlight the ruggedness of the landform, limit access and contribute to the sense of naturalness (SNH, 2017)
Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA	Ever Changing Compositions: • This SLA comprises a contrasting combination of landform and landuse, forming a fairly confusing composition and a varied character of views. • A dynamic sense of place is experienced through ever changing combinations of high mountain, craggy knolls and ridges, smooth moorland, dark coniferous forest and native broadleaf woodland, flat farmed strath and open loch. • This area includes some striking landscape features: Coire Ardair, on Creag Meagaidh is one of Scotland's most dramatic mountain corries: Creag Dhubh, near Newtonmore is one of Scotland's most impressive roadside crags: And the Dirc Mhór, off the beaten track in the hills west of Dalwhinnie, is one the country's best examples of a glacial meltwater channel. • Loch Laggan, an extensive body of open water flanked by wooded shores and slopes, separates the Aberarder and Ardverikie Forests. This provides the focus for long ranging panoramas and intimate vistas, particularly for users of the A86. • Glen Banchor in the north is enclosed by a complex pattern of craggy hills and deep glens and displays a lonely character despite its relative proximity to Newtonmore and the busy A9 corridor. • The Monadhliath Mountains form a simple landform horizon to the north in contrast to Ben Alder and Creag Meagaidh which are more variable in form. • Creag Meagaidh which is National Nature Reserve is popular with visitors all year round and particularly in the winter as it provides challenging walking and ice climbing. • Ben Alder is remote from public access routes and a visit requires a long walk in, with consequent qualities of wildness. Historic Landscape: • This area comprises a range of features that lend a sense of history to the landscape, including medieval castles such as the ruinous castle on Eilean an Righ in Loch Laggan, depopulated medieval townships with many associated shielings in the hills, and post-medieval crofting townships and farmsteads. • There is a picturesque sequence of contrasts between upland mountains and settled straths which are enhanced by castles and lodges.

Designated / Protected Area	Special Qualities* (*Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of CNP, WLA Qualities (WLQs) and Special Qualities of SLAs)
	• Cluny Castle and Glen Trium House, with their small-scale policy landscapes, give the area an added visual richness. • Current day settlement is heavily concentrated around the banks of the River Spey and, to a lesser extent, the River Truim. Prehistoric settlement is especially pronounced and present in significant concentrations along the River Spey to the south-west of Newtonmore. This area was clearly of importance in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Also present are more contemporary defensive structures, such as the Fort at Dun da Lamh (Black Craig). (THC, 2011)

Landscape Character

- 7.6.17 NatureScot has undertaken detailed review and classification of various landscape areas and types of Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online])². 14 individual Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are identified within the study area for the Proposed Development (see **Figure 7.5**).
- 7.6.18 The following eight LCTs have been identified for inclusion within the assessment:
- LCT 85: Isolated Mountain Plateau;
 - LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch & Strathspey;
 - LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills;
 - LCT 88: Loch and Glen;
 - LCT 89: Broad Loch and Glen;
 - LCT 126: Upland Glen – Cairngorms;
 - LCT 236: Smooth Moorland Ridges; and
 - LCT 238: Rugged Massif – Lochaber
- 7.6.19 Following initial appraisal and site visits, the following six LCTS were scoped out of the assessment due to the limited extent of theoretical visibility and / or predominance of woodland which results in the potential for significant effects being very unlikely:
- LCT 124: Summits and Plateaux – Cairngorms;
 - LCT 221: Rolling Uplands – Inverness;
 - LCT 231: Upland Glen – Inverness;
 - LCT 235: Broad Forested Strath;
 - LCT 373: Upper Upland Glens with Lochs; and
 - LCT 376: Summits and Plateaux – Tayside.

- 7.6.20 These LCTs are considered to provide an accurate representation of landscape character across the study area and have therefore been used as the basis for the landscape assessment. The LCTs are described in further **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-b**) indicates that visibility of the Leamhain Dam would be mostly experienced in the south-eastern part of the study area, mainly from elevated summits, ridgelines and facing slopes to the south across Càrn Dearg and An Lairig and to the east of River Pattack valley and Loch Ericht. Some lower level visibility is also indicated around Loch Pattack. There would be some very limited visibility from elevated summits to the north-west including the summits of Creag Meagaidh and Beinn a' Chaorainn.
- 7.7.2 The Shios and Shuas Dams, and the powerhouse to a lesser extent, would be theoretically visible from the surrounding slopes and summits within the immediate context of the Proposed Development within the Lochan na h-Earba valley extending in areas through the valley to valley floor and facing slopes to the south-west and north-east, with the ZTVs for the Shuas Dam and powerhouse tending to be a focus across areas to the south-west, and for the Shios Dam covering areas to the north-east. Some limited theoretical visibility is also indicated across higher slopes and summits to the north of Loch Laggan and around Glen Shirra. Ground truthing suggests that the presence of woodland and forest cover around Strath Mashie and Loch Laggan, and close to the Shios Dam would inhibit most views of this dam, with the exception of more distant views from the more elevated areas to the north of Loch Laggan.
- 7.7.3 The ZTV of the access tracks between Moy and Bealach Leamhain (see **Figures 7.2a-b**) suggests that vehicles using the track would be seen over a relatively wide area to the north and west, with some potential views also obtained from higher ground to the north-east and a few summits to the south-west. 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 not be visible, and with reinstatement of vegetation on cuttings and embankments the tracks 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 (see **Figure 7.6**) are limited to scattered buildings along the A86. The main settlement within the study area is Kinloch Laggan, located approximately 5 km from the Proposed Development.

Four receptor groups have been identified for inclusion within the visual assessment, and are shown on **Figure 7.7**.

B1: Luiblea and Tòrgulbin

- 7.7.6 This receptor location considers residents and visitors to residential properties in a grouping south of the A86 and River Spean, west of Loch Laggan, on either side of Abhainn Ghuilbinn. Views from this location include main views from Luiblea to the south-south-east, partially contained by nearby planting, but with some more open upper-level views across field, and watercourse towards hill slopes. For Tòrgulbin, main views appear to be north and north-east, but are largely screened / filtered by nearby trees. Secondary views to the east are screened/ filtered from Tòrgulbin, and more open from Luiblea.

B2: Moy Lodge

- 7.7.7 This receptor group comprises residents and visitors to properties on the southern side of A86, at the western end of Loch Laggan, where receptors have main views north-east and south-east onto Loch Laggan. Trees near the loch screen more distant views to the south.

B3: Moy

- 7.7.8 This receptor group comprises residents and visitors to properties on the southern side of A86, with main views south-east and south-west across fields, towards reservoir.

B4: Kinloch Laggan

- 7.7.9 This receptor group comprises residents and visitors to a group of buildings at the north-eastern end of Loch Laggan including the properties of Tullochroam, Aberarder Lodge, Kinloch Lodge and others, as well as the St Kenneth's Cross, beach and Corporal J Hendry GC Memorial, with a variety of views, towards the beach and along Loch Laggan or overlooking the A86. Views for properties to south of A86 and River Pattack are largely contained by trees.

Route-based Visual Receptors

- 7.7.10 Potential route-based visual receptors include those using public roads and recreational users of paths, tracks and other established walking routes (see **Figure 7.6**). Views from the following routes have been identified within the study area for inclusion within the assessment (see **Figure 7.7**).
- 7.7.11 Sixteen routes have been included within the assessment: R1 is a public road; while R1 – R16 are recreational routes.

Public Roads

- 7.7.12 The following public roads have been included within the assessment:
- **R1 – A86:** A-road through Glen Spean, along northern shores of Loch Laggan.

Recreational Routes

- 7.7.13 The following recreational routes have been included within the assessment:

- **R2 – Glen Shirra Tracks:** Recreational tracks through Glen Shirra between A86 at Kinloch Laggan and Glensherro Lodge.
- **R3 – Mountain Route to Càrn Liath, Stob Poite Coire Ardair and Creag Meagaidh:** Recreational route connecting ascent/descent of three munros and A86 (Càrn Liath summit being VL 1, see **Figures V3a-1a-f** and **V3b-1a-k**). Part of the route from the A86 to Lochan a' Choire, along Allt Coire Ardair, is Core Path BS08.01. This is referred to as the Creag Meagaidh circuit on walkhighlands website.
- **R4 – Mountain Route to Beinn a' Chaorainn and Beinn Teallach:** Recreational route connecting ascent/descent of two munros and A86 (Beinn a' Chaorainn summit being VL 2, see **Figures V3a-2a-f** and **V3b-2a-k**).
- **R5 – Mountain Route to Beinn na Lap:** Recreational route south from A86 through forestry and through Strath Ossian, passing west of Loch Ghuilbinn and Loch na Lap to munro summit Beinn na Lap.
- **R6 – Mountain Route to Beinn a' Chlachair, Geal Charn and Creag Pitridh:** Recreational route connecting ascent/descent of three munros and A86 (Creag Pitridh summit being VL 4, see **Figures V3a-4a-f** and **V3b-4a-k**; Beinn a' Chlachair summit being VL 5, see **Figures V3a-5a-f** and **V3b-5a-k**; and location on route near Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain being VL 8, see **Figures V3a-8a-f** and **V3b-8a-k**).
- **R7 – East Highland Way:** Recreational route passing Loch Laggan, connecting Fort William to Aviemore. An unofficial long distance route documented in Langan (2012) and on walkhighlands.com.
- **R8 – Lochan na h-Earba track:** Recreational estate track along the eastern shore of Lochan na h-Earba, and looping around the northern loch. VL 6 (see **Figures V3a-6a-f** and **V3b-6a-k**) and VL 7 (see **Figures V3a-7a-f** and **V3b-7a-k**) are situated on this route.
- **R9 – Loch Leamhain to Loch Pattack path:** Recreational routes between Lochs Leamhain and Pattack, connecting other recreational routes (R6 and R14). VL 8 (see **Figures V3a-8a-f** and **V3b-8a-k**), is situated on the western end of this route.
- **R10 – Mountain Route to Geal Charn and A' Mharconaich:** Recreational route connecting two munro summits (Geal-earn summit being VL 11, see **Figures V3a-11a-f** and **V3b-11a-k**; and A'Mharconaich summit), heading off from the A9 at Baisporran Bed and Breakfast.
- **R11 – Mountain Route to Beinn Udlamain, Sgairneach Mhòr and the Sow of Atholl or Meall an Dobharchain:** Recreational route connecting two munro summits (Beinn Udlamain and Sgairneach Mhòr) and Corbett summit (The Sow of Atholl or Meall an Dobharchain), starting from the A9 near Drumochter.
- **R12 – Mountain Route to Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain:** Recreational route connecting two munro summits (Chno Dearg and Stob Coire Sgriodain) and Fersit.
- **R13 – Scottish Hill Track 155 – Corrour Station (Loch Ossian) to Fersit:** Recreational route from Fersit to Loch Ossian (outside the study area), passing through Strath Ossian.
- **R14 – Mountain Route to Carn Dearg, Geal-Charn, Aonach Beag and Beinn Eibhinn:** Recreational route connecting Dalwhinnie and four munro

summits (Carn Dearg summit which is VL3, see Figures V3a-3a-f and V3b-3a-k), Geal Charn, Aonach Beag and Beinn Eibhinn). It encompasses part of Scottish Hill Track 155 – Corrour Station to Dalwhinnie or Kinloch Laggan and a small section of Scottish Hill Track 155b – Loch Rannoch to Kinloch Laggan.

- R15 – Scottish Hill Track 155 – Corrour Station to Dalwhinnie or Kinloch Laggan and Scottish Hill Track 155b – Loch Rannoch to Kinloch Laggan: Recreational routes which all feature sections that pass the vicinity of Loch Pattack, including Scottish Hill Track (SHT) 155 and 155b.
- **R16 – Ascent / Descent of Binnein Shuas:** Recreational route to summit of Binnean Shuas taking in the Ardverikie Wall climbing route.

Future Baseline

- 7.7.14 The baseline landscape and visual resource of the study area is not anticipated to alter noticeably in future years. Whilst there may be some continued development or ongoing 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 2.2: Sustainable Design and Access Statement**.
- 7.8.2 Key design decisions which have been taken to mitigate landscape and visual effects are summarised as follows:
- Reinstatement of vegetation 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 2.3: Outline CEMD**.
 - Tracks would be narrowed on completion to the minimum width that operational requirements would allow. This would reduce their visible footprint and bring them closer to the scale and character of existing tracks and paths within the landscape, in particular tracks around the upper reservoir. Narrowing of tracks would give 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;
 - Cuttings and embankments around tracks or other features would be reinstated at a gradient to accommodate vegetation where possible, except where they would be within bare rock.
 - At the lower reservoir, it is proposed to establish vegetation on the downstream faces of the Shuas and Shios Dams. This would reduce the prominence of these features when seen from downstream. Native woodland

planting is also proposed on the downstream side of the Shuas Dam which would further soften its appearance when viewed from the west;

- The powerhouse and substation would be set within a cutting in the hillside and landform created to wrap around the front of the building. This would help to sit the building within the landscape and would partially conceal it. Planting on this landform and the surrounding slopes to either side and above the powerhouse cutting would help to further conceal the building and soften the appearance of the cutting and landform.
- It is proposed to construct two promontories at the mid-point of the lower reservoir which would go some way to re-establishing the original appearance of two separate lochs, particularly when looking laterally along the valley.
- Further planting around the lower reservoir area is proposed to compensate for trees lost to the inundation. As well as planting around the powerhouse, this would include planting on the proposed promontories, and scattered planting along the shoreline to try to re-establish some of the existing types of views which are experienced of the tree-lined shoreline when looking along the loch-shore. Fencing to prevent grazing would also encourage natural regeneration of woodland in these areas.
- A landform bund planted with native woodland would be installed adjacent to the entrance compound area to minimise potential visibility of features within this area during construction.

Programme of Landscape Mitigation Proposals

- 7.8.3 The LVIA assumes a worst-case scenario, whereby all landscape mitigation planting would be planted by the end of the construction period, and therefore would be present as newly planted bare root transplants upon completion of construction in year 1 of operation and would have grown by at least 15 years in year 15 of operation. Therefore the effects of this landscape mitigation is reflected in the assessment of year 15 of operation, and associated visualisations.
- 7.8.4 It is, however, possible that the effects of mitigation may be enhanced by planting some areas earlier in the construction period, which is anticipated to be 5 years long. Therefore, upon completion of construction in year 1 of operation, planting may already be providing a level of screening and some planting may have grown for at least 5 years. 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, such as in the areas around the powerhouse and near properties in the B1 visual receptor grouping (near Moy).

7.9 Potential Significant Effects: Landscape

- 7.9.1 This section provides an assessment of effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character and designated and protected landscapes within the study area during construction, and at two stages 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 to 7.6**.

7.9.3 The key findings of the assessment are discussed below.

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

7.9.4 The detailed assessment of landscape character has focussed on seven LCTs. Predicted effects are summarised below with an emphasis on predicted significant effects.

Landscape Character Effects during Construction

7.9.5 During construction, significant effects are predicted to occur within the three LCTs which would contain the majority of construction activity for the Proposed Development:

- LCT 85: Isolated Mountain Plateau
- LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey; and
- LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills.

LCT 85: Isolated Mountain Plateau

7.9.6 There would be a concentrated area of construction activity within this LCT around Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain involving the construction of the Leamhain Dam and upper intake, and the construction and use of associated tracks, compound areas and borrow pits which would form a visible area of intensive activity experienced from the immediate surrounding slopes and areas of facing slopes of Càrn Dearg and An Lairig to the south. There would also be some intervisibility with construction works at the lower reservoir from some areas around Beinn na Chlachair and Creag Pitridh (see VL4, **Figures V3a-4d and V3b-4b, g and h**). These activities are predicted to disrupt the remote character and sense of wildness in a landscape where there is currently limited obvious human intervention, particularly in the area around the upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam (see also the WLA Assessment, **Appendix 7.5**, summarised in paragraphs 7.9.29 – 7.9.44). The effect during construction would be **locally Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant), localised to an area around the Ardverikie Munros, between Beinn a' Chlachair, and Creag Pitridh, south as far as Càrn Dearg. The construction-based effect would be temporary and other areas of the landscape character of other parts of the LCT within the study area would not be affected.

LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey

7.9.7 This LCT would be directly affected in two locations within its transitional area with other LCTs: by the construction around the Shuas Dam area, including other smaller scale intakes, aqueduct and diversion channel, and working areas and the main construction compound on its downstream side; and by the construction of the Leamhain Dam within a hanging valley above Loch Pattack. However, whilst these features would directly affect the edges of the LCT, the main effect on landscape character would be indirect, through the visible appearance of these activities across more extensive parts of the LCT. Construction in adjacent LCTs of the powerhouse, tracks and other features around the lower reservoir and up to the upper reservoir and surge shaft would also be experienced from parts of this LCT.

- 7.9.8 During construction, the additional activities associated with these works would increase evidence of active land use and draw the eye towards these areas, interrupting the simple landform, particularly within the sub-section of the LCT near the Shuas Dam. The Leamhain Dam would be intervisible with a larger area around Loch Pattack and surrounding facing slopes, but would appear more focussed within the mountain backdrop. Nevertheless, the works would be distracting within the remote upland landscape, and would affect perceptions of wildness (see also the WLA Assessment, **Appendix 7.6**, summarised in paragraphs 7.9.29 – 2.9.46).
- 7.9.9 The effect during construction would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) within the Lochan na h-Earba LCT sub-section and locally within the Loch Pattack sub-section, affecting the area within the bowl around Loch Pattack, up to around 3 – 4 km from the Leamhain Dam.

LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills

- 7.9.10 This LCT is located in two sub-sections within the study area but affects only one of these areas accommodating Lochan na h-Earba and surrounding craggy hills where the lower reservoir would be located. A second area within the River Pattack Glen would not be affected. Construction works would be prevalent throughout the Lochan na h-Earba valley associated with the construction of the Shuas and Shios Dams, the powerhouse, tracks, processing of rock which would form the new promontories and various compound and borrow pit areas. Trees would also be removed from the north-eastern end within the proposed area of inundation. The activities associated with this area would noticeably change its character during construction from an area of limited human intervention, dominated by natural features to one more characterised by human activities. This is predicted to lead to a temporary **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) on landscape character during construction.

Other Effects which would be Not Significant

- 7.9.11 All other construction period effects on LCTs would be not significant:
- 7.9.12 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for LCT 88 (Loch and Glen) where there would be some intervisibility with construction activities at the upper reservoir and dam within the northern context from some areas. These works may form a distraction in the wider area but would be experienced in the context of forestry at closer proximity and seen external to the LCT which is focussed on the linear, trench-like valley and Loch Ericht.
- 7.9.13 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for LCT 89 (Broad Loch and Glen) during construction, where there would be a small and focussed area of construction activities at the site entrance (including a new bridge and temporary site compound and borrow pit) and some limited appearance of construction works at the lower reservoir within the wider landscape context from summits surrounding the glen. These activities are not predicted to lead to notable change in the characteristics of this LCT, which is focussed on Loch Laggan and the containing slopes.
- 7.9.14 A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is also predicted for LCT 236 (Smooth Moorland Ridges) where there would be some intervisibility with construction works at the Shuas Dam and surrounding area and there may be some influence on the qualities of wildness. This would mostly occur within areas where other land

use such as forestry is already influential and would affect a relatively small portion of the LCT, at distance.

- 7.9.15 During construction, **Negligible** (not significant) effects are predicted for LCT 126 (Upland Glen – Cairngorms) and 238 (Rugged Massif – Lochaber) where it is predicted that the construction of the Proposed Development would lead to a barely perceptible effect on the landscape characteristics of the LCT.

Landscape Character Effects during Operation

- 7.9.16 During the operation of the Proposed Development, significant effects would reduce in extent and would become more localised. However, these effects would continue to affect the same three LCTs where the majority of the Proposed Development would be located:

- LCT 85: Isolated Mountain Plateau;
- LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey; and
- LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills.

LCT 85: Isolated Mountain Plateau

- 7.9.17 Following construction, effects would be reduced in this LCT, with the removal of the activities associated with the works. The upper reservoir would be relatively contained by the surrounding landform and experienced mainly from higher slopes. The increased size of the loch would not appear incongruous within a landscape where lochs and lochans are common features. However, the linear form of the dam and visible drawdown area would increase the influence of man-made features and contrast with the surrounding hills which may diminish the sense of naturalness and wildness (see VL3 (**Figures V3a-3a-f** and **V3b-3a-k**). New access tracks may also increase a sense of accessibility to the landscape which may contribute to a reduced perceptions of remoteness, although existing tracks are already present within the wider area (see also the WLA Assessment, **Appendix 7.6**, summarised in paragraphs 7.9.27 to 7.9.44). Reduction in widths of tracks during operation would help to reduce their influence in the longer term.
- 7.9.18 There would also be some indirect effects relating to the appearance of the lower reservoir and dams from some elevated areas which may increase a sense of development within the surrounding context (see VL4 (**Figures V3a-4a-g** and **V3b-4a-n**) and VL5 (**Figures V3a-5a-f** and **V3b-5a-k**), but these effects are not predicted to be significant.
- 7.9.19 A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is therefore predicted during both year 1 and year 15 of operation, within the area surrounding the upper reservoir and north, facing slopes to the south of the Leamhain Dam. However, given the localised nature of the effect, the overall effect on the LCT is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during operation.

LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey

- 7.9.20 The Leamhain Dam, and Shuas Dam along with some smaller features on its downstream side, would continue to influence the two sub-sections of this LCT during operation. However, the proposed vegetated downstream face of the Shuas Dam would help it to assimilate into the backdrop within the valley setting of

the Lochan na h-Earba sub-section in the longer term, and the permanent intake and outlet structures in this area would appear relatively small. Woodland planting proposed in this area would also help to soften the appearance of these features within the context of this LCT and the Dam would reinforce the transition between this and the neighbouring LCT 87 (Small Craggy Knolls and Hills). Overall, the effect on landscape character within this sub-section of the LCT is predicted to be **Minor Adverse** (not significant) during both year 1 of operation and after 15 years.

- 7.9.21 The Leamhain Dam would introduce a prominent new focus on the edge of the Loch Pattack sub-section (see VL10 (**Figures V3a-10a-g** and **V3b-10a-n**)). This would appear as a simple, focused feature within the western context of mountains and would generally sit below the skyline when seen from the valley below. Although large and prominent, the dam would be seen as part of the mountain backdrop to the valley area around Loch Pattack and is not predicted to take away role of Loch Pattack as a focus of the bowl-shaped valley. In the longer term, the Proposed Development is not predicted to lead to a significant effect on wildness within the wider area around Loch Pattack because this area is already influenced by human interventions in the form of tracks and forest plantations (see WLA Assessment, **Appendix 7.6**, summarised in paragraphs 7.9.27 to 7.9.44 below) but it would continue to form a very prominent man-made focal point within an otherwise upland, mountainous context. Taking into account this prominence, a very localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is predicted during both phases of operation within areas to the west of Loch Pattack, but the overall effect on this sub-section is predicted to be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant).

LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills

- 7.9.22 Following completion of construction and reinstatement, the Shios and Shuas Dams and the powerhouse would continue to feature as permanent large, built structures affecting localised parts of this LCT. However, the larger body of water would help to balance the scale of the dams and would conceal most of their bulk on the upstream side, and the setting of the powerhouse within a cutting, with the establishment of woodland planting around it would help to accommodate it over time (see VL9 (**Figures V3a-9a-f** and **V3b-9a-k**)). The new structures would introduce new man-made forms into the landscape which, in addition to fluctuating drawdown around the loch and new access tracks, would increase the sense of human influence in the landscape and reduce the perceived sense of 'naturalness'. However, the natural qualities of craggy enclosing hills and body of water would remain predominant through most of the valley, particularly with the on-going growth of proposed woodland planting (see VL6 (**Figures V3a-6a-g** and **V3b-6a-k**) and VL7 (**Figures V3a-7a-g** and **V3b-6a-k**)).
- 7.9.23 The increased inundation area would alter the proportions of the valley, slightly reducing the sense of depth and enclosure, and removing the separation between lochs. The addition of woodland around the south-western loch may also reduce the diversity of character between the two lochs but, this is not necessarily a negative effect and a diverse pattern of open and planted areas would remain. The introduction of two promontories with associated planting, would help to maintain the visual sense of separation between the two areas of water, particularly when viewed laterally along the valley. As such, the significant effect to this LCT during operation is predicted to be localised to the south-west end of the valley, around the powerhouse and Shuas Dam area where the effect would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during year 1 of operation. The effect elsewhere would be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant). With the growth of proposed woodland planting, after 15 years the effect is predicted overall to **Minor –**

Moderate Adverse (not significant) for this LCT as a whole, because the predominant character of a waterbody, set within wooded slopes and craggy hills would be maintained.

- 7.9.24 Additional planting for BNG proposes which are proposed throughout this LCT would potentially lead to noticeable change in character over the longer term, where the loch would become potentially more enclosed by woodland, reducing the visual influence of surrounding crags. This has not been fully considered in the assessment of effects due to being only an outline proposal at this stage with a lack of detailed design. However, although leading to a change in character, this would not necessarily be negative in its effect, as the native woodlands may be expected to lead to positive new characteristics in their own right and would further reduce intervisibility with the Proposed Development.

Other Effects which would be Not Significant

- 7.9.25 With the completion of construction activities, the effect during operation is predicted to be Negligible for all other LCTs in both the first year, and after 15 years. Whilst the Proposed Development may be perceptible to various degrees within parts of these LCTs, with the exception of the site entrance and a small section of track which would be situated in LCT 89 (Broad Loch and Glen), the changes would be indirect, associated with neighbouring landscape types. It is predicted that this would comprise a barely perceptible effect on landscape character, where either the focus within these LCTs is on more immediate internal features, or the areas of potential intervisibility are very small.
- 7.9.26 As discussed above in paragraphs 7.9.15 to 7.9.21, non-significant effects are also predicted for parts of those LCT where effects would be locally significant during operation, and the overall operational effect for LCT 87 (Small Craggy Knolls and Hills) is predicted to reduce to **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) after 15 years.

Assessment of Effects on Designated and Protected Landscapes

Cairngorms National Park

- 7.9.27 Detailed assessment of the effects on the CNP is discussed in **Appendix 7.4**. The assessment of CNP SLQs gave consideration to six SLQs which were identified with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. These were classified into two separate groups for assessment as follows:
- 7.9.28 SLQ Group 1: SLQs relating to upland areas, hills, moorland, and mountain:
- Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath;
 - The surrounding hills; and
 - Wildness.
- 7.9.29 SLQ Group 2: SLQs relating to the relationships of straths and glens within the wider setting of hills and mountains;
- Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath;
 - A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland
 - Layers of receding ridgelines; and
 - Grand panoramas and framed views.

- 7.9.30 The effects on the CNP would be indirect only, very limited and experienced at distance. The assessment concluded that there would be no significant effects to either the landscape character or any of the SLQs resulting from the Proposed Development during either the construction or operational phases. The predicted effect was concluded to be **Negligible** for all stages of development.

WLA 14. Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder

- 7.9.31 Detailed assessment of WLA 14 is discussed in **Appendix 7.5**. This considers the potential for effects on the overall strength of wildness within the WLA and the Wild Land Qualities (WLQs) which have been identified by NatureScot. In agreement with NatureScot, four of the five WLQs were included for detailed assessment with WLQ2 being scoped out as non-representative of the landscape within the study area.
- 7.9.32 The majority of the Proposed Development would be within the WLA including the upper and lower reservoirs and dams (with the exception of the Shios Dam which falls just outside it), the track between these areas and the surge shafts on Creag Pitridh.
- 7.9.33 During construction, the WLA Assessment has identified that there would be localised significant effects to parts of the WLA which would be most directly affected by the Proposed Development. **Major Adverse** (significant) effect to the strength of wildness within the localised area around Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain (the upper reservoir) and **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect on strength of wildness throughout the Lochan na h-Earba valley in relation to construction at the lower reservoir area. A **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect is also predicted to an area within 1 km on the downstream side of the Leamhain Dam, remaining significant, but reducing to Moderate Adverse (significant) up to 2 – 3 km to the east, south and south-west, through An Lairig and up to the summit of Carn Dearg. These effects would result to the increased activity and presence of large scale plant, excavations, working areas and structures which 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.
- 7.9.34 Beyond these areas, the effects are predicted to be not significant due to the lower baseline strength of wildness within the areas affected, resulting from the increased immediate presence of tracks and forest plantation areas and the influence of other land use and features outwith the WLA boundary. A **Moderate – Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for the area around Loch Pattack and around Coire Pitridh, including north-facing slopes of Beinn a' Chalchair, and a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted across open slopes to the east of the River Pattack.
- 7.9.35 During operation, the reduced level of human activities at the reservoir and dam sites would lead to effects on strength of wildness being reduced and perceptual attributes such as sense of solitude and awe would be to some extent restored. However, presence of the large dams and powerhouse and the management of the lochs is still predicted to lead to a localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect on strength of wildness around the upper reservoir and Leamhain dam within an area of around 2.5 km from the dam. A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is also predicted for the south-western end of the lower reservoir within around 1 km of the powerhouse and upstream of the Leamhain Dam where evidence of people in the landscape would be greater. However, the effect on the remainder of the lower reservoir area would be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not

significant) because the sense of solitude and arresting qualities would be similar to existing levels and the management of the loch is not predicted to alter the baseline strength of wildness to a significant degree. A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted to strength of wildness for areas around Loch Pattack and Coire Pitridh where the baseline strength of wildness is lower, and summit areas of surrounding mountains because the permanent features of the scheme would be seen within a wider context featuring other development and contemporary land use, where it would have only limited effect on the experience of perceptual attributes.

- 7.9.36 These effects are predicted to lead to localised significant effects on three of the four WLQs assessed during construction, and two during operation, 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:

- 7.9.37 There would be localised significant effects on this WLQ during construction but this would reduce to a very localised area during operation because the focus of the WLQ is on arresting qualities of the physical landform which would continue to be present in all areas to some degree.

- 7.9.38 During construction:

- A localised **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect around upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam within around 1 – 2 km; and
- A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) around lower reservoir area.
- A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) around the Loch Pattack area where the mountain setting contributes to arresting qualities.

- 7.9.39 During operation:

- A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect around the upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam within around 1 – 2 km;

WLQ 4: A large area which is visited by many people to experience wild land qualities in different ways, whilst maintaining a sense of remoteness, sanctuary, challenge and risk:

- 7.9.40 Significant effects are predicted for this WLQ during construction only, where the strength of wildness experienced by members of the public would be affected by the presence of large scale construction activities.

- 7.9.41 During construction:

- A **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect around the upper reservoir area and lower reservoir area, graduating to a **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect on higher summit areas around the lower reservoir and in Coire Pitridh;

- 7.9.42 During operation:

- No significant effects are predicted because visitors would continue to be able to experience all the perceptual attributes of wild land.

WLQ 5: An extensive pattern of lochs, lochans, burns and bog that highlight the ruggedness of the landform, limit access and contribute to the sense of naturalness:

- 7.9.43 Significant effects are predicted for this WLQ during construction and operation within the localised areas around upper reservoir area and lower reservoir area where the modification and management of the lochs would lead to a reduced sense of naturalness
- 7.9.44 During construction:
- A localised **Major Adverse** (significant) effect around the area of the upper reservoir;
 - A localised **Moderate – Major** (significant) effect around the lower reservoir area (which already features some limited degree of management).
- 7.9.45 During operation:
- A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect in the areas around the upper and lower reservoirs.
- 7.9.46 All other effects on WLQs would not be significant.
- 7.9.47 Considering the effect on the WLA as a whole, the longer term significant effects associated with the operation of Proposed Development would be very localised in relation to the WLA as a whole, and the vast majority of the area would receive little or no effect. Whilst lesser effects which would not be significant have been identified over a wider area of summits, it is not considered that this would contribute to a greater effect on the WLA.
- 7.9.48 Additional planting for BNG purposes and associated fencing around Lochan na h-Earba and Binnein Shuas may lead to a more formalised sense of contemporary land use in the shorter term, but over time, with use of appropriate native species and considerate patterns of planting supported by natural regeneration, would be more likely to be perceived as natural and would therefore not be out of context within the WLA.
- 7.9.49 Overall it is considered that, although some localised significant effects would occur as a result of the Proposed Development, the study area would still form a viable part of the WLA and it is therefore concluded that the effect on the WLA as a whole would not be significant.

Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA

- 7.9.50 Effects on the SLA are described in detail within **Appendix 7.6** and are summarised below.
- 7.9.51 The Proposed Development would be fully situated within this SLA and would result in significant effects to the landscape character within the SLA within the immediate context of the Proposed Development, as detailed within the Landscape Assessment (**Appendix 7.3** and summarised in paragraphs 7.9.4 to 7.9.24 above). These landscape effects would be likely to lead to similar significant landscape effects to the character of the SLA, largely focussed within an area surrounding the proposed reservoirs. Whilst key areas of the SLA around Ben Alder, Creag Meagaidh and Glen Banchor would be generally unaffected by the Proposed Development, during construction, the predicted landscape effects would affect an area comprising a notable proportion within the centre of the SLA. During operation, the area of significant effect would reduce, particularly around the lower reservoir with the growth of proposed tree planting after 15 years, and therefore the overall effect on the SLA would be localised.

- 7.9.52 These effects are predicted to lead to locally significant effects to two sub-qualities of the “Ever changing compositions” SQ:
- A contrasting combination of landform and landuse, forming a fairly confusing composition and a varied character of views; and
 - A dynamic sense of place experienced through ever changing combinations of high mountain, craggy knolls and ridges, smooth moorland, dark coniferous forest and native broadleaf woodland, flat farmed strath and open loch.
- 7.9.53 However, during operation, with the completion of activities associated with construction the level of effects would reduce, becoming more localised to the areas immediately around the Leamhain Dam and reservoir and Lochan na h-Earba. During this phase, without the additional movement, noise and activity of construction works, and with the contribution of proposed mitigation, the effect on the SQs is not predicted to be significant. With the establishment of vegetation on the downstream faces of the Shios and Shuas Dams, and growth of landscape mitigation tree planting around Lochan na h-Earba, the sense of place around the lower reservoir would become more established.
- 7.9.54 Wider planting around this area for BNG purposes would lead to further landscape change, as described for LCT 87 (see paragraph 7.9.24) but this change would not necessarily be negative in nature and is unlikely to lead to any further significant landscape effect.
- 7.9.55 After 15 years, longer term significant effects, are predicted to be limited to the area around the upper reservoir and Leamhain dam only which would form a more noticeable intervention in the upland landscape. This would comprise a very localised area within the context of the SLA and it is not considered that this would lead to a significant effect on the designation overall as the area would continue to provide a positive contribution to its diversity.
- 7.9.56 The effect on Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA is therefore predicted to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) during construction, reducing to **Minor-Moderate Adverse** (not significant) in year 1 of operation and **Minor Adverse** (not significant) after 15 years. There would be no long-term significant effects on the SQs of the SLA.

Summary of Landscape Effects

- 7.9.57 The landscape assessment has established that during construction, there would be temporary, localised significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development, focussed around the upper and lower reservoir areas and dams. This would include areas to the west of the Shuas Dam and south and east of the Leamhain Dam towards the summit area of Càrn Dearg and Loch Pattack, for up to around 3 – 4km. These effects would lead to some corresponding localised significant effects on the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA, and WLA 14: Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder. Construction-phase significant effects would largely relate to the presence of large scale construction, excavations and movement of plant and personnel within an upland and largely undeveloped landscape.
- 7.9.58 After completion of construction and following restoration, the area of significant effects would reduce to a more localised area around the permanent features of the Proposed Development: the upper and lower reservoirs, the dams, surge shafts and powerhouse. This would be assisted by mitigation and reinstatement measures including restoration of disturbed areas and re-establishment of

vegetation, narrowing of tracks, landform around the powerhouse and other structures such as the surge shafts and the establishment of vegetation over the downstream sides of the Shuas and Shios Dams. Over time, planting around the lower reservoir tracks, and particularly the powerhouse would further mitigate the longer term effects in this area and after 15 years, whilst some localised significant effects on wild land are predicted around the powerhouse and Shuas Dam, wider significant effects on landscape character would be largely limited to an area within around 1 - 2 km of the upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam.

- 7.9.59 These effects would also result in a localised significant effect to WLA 14 during operation, although the wider effect on the WLA as a whole is not predicted to be significant.
- 7.9.60 No significant effects are predicted on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorm National Park.

Table 7.8: Summary of Landscape Effects

LCT or Designated / Protected Landscape	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Year 1 of Operation)						Level of Effect (Year 15 of Operation)					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
LCTs																		
LCT 85: Isolated Mountain Plateau		•			L			•		L				•		L		
LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch & Strathspey				•				•	•	L				•	•	L		
LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills					•				•	L					•			
LCT 88: Loch and Glen		•					•						•					
LCT 89: Broad Loch and Glen		•					•						•					
LCT 126: Upland Glen – Cairngorms	•						•						•					
LCT 236: Smooth Moorland Ridges		•					•						•					
LCT 238: Rugged Massif - Lochaber	•	•					•						•					

LCT or Designated / Protected Landscape	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Year 1 of Operation)						Level of Effect (Year 15 of Operation)					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
Designated and Protected Landscapes																		
CNPA	•						•						•					
WLA 14. Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores - Alder				L	L	L				L						L		
Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA				•					•					•				
Notes: • All effects are adverse. • L denotes effects which are localised (where an effect is predicted for a localised part of the area).																		

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 Four building-based receptor locations have been included in the visual assessment (see **Figure 7.7**), comprising individual buildings or groups of buildings and associated outdoor spaces where a view of the Proposed Development would potentially be obtained.

- 7.10.3 Predicted effects are summarised below:

Building-based Receptors during Construction

- 7.10.4 During construction, no significant effects for building-based receptors are predicted:
- A **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for receptors occupying **B1 (Luiblea and Tòrgulbin)**, where construction activity would be partially visible nearby in some side-on and oblique main views, including a compound and borrow pit. Some construction would be screened by trees and an earth bund formed during construction, whilst other work (construction of a track) would be seen on elevated ground..
 - A **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for receptors occupying **B3 (Moy)** and **B4 (Kinloch Laggan)** where construction works at the Shios Dam may be perceptible in some views in the distance but would be unlikely to be detracting.
 - Effects would be **Negligible** (not significant) for receptors occupying **B2 (Moy Lodge)** because construction would be likely to be hidden by nearby trees and landform.

Building-based Receptors during Operation

- 7.10.5 During operation, all potential visual effects for building-based receptors are predicted to be Negligible because any views of the Proposed Development would be of limited perceptibility and likely to contribute an unexceptional change to the view.

Assessment of Effects on Route-based Receptors

- 7.10.6 Sixteen routes have been considered in the visual assessment (see **Figure 7.7**), comprising roads and recreational routes such as core paths, mountain routes and Scottish Hill Tracks where a view of the Proposed Development would potentially be obtained.

- 7.10.7 Predicted effects are summarised below with an emphasis on predicted significant effects.

Route-based Receptors during Construction

- 7.10.8 During construction, significant effects are predicted for users of six recreational routes which would either be partly used for construction access and/or be located in close proximity to the construction of the Proposed Development:

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- 7.10.9 A **Major Adverse** (significant) effect during construction is predicted for users of two recreational routes: Route R8 (Lochan na h-Earba Track); and Route R9 (Loch Leamhain to Loch Pattack path) as follows:
- Route R8 passes alongside Lochan na h-Earba which would form the lower reservoir, and users would obtain close views of construction activities along its full length including the dams, powerhouse, promontory areas, compound areas and borrow pits. Parts of the route would also be used for construction access. Recreational users would be directed along an alternative new track on the opposite side of the loch, but the works would still be prominent along the full length of the route.
 - Route R9 passes alongside Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain. From this route, there would be views of extensive construction activities within the upper reservoir area and at the Leamhain Dam at close proximity in passing. Works would also be prominent when ascending from Loch Pattack. Parts of the route would also be widened and used for construction traffic although there would be some separation of recreational users along other sections.
- 7.10.10 A **Moderate – Major Adverse** (significant) effect during construction is predicted for users of two recreational routes: Route R6 (Mountain Route to Beinn a' Chlachair, Geal Charn and Creag Pitridh); and Route R16 (Ascent / Descent of Binnein Shuas) as follows:
- Construction works at all three dam sites would be very noticeable from various different sections of Route R6 with new tracks and compound areas also appearing prominent at close proximity, particularly when ascending and descending through Coire Pitridh. Parts of the route would also be used for construction access. A representative view of construction works is shown from VL4 Creag Pitridh in Figure V3a-4d / Figures V3b-4b, g and h.
 - Construction works would be prominent from parts of Route R16, passing close to the Shuas Dam and overlooking the powerhouse area and Lochan na h-Earba where extensive works would be on-going.
- 7.10.11 A localised **Moderate Adverse** (significant) effect is predicted during construction for recreational users of two routes: Route R14 (Mountain Route to Carn Dearg, Geal-Charn, Aonach Beag and Beinn Eibhinn); and Route R15 (Kinloch Laggan to Corrour via Loch Pattack). This effect would be significant and localised because visibility would be notable but limited to a discrete section of both routes.
- Receptors following Route R14 would obtain views of construction works at the Leamhain Dam area when passing Loch Pattack (see VL10 (Figures V3a-10d / Figures V3b-10b, g and h)) which would extend more widely across the upper reservoir area from summit and ridge areas around Carn Dearg where the works would be very prominent. However, the majority of this long route would not be affected.
 - Receptors following Route R15 would also obtain very noticeable views of construction works at the Leamhain Dam areas when passing around Loch Pattack for around 3 – 3.5 km of the route, although the majority of the route would be unaffected.
- 7.10.12 All other construction effects for route-based receptors would not be significant:
- During construction, **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effects are predicted for receptors using nine routes: Route R2 (Glen Shirra Tracks), Routes R3 and R4 (both comprising mountain routes to the north of Loch Laggan), Routes R5, R10, R11 and R12 (all comprising mountain ascent route within the wider study area to the south and west); and two longer distance glen routes: R7
-

(East Highland Way); and R13 (Fersit to Loch Ossian). Users of these routes would obtain views of construction activities either from limited sections, or distantly. These activities would form a new focus within the wider view or would be briefly noticeable when travelling along the routes, but would be unlikely to form a sufficiently distracting feature to adversely affect the overall visual amenity of the route.

- The construction period effect for all other routes, would be **Negligible** because construction works would either be barely perceptible, or would be unremarkable within the existing context of the view. This would include travellers on the A86 where views would be so briefly obtained that they would be unlikely to form a recognisable adverse change to the view.

Route-based Receptors during Operation

7.10.13 Significant visual effects are predicted to continue into the operational phase for four of the sixteen routes included in the assessment within the short term: Routes R8 (Lochan na h-Earba Track), R9 (Loch Leamhain to Loch Pattack path), R14 (Mountain Route to Carn Dearg, Geal-Charn, Aonach Beag and Beinn Eibhinn); and R16 (Ascent / Descent of Binnein Shuas). However, with the growth of proposed woodland planting, over time this is predicted to reduce to a non-significant level for two Routes R8 and R16 which are located close to the lower reservoir. These effects are discussed as follows:

- Route R8 (Lochan na h-Earba Track) would be inundated by the lower reservoir, but rerouted higher up the slope. During operation, there would continue to be views of the dams at either end of the reservoir and the fluctuating extent of drawdown (up to 21 m) may appear distracting. The powerhouse and surrounding landform would also form a notable new feature in passing. Although the landform would largely conceal the powerhouse, it may interrupt some views along the valley (see VL 6 (**Figures V3a-6a-f and V3b-6a-k**) and VL 7, (**Figures V3a-7a-f and V3b-7a-k**) which show representative views from this route). Over time, landscape mitigation planting would filter and soften views of drawdown and powerhouse area. The promontories would go some way to re-establishing the separation of the two lochs and with planting, would give similar visual combinations of open water and trees contained by the craggy valley sides when looking along the valley. This visual effect is predicted to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) at year 1 during construction. However, with the growth of proposed woodland planting it is predicted that this effect would not be significant in the longer term. After 15 years, the effect would be **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant).
- During operation, recreational users on Route R9 would continue see the Leamhain Dam, upper reservoir and associated drawdown and associated tracks and other features at relatively close proximity (VL8 gives a representative view from this route, **Figures V3a-8a-f and V3b-8a-k**). Parts of the route would be inundated but would be re-constructed at a higher level. From the lower part of the route towards Loch Pattack, the dam would be prominent, but would screen other features around the reservoir from view. The visual effect for recreational users using this route is predicted to be **Moderate Adverse** (significant), both in year 1 and after 15 years.
- From Route R14, the Leamhain Dam would form a noticeable new feature of the view from the Loch Pattack area (see VL10, **Figures V3a-10a-g and V3b-10a-n**) and the dam and inundation area with associated drawdown would also remain prominent in the northerly view from the Càrn Dearg summit and ridge (see VL3, **Figures V3a-3a-f and V3b-3a-k**). Whilst these features may be less distracting in the view, without the added activities of construction

works, a localised **Moderate Adverse** effect is predicted to continue throughout the operation of the Proposed Development.

- During operation, recreational users of Route R16 would retain noticeable views towards the powerhouse area and Shuas Dam when passing at low level and from above, albeit that those involved in climbing the crag may not be focussed on the view). There would also be views across the wider reservoir (see VL9, **Figures V3a-9a-f** and **V3b-9a-k**) and potentially views of permanent features at the surge shaft. However, these features would be likely to be less distracting without the activities of construction works. Over time, tree planting would be likely to soften the appearance of some of these features, particularly the powerhouse area from the lower sections of the route although drawdown may become slightly more noticeable, and from the summit area the wider vista of surrounding mountains would be likely to remain the greater focus of the view. The effect would be **Moderate Adverse** (significant) in year 1 of operation but with the growth of woodland planting is predicted to reduce to **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) after 15 years.

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

- In the initial stages of operation, a **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for users of two recreational routes: Route R6 ((Mountain Route to Beinn a' Chlachair, Geal Charn and Creag Pitridh); and Route R15 (Kinloch Laggan to Corrour via Loch Pattack). Users of these routes would obtain visibility of permanent features of the Proposed Development from some sections, intermittently changing for Route R6 (see VL4 (**Figures V3a-4a-g** and **V3b-4a-n**) and VL5 (**Figures V3a-5a-f** and **V3b-5a-k**)) but focussed on the Leamhain Dam for Route R15. Whilst these features would be noticeable where seen, it is considered that they would generally not distract from the wider visibility of surrounding mountains and the effect is therefore not predicted to be significant. For Route R6, the effect is expected to further reduce with the establishment of reinstatement and mitigation measures, to **Minor Adverse** (not significant) after 15 years.
- As discussed in 7.10.13 above, effects for Routes R8 and R16 are both predicted to reduce to **Minor – Moderate Adverse** (not significant) after 15 years.
- During operation, a **Minor Adverse** (not significant) effect is predicted for Routes R10 and R11, both mountain routes to the east of Loch Ericht. From the summit and ridge sections of these routes, there would be distant visibility of the Leamhain Dam which would form a new focus within the westerly view (VL11 (**Figures V3a-11a-f** and **V3b-11a-k**)). Whilst this is likely to be eye-catching, it is not predicted to be very distracting and would affect relatively short sections of these routes where wide and expansive views are obtained in all directions.
- 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.

7.10.15 Additional planting for BNG purposes would lead to some further change to visual effects for users of some routes, but notable Routes R8 (Lochan na h-Earba Track) and R16 (Ascent / Descent of Binnein Shuas) where the views may become more enclosed. Whilst this would be a change to the current open views, it would not necessarily lead to greater negative effects and may further limit views of some elements of the Proposed Development. This is not predicted to lead to any change in the assessed levels of effect for these routes.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 7.10.16 Significant effects have been identified for recreational receptors using six out of the sixteen routes assessed during construction. These all comprise upland walking routes within relatively close proximity to the Proposed Development, where recreational users would pass adjacent to the reservoirs and dams, would overlook the key areas of construction from surrounding mountains, or, from the Loch Pattack area, where the works at the Leamhain Dam would feature prominently in the hills above. In some cases, the routes would also be upgraded and used by construction traffic, although off-route diversions would be provided for walkers.
- 7.10.17 During operation, the visual effects would reduce and significant effects are predicted only from routes which pass close to the Proposed Development or directly overlook it. These include tracks alongside the upper and lower reservoir, and hill routes on Binnein Shuas, close to the proposed Shuas Dam and powerhouse, and Càrn Dearg lying south and overlooking the Leamhain Dam. Over time, with the growth of woodland planting around the lower reservoir, the effects to routes in this area would continue to reduce and are predicted to be not significant after 15 years. Long term significant effects are therefore only expected to occur for recreational receptors within close proximity to the upper reservoir, Loch a' Bhealach Leamhain.
- 7.10.18 All other effects would not be significant either during construction or during operation. There would be no significant effects to the visual amenity of residents or other building-based visual receptors within the study area.
- 7.10.19 A summary of the effects on visual receptors is outlined in **Table 7.9** during construction and in years 1 and 15 of operation.

Table 7.9: Summary of Visual Effects

Visual Receptor Location	Level of Effect (Construction)						Level of Effect (Year 1 of Operation)						Level of Effect (Year 15 of Operation)					
	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major	Negligible	Minor	Minor-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Major	Major
Building-based Receptors	1	2	1	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Route-based Receptors	1	9	-	2(L)	2	2	8	2	2	3 + 1(L)	-	-	8	3	3	1 + 1(L)	-	-
Totals	2	11	1	1(L)	2	2	12	2	2	3 + 1(L)	-	-	12	3	3	1 + 1(L)	-	-
Notes: - All effects are adverse. - L denotes effects which are localised (where an effect is predicted for a localised part of a route).																		

7.11 Potential Significant Effects: Cumulative 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 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. Two developments were identified for inclusion within the cumulative Assessment:
- The Proposed Corrievarkie Pumped Storage Scheme, at the southern end of Loch Ericht (currently at Scoping Stage and therefore assessed as a theoretical development with no fixed design); and
 - Replacement weir and change to inundation levels on Loch Ossian (consented November 2022)
- 7.11.3 The cumulative assessment has considered effect during construction only, as it is difficult to predict when construction works would take place and what these would involve.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

Landscape Character

- 7.11.4 The proposed Corrievarkie Pumped Storage Scheme would be located in the far south of the study area and partially outside it, mostly within LCT 88 (Loch and Glen). This LCT would only be affected indirectly by intervisibility with the Leamhain Dam. There is some potential that there would be areas of shared intervisibility with both developments within LCT 88. However, this would be relatively limited, because the proposed Corrievarkie development would be located on the easterly side of Loch Ericht with most intervisibility likely to be on the western side whereas most intervisibility with the Leamhain Dam would be on the east side. The landscape assessment for the Proposed Development has identified a Negligible operational effect for this LCT and therefore the potential for any significant cumulative effect is unlikely.
- 7.11.5 There would be likely to be some areas of potentially shared intervisibility of the Corrievarkie development with the Proposed Development, around some of the higher hills around the south of the study area, including Càrn Dearg where a significant landscape effect is predicted around the transition between LCT 85 (Isolated Mountain Plateau) and LCT 86 (Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch & Strathspey). From this area, there is the potential that a dam and / or a powerhouse may be visible for the proposed Corrievarkie development, but this would be further away and likely to be less prominent than the Leamhain Dam, and seen to be in a different landscape type where forestry and a few distant buildings are present. Due to the locations of the two developments on either side of this mountain, the area of potential shared intervisibility would be likely to be extremely limited, covering only the summit and ridgeline area. Whilst there would also be the potential for sequential intervisibility, because of the relatively distant areas of effect for each development on the LCTs, it is not predicted that the presence of the two developments would lead to a greater level of effect on landscape character than either of the developments on its own.
- 7.11.6 The Loch Ossain Weir would be outwith the study area within LCT 236 (Smooth Moorland Ridges). It would be a low feature, replacing an existing weir and set within existing buildings of Corroul Estate. The drawdown area on Loch Ossian would be relatively visually contained by surrounding forest / woodland and hills

and it is likely that landscape effects associated with this development would be very localised. The landscape assessment has identified a Negligible effect for LCT 236 during operation, and therefore it is not predicted that there would be any significant cumulative effects with the Loch Ossian Dam development.

Designated and Protected Landscapes

Cairngorm National Park

- 7.11.7 It is unlikely that either of the cumulative baseline developments would lead to any notable effects on the CNP. As the long term effect of the Proposed Development is predicted to be Negligible then no significant cumulative effects are predicted.

WLA 14: Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder

- 7.11.8 Both of the cumulative baseline developments would be located within WLA 14. However, both would be largely focussed within areas where other contemporary land use is already present in the form of forest plantations and buildings. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Corrievarkie development would lead to some decrease in the strength of wild land attributes within the surrounding local area. This may extend to limited areas which would also be affected by the Proposed Development but it is likely that any areas of significant effect arising from the two developments would remain distinct due to their geographical separation by Càrn Dearg. Significant effects to the WLA resulting from the Proposed Development are predicted to be very localised, largely confined to the immediate area around the upper reservoir. Whilst there may be a greater area of the WLA affected if considering the combined effects of the two developments in relation to the existing baseline, the addition of the Proposed Development to a scenario whereby Corrievarkie is already theoretically present and influencing the strength of baseline wild land attributes, is not predicted to lead to any greater effect on the WLA as a whole, then would be the case without Corrievarkie.

Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA

- 7.11.9 Both of the cumulative baseline developments would be located just outside the SLA and would therefore only affect it indirectly. As no significant effects to LCTs within the SLA are predicted, it is not predicted that the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in addition to the other developments would be any greater than the effect predicted for the Proposed Development alone. As such, the cumulative effect of the Proposed Development on the SLA is not predicted to be significant.

Cumulative Visual Effects

Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Building-based Receptors

- 7.11.10 No significant effects are predicted for building-based visual receptors within the study area. Neither of the cumulative baseline development would be likely to be visible from any building locations where the Proposed Development would be seen and therefore, no cumulative visual effects for building-based receptors would occur.

Assessment of Cumulative Effects on Route-based Receptors

- 7.11.11 Visibility of the proposed Corrievarkie Pumped Storage scheme would be expected to be mostly focussed around the southern part of the study area, including areas around Loch Ericht and some facing slopes to the north. The most likely location for visual receptors to obtain views of both developments is

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- predicted to be Route R14 (Mountain Route to Carn Dearg, Geal-Charn, Aonach Beag and Beinn Eibhinn), along the ridgeline and summit area of Càrn Dearg. There could also be some potential for sequential views from Route R15 (Kinloch Laggan to Corrour via Loch Pattack), where the two developments could be seen from different parts of the route.
- 7.11.12 Potential cumulative visibility of the Loch Ossian Weir is likely to be limited to sequential visibility from Route R13 (Fersit to Loch Ossian).
- 7.11.13 The Corrievarkie development would be somewhat further away from Càrn Dearg in comparison with the Proposed Development. It is considered that it would be likely to be noticeable in the view. However, it would be seen in the context of forest plantation and existing buildings on the shore of Loch Ericht. The Proposed Development would add a new feature to the northerly view, in the opposite direction the Corrievarkie development, requiring receptors to turn in all directions to appreciate both developments. The Proposed Development would be close and very noticeable and is predicted to result in a localised Moderate Adverse (significant) effect to this route. However, the assumed presence of the Corrievarkie Development is not anticipated to lead to a change the baseline that would result in any greater effect from the Proposed Development than would be expected without Corrievarkie.
- 7.11.14 The potential for sequential effects to Route R15 is considered fairly limited. If walking north – south, the Proposed Development would be experienced first whereas when walking south – north the Corrievarkie development would be experienced first. The appearance of two developments may slightly increase a perception of dams affecting the route, but it is unlikely that this would increase the Minor – Moderate Adverse (not significant) operational effect that would already be experienced from this route as the majority of the route would continue to remain remote with no little visibility of either development.
- 7.11.15 The consented Loch Ossian Weir would be seen within the context of other development at Corrour Lodge. This is considered unlikely to noticeably change the visual baseline for this route. Potential views of the two developments would be seen from very disparate parts of the route and would be unlikely to be considered in relation to each other.
- 7.11.16 Overall, the cumulative baseline is not predicted to lead to any increase in the levels of visual effects predicted for the Proposed Development under the current baseline.

7.12 Additional Mitigation

- 7.12.1 Whilst the assessment for the Proposed Development takes into account mitigation measures embedded in the design (see Section 7.8) there is potential opportunity for additional mitigation to help ensure that the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would be minimised as far as possible. It is proposed that these measures could be incorporated within the detailed design for the Proposed Development as this is developed. These measures are discussed as follows:

Landform

- 7.12.2 Landform to help tie-in and conceal different built elements of the Proposed Development is considered within the mitigation through design. However, as the detailed design is developed for individual features and areas there would be

opportunity to design more specific landform at a greater level of detail, to contain and tie-in permanent features. This could help to reduce the visible appearance of these features and the footprint of disturbed areas by maximising the area for vegetation growth, and would help these features assimilate with the surrounding landscape. The following measures are proposed:

- At the surge shaft reduction in the size of the cuttings and restoration of gradual vegetated slopes where possible would help to reduce the visible area whilst 'wraparound' landform around the lower edges of cut would help to reduce appearance of lower features including fencing, hardstanding or vehicles.
- Around the gate-shaft entrances, restoration of landform around these features would reduce the area of visible cut, whilst landform mounding on the lower side of the track opposite would help to reduce the visible facing of the structures in longer views across the reservoir. Similar measures could be taken at the tunnel adit.
- At the bases of the Shuas and Shios Dams, gradation of the toe of the slope would help the dams to smoothly tie into the adjacent landform, helping to disguise their height.
- At former borrow pits or compounds outside inundated areas, the restoration of contours and landform features which reflect and tie in with the surrounding terrain, such as ridges, knolls and erratic boulders, would help to reduce perceptibility of these features in the longer term.

Drawdown Areas

- 7.12.3 Where greatest extent of horizontal drawdown occurs on the lower reservoir across shallow ground (likely to be limited to areas in the central area between the two existing lochs), there may be opportunities to modify terrain within the drawdown area to create pools or small islands which would help to break up the visible extent of these areas. Small islands could be planted with riparian tree species to further minimise perceived extent of drawdown.

Finishes

- 7.12.4 Detailed consideration of finishes to permanent features, including at the powerhouse (such as doors or vents), gate shaft entrances, tunnel adits and features such as railings or valves would help these to appear less prominent within the landscape. Dark grey or brown colours would result in features being more regressive and would reflect the tones and colours of shadowed rock and peat within the surrounding landscape context.

Restoration of Borrow Pits and Working Areas within Inundated Areas

- 7.12.5 Softening of cuttings and shapes of borrow pits and working platforms which would be visible within the drawdown area or would modify the shapes of the inundated reservoirs would help to create waterbodies which would appear more natural within the landscape in the longer term. This could include breaking out some cut faces or reinstatement of softer contours with un-used excavated materials.

7.13 Residual Effects

- 7.13.1 The assessment of operational effects takes into account the likely benefits of Mitigation by Design (see **Section 7.8**). There would be additional benefits to landscape and visual effects with the implementation of additional mitigation

measures outlined in **Section 7.12**, but this is not likely to lead to any reduction in the levels of effect that have already been identified during operation.

7.14 Conclusion

Landscape Effects

- 7.14.1 The landscape assessment has established that during construction, there would be temporary, localised significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development, focussed around the upper and lower reservoir areas and dams, and areas to the west of the Shuas Dam and south and east of the Leamhain Dam towards the summit area of Càrn Dearg and Loch Pattack, for up to around 3 – 4km. These effects would lead to some corresponding localised significant effects on the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA, and WLA 14: Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder. Construction-phase significant effects would largely relate to the presence of large scale construction, excavations and movement of plant and personnel within an upland and largely undeveloped landscape.
- 7.14.2 After completion of construction and following restoration, the area of significant effects would reduce to a more localised area around the permanent features of the Proposed Development: the upper and lower reservoirs, the dams, surge shafts and powerhouse. This would be assisted by mitigation and reinstatement measures including, restoration of disturbed areas and re-establishment of vegetation, narrowing of tracks, landform around the powerhouse and other structures such as the surge shafts and the establishment of vegetation over the downstream sides of the Shuas and Shios Dams. Over time, planting around the lower reservoir tracks, and particularly the powerhouse would further mitigate the longer term effects in this area and after 15 years, whilst some localised significant effects on wild land are predicted around the powerhouse and Shuas Dam, wider significant effects on landscape character would be largely limited to an area within around 1 - 2 km of the upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam.
- 7.14.3 These effects would also result in a localised significant effect to WLA 14 during operation, although the wider effect on the WLA as a whole is not predicted to be significant.
- 7.14.4 No significant effects are predicted on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorm National Park.

Visual Effects

- 7.14.5 Significant effects have been identified for recreational receptors using six upland walking routes assessed during construction of the Proposed Development, where recreational users would pass adjacent to the reservoirs and dams, would overlook the key areas of construction from surrounding mountains, or where works would feature prominently in the hills above. In some cases, parts of these routes would also be upgraded and used by construction traffic.
- 7.14.6 During operation, the visual effects would reduce and would be limited to users of tracks directly alongside the upper and lower reservoir, and hill routes immediately overlooking the reservoirs. Over time, proposed woodland planting around Lochan na h-Earba would reduce the visual effects to recreational users in this area and these effects are predicted to become not significant after 15 years. Long term significant effects are therefore only expected to occur for recreational receptors within close proximity to the upper reservoir, Loch a' Bhealach Leamhain.

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- 7.14.7 There would be no significant effects to the visual amenity of residents or other building-based visual receptors within the study area.

Cumulative Effects

- 7.14.8 The cumulative assessment has not identified any areas where the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would be increased if other proposed developments were considered within the baseline.

Conclusion

- 7.14.9 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 around the Proposed Development up to around 3 – 4 km. These effects would be largely related to the introduction of large scale construction activities within an upland area of limited human intervention. This would lead to significant effects on landscape character within this area, and consequent significant effects on some of the Special Qualities of the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area, and Wild Land Qualities of Wild Land Area 14. Rannoch – Nevis – Mamores – Alder, as well as significant visual effect on recreational users of a number of upland routes within close proximity to the construction works. However, there would be no significant effects to the Cairngorms National Park.
- 7.14.10 During operation, these effects would reduce following the cessation of the additional activities associated with construction, and significant effects would become more localised, associated with the main permanent structures of the Proposed Development at the upper and lower reservoirs. Mitigation is proposed as part of the Proposed Development and would include reinstatement of disturbed areas, narrowing of access tracks following construction, a vegetated front face to both the Shuas and Shios Dams at the lower reservoir, landform around the powerhouse, and planting around the lower reservoir and tracks. Over time, and after 15 years, these measures would lead to significant effects becoming further localised to areas focussed around the Leamhain Dam and proposed upper reservoir, and Shuas Dam and powerhouse, where existing qualities of wild land would be affected by the introduction of new, large scale man-made features, whilst visual effects are predicted to be associated only with nearby views of the upper reservoir and Leamhain Dam. Although other elements of the Proposed Development, including operational drawdown would be perceptible, and in some cases more noticeable in the wider landscape, the overriding qualities of the surrounding landscape would remain present and these effects are not predicted to significantly change the existing characteristics of the landscape or lead to significant visual effects being experienced in the wider area.
- 7.14.11 By 15 years post construction, with the growth of proposed planting and other vegetation, the effect on the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA is predicted to be not significant. Whilst localised significant effects are predicted for Wild Land Area 14, this is not predicted to lead to a significant effect on the Wild Land Area overall.