Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Teindland Wind Farm

Volume 3

TA A5.2: Non-Significant Effects

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Technical Appendix A5.2 – Non-Significant Effects

Introduction

1. Effects on the receptors considered in this appendix have been assessed as being non-significant. The assessment is provided below, and effects are summarised in Chapter 5.

Landscape Character

2 Coastal Farmland (1.8km, N)

2. This LCT lies to the north of the Site and extends east to west to form the transition between the upland and the coast. MWELSS describes the LCT as follows:

   "...an extensive low-lying plain which is gently undulating to flat but also features pockets of more rolling landform and occasional small, but prominent, ridges and hills. ... intensively farmed with large fields of arable crops and some pasture interspersed with small conifer blocks. It is a well-settled landscape which accommodates a number of large settlements and major roads. Views are often extensive and tend to focus on the uplands of Moray to the south; views to the sea from lower-lying areas are often screened by forest or landform."

3. Applying the approach set out within the review and use of landscape sensitivity studies, landscape susceptibility criteria for this LCT identify a mix of High and Medium susceptibility factors for this LCT. The MWELSS does not provide consideration of sensitivity to turbines over 150m for this LCT and the ratings for turbines between 100-150m are used as a guide given that this is not the host landscape, so turbine size is less relevant. Some factors indicate higher susceptibility; including the small scale settlement and open views, whilst others indicate medium susceptibility; including the mixed scale (large open fields, but small settlements and generally simple landcover and landform but with more natural woodlands along the Spey). Taking account of these criteria, susceptibility of this LCT is judged to be High/medium. The LCT is mostly undesignated and is judged to be of Community value and Medium sensitivity.

4. As illustrated by Figure 5.6 visibility would be widespread across this area within 10-12km north of the Development, albeit frequently broken up by woodlands and local vegetation. As shown by viewpoints 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13, the proposed turbines would be seen on the forested inland skyline to the south in most views, and partly over the open lower sides of Brown Muir in views from near Elgin. The change in character between the coastal farmland and the upland forests and moors is readily apparent in such views, and it would be clear that the turbines are within a different character area. However, the distinctive inland backdrop to the LCT would be notably altered. Medium (within 5km) to Small scale changes to character would arise within an Intermediate extent of the LCT within 10-12km to the north of the Development. The magnitude of impact would be Medium/small and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Visual Receptors

Fochabers (5.9km, NE)

5. This receptor group includes residents of and visitors to Fochabers. These receptors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views. Fochabers is within an SLA and has views of Regional value and High/medium sensitivity.

6. As illustrated by Figure 5.6, visibility from the settlements would be largely screened by buildings and trees as there is extensive tree cover around and within the village. The most open views would be from viewpoint 7 at the western edge of Fochabers where a view towards the site is possible from the park, through gaps between trees. As shown by viewpoint 7, Permanent changes to views would be Medium/small scale in the very Limited parts of the settlement where they arise. The magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible scale and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant.**

Mosstodloch (6.0km, N)

7. This receptor group includes residents of and visitors to the village which is centred around a large sawmill and has an open, gridded street pattern. People living in and visiting the village have a High susceptibility to changes to views. Views from Mosstodloch are of Community value and High/medium sensitivity.

8. As illustrated by Figure 5.6, visibility from most of the village would be screened by buildings and forestry to the south, however there would be some visibility of turbines between houses and above roadside vegetation on the A96 from the old A96 along the south edge of the village and more open views from core paths to the north of the village and from Stymie Road and the B9105 where views align towards the Site as shown by illustrative view E in Technical Appendix A5.3. Permanent, changes to views would be Medium to Small scale in the Intermediate extent of the village where they arise, depending on the degree of visibility as illustrated by nearby viewpoint 11 which shows a more open view than those available from the village. The magnitude of impact would be Medium/small and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

Craigellachie (6.9km, S)

9. This village is located on the wooded valley sides of the River Spey. The situation on the wooded valley side allows elevated views north along the valley from Leslie Terrace and in winter from the A95 which is slightly further downslope. Residents and visitors have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Regional value and High/medium sensitivity given that the village is within the Spey Valley SLA.

10. As shown by viewpoint 9, there would be visibility of the Development on the forested skyline of the valley when looking north from Leslie Terrace and through trees in winter from the less elevated views from the A95 as it passes around the northern edge of the village. This would give rise to Permanent, Localised, Medium/small scale changes to views. The magnitude of impact would be Small and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Elgin (8.1km, NW)

11. The town of Elgin is located to the north-west of the Site on the River Lossie. The receptor group encompasses the town, users of local roads and the core paths within and at the edge of the settlement. Most of the town is not covered by any landscape designation and views are of Community value; a small area of the town centre is covered by a Conservation Area where views are of Regional value. People living in and visiting the town have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity to changes to views.

12. As illustrated by viewpoints 10 and 20, and Figure 5.6, visibility of the Development would arise from the southern edge of the town and open or more elevated locations including the high point at Duke of Gordon Monument, the larger open spaces at Cooper Park and the cemetery; the rail bridges and Calcots Road. Permanent, small scale changes would arise to the most open views as a result of visibility of the turbines beyond the skyline of Brown Muir and forestry, affecting a Localised extent of the town taking account of the

prevalence of changes to views from open spaces. The magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Charlestown of Aberlour and adjacent rural area (8.2km, S)

13. This receptor group encompasses the settlement of Charlestown of Aberlour, residents of the scattered settlement, users of minor roads and core paths within the surrounding 2km. Most of the area lies within The Spey Valley SLA and there is a Conservation Area at Archiestown, views from these locations are of Regional value. Residents and visitors to this area would have a High susceptibility to changes in views and sensitivity is judged to be High/medium.

14. As shown on Figure 5.6, views towards the development from the settlement would be limited by buildings, surrounding woodland and the valley sides. From outlying roads, core paths and homes, particularly the upper valley sides to the south, there would be some more open views where they not screened by nearby trees as shown by illustrative view C in Technical Appendix A5.3 and viewpoint 19. As shown by Figure 5.10 this visibility would frequently arise in the context of closer views of operational and consented wind farms to the northwest. Changes to views would be Small/negligible to Negligible scale for an Intermediate extent of this receptor group. The magnitude of impact would be Negligible and effects would be **Minimal, Neutral and not significant**.

Rural area between Fogwatt, Lhanbryde, Miltonduff and Kellas (1.0km, N)

15. This receptor group to the northwest of the site includes residents of rural properties and small settlements, users of local roads including the B9010 and walkers at Millbuies Country Park and using the Core Path south of Thomshill. These receptors would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of Community value and High/medium sensitivity. The gently undulating farmland in this area includes woodlands which frequently contain views.

16. As shown by Figure 5.6, illustrative view G at Clackmarras in Technical Appendix A5.3 and viewpoint 12, visibility of the Development from this area would typically be limited to blade tips seen above rising ground or nearby woodland. Visibility would increase where the land flattens towards the coast, with the most open views being from near Elgin – similar to those illustrated for viewpoint 10. Changes to views would be Small scale for an Intermediate extent of this receptor group, giving rise to a Small magnitude of impact. Effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Rural area between A96 and the coast between Fochabers, Elgin, Lossiemouth and Portgordon (5.2km, N)

17. Visual receptors within this gently undulating area of farmland include local residents and road users, and walkers using the short core path routes around the edge of villages as shown by Figure 5.6. The Spey valley and bay is designated as SLA, but for the most part views, particularly within the main areas of visibility, are of Community value. Local residents and recreational receptors in this area have a High susceptibility and High/medium sensitivity.

18. As illustrated by Figure 5.6 visibility would be relatively widespread albeit frequently interrupted by intervening woodland and roadside vegetation. As shown by viewpoints 11, 18 and illustrative view D in Technical Appendix A5.3, changes to views as a result of seeing the Development on the hills to the south which form the inland skyline would reduce with distance from Medium to Small scale. These Permanent changes to views would affect a Wide extent of this receptor group and the magnitude of impact would be Medium/small. Effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

Rural area north of Keith (9km, E)

19. Visual receptors in this area comprise residents or rural properties and local road users between Aultmore and Glen of Newmill. These receptors have a high susceptibility to changes to views which are of Community value and High/medium sensitivity.

20. Views towards the site from this area would arise from the open west facing slopes and higher ground rather than from the settlements which are on lower ground, as illustrated by Figure 5.6. As shown by illustrative view H in Technical Appendix A5.3, the Development would be seen above the forested skyline formed by the Site in the distance, in the context of nearby single turbines and pylons on higher ground at Wood of Ordiequish. Permanent changes to views would be Small scale for the Intermediate extent of this receptor group within 12km and Negligible beyond 12km. The magnitude of impact would be Small and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Gordon Castle Walled Garden (6.7km, NE)

21. The walled gardens at Gordon Castle are a popular local visitor attraction. The gardens themselves are relatively open but surrounded by a tall wall with mature trees in the surrounding parkland beyond. Visitors to the gardens have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are of National value and High sensitivity within this Garden and Designed Landscape.

22. The Development would be visible from some locations in the east sides of the garden, where there are longer views over the wall, but only in the few places where gaps between the trees align to permit longer views, such as from viewpoint 17 located near the café entrance. Permanent changes to views would be Limited in extent and Small scale and the magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible. Effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Duffus Castle (15.5km, S)

23. Duffus Castle is a ruin located to the north of Elgin and is open to visitors. From within the walls, views are mostly contained apart from through the gaps to the northeast and southwest. However, more elevated views over the walls are available from the castle doorway as shown by viewpoint 13. Visitors to the castle would have a High susceptibility to changes to views which are judged to be of Regional value and High/medium sensitivity as the castle is primarily visited for its heritage interest rather than its views.

24. As shown by viewpoint 13, the visibility of the Development beyond the forested skyline to the southeast would arise from the castle doorway and other areas with open views to the south and southeast, such as near the gap in the walls to the south and from the cobbled roadway up the castle mound. Permanent changes to views would be Small/negligible scale, affecting an Intermediate extent of the views from the castle. The magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Ben Rinnes (16.3km, S)

25. This is a popular summit with hill walkers who have a High susceptibility to changes to views. The hill and surrounding lower lying areas are designated as a SLA and views have a Regional Value and High/medium sensitivity. As shown by Figure 5.6, the hill summit is open, as are the north facing slopes and there are extensive views as illustrated by viewpoint 14.

26. The OS maps show tracks up the north facing slopes, but the recommended ascent (as described by Walk Highlands) is from the local road to the east, following the ridgeline between Rond Hill, Roys Hill and Ben Rinnes. As shown by Figure 5.6, there would be visibility of the Development from most of this route, with the Development seen as turbines set within forestry on lower hills in the distance to the north, in the context of more nearby existing and consented wind farms to the northwest and northeast as shown by viewpoint 14. Permanent changes to views would be Small/negligible scale for a Wide extent of the ascent and descent. The magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant**.

National Cycle Route 1 (8.0km, N)

27. National Cycle Route (NCR) 1 is a long distance route that loosely follows the east coast of the UK from Dover to the north of Scotland. Within the study area it routes from east to west within the landscape to the north of the site. A short section of the route passes within SLAs, however for most of the route views are of Community value. Cyclists using this route have a Medium susceptibility and a Medium sensitivity to changes to views.

28. As shown by Figure 5.6, there would be limited visibility of the Development from the route west of Elgin, more open views between Elgin and Spey Bay at distances of 8-10km, and less frequent and more distant views for westbound users of the route to the east of Spey Bay. As shown by nearby viewpoints 10, 13 and 18 and illustrative view D in Technical Appendix A5.3, the proposed turbines would be seen on the inland skyline adjacent to or partly over the lower side slopes of Brown Muir giving rise to Small scale changes to views. Between Elgin and Spey Bay there would be occasional breaks in visibility due to nearby vegetation, but there are frequent open stretches of the route and Permanent changes to views would arise for a Localised extent of the route. The magnitude of impact would be Small and effects would be **Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant**.

Aberdeen-Inverness Railway (1.6km, E)

29. The railway line routes from Aberdeen to Inverness. Within the study area it routes broadly east to west; with a short section of the route that travels north to south along the Spey Valley between Boat o' Brig and Lhanbryde, to the east of the Site. This short section of the route is within The Spey Valley SLA (see Figure 5.2) and views would be of Regional value, elsewhere along the route they would be of Community value. Rail passengers have Medium susceptibility and a Medium/low sensitivity to changes to views, increasing to Medium within the Spey Valley.

30. The views from train windows are largely oriented to the side of the direction of travel, with limited visibility ahead and behind. This factor would restrict visibility from the route east of the Spey Valley. There would be distant visibility of the Development from the route as it approaches Elgin from the west, giving rise to Small scale changes to views for approximately 2km west of Elgin. Between Elgin and Lhanbryde, there would be intermittent Medium scale changes to views (where not screened by cuttings, railside vegetation, or intervening woodland) as illustrated by Figure 5.6, with the turbines visible standing above the forested skyline to the south – similar to the view shown from nearby viewpoint 11. The remaining stretch of visibility would arise close to the Site, northwest of Inchberry, where the northernmost turbines would be seen within forestry on rising ground to the southwest (similarly to nearby viewpoint 16) for approximately 1.5km of the route, giving rise to Large scale changes to views. Considered together, these changes to views would affect a Localised extent of the route, with Large scale changes restricted to a Limited extent. The magnitude of impact would be Medium and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

A95 (5.4km, SE)

31. As shown by Figure 5.6, the A95 runs along the Spey valley to the south of Craigellachie, continuing northeast to Mulben and heading east along the valley towards Keith. To the south of Craigellachie. the route is located within the Spey Valley SLA, and that section of the route also forms part of the North East 250 scenic driving route where views are of Regional value; views from the rest of the route are of Community value. Road users on this route have a Medium susceptibility and a Medium/low sensitivity to changes to views, increasing to Medium sensitivity south of Craigellachie.

32. As illustrated by viewpoint 8 at Mulben and Figure 5.6, visibility from the route for drivers heading west and south would be restricted to a Limited extent of views of the tops of the turbines over rising ground and through trees looking ahead and slightly to the left as the route approaches Mulben, giving rise to Permanent, Small scale changes to views. Beyond this area, visibility would be screened until the route passes beyond the site. For northbound road users, there would be a Limited stretch of visibility looking ahead as the road approaches Charlestown of Aberlour, as illustrated by viewpoint 19; and through trees in winter as the route passes around the northern edge of Craigellachie. There would also be Permanent, Small scale changes to views

in these parts of the route. Beyond this part of the route, visibility would reduce as the route passes through settlements and areas of more limited visibility until the site is behind the direction of travel.

33. Considered together these changes to views would give rise to a Small/negligible magnitude of impact and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant for northbound road users and Minimal, Neutral and not significant for southbound road users**.

A96 (5.2km, N)

34. The A96 connects Aberdeen and Inverness. As shown by Figure 5.6, within the study area it passes to the east and north of the Site. A short section of the route passes within SLAs, however for most of the route views are of Community value. Users of this main road have a Medium susceptibility and a Medium/low sensitivity to changes to views.

35. There would be very limited visibility east of Focahbers and west of Elgin, but open views of the Development on the skyline to the south between Fochabers and Elgin as illustrated by viewpoint 11. Most of this section has relatively open southward views, occasionally broken by roadside vegetation or buildings as it passes forestry west of Mosstodloch, the roadside services east of Elgin and Lhanbryde. Permanent changes to views from this Intermediate extent of the route would be Medium scale and the magnitude of impact would be Medium. Effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant**.

A941 (1.9km, W)

36. The A941 routes from Garbet Hill via Dufftown, Craigellachie, Rothes and Elgin to Lossiemouth, passing roughly north to south through the study area and to the west of the Site. South of Dufftown and between Criagellachie and Rothes, the route passes through SLAs (see Figure 5.2) where views are of Regional value; for the rest of the route views are of Community value. Users of this route have a Medium susceptibility and a Medium/low sensitivity to changes to views, increasing to Medium sensitivity within the SLAs.

37. For road users travelling north, the first views of the Development would arise as distant views of up to 8 blade tips as illustrated by Figure 5.2 as the route approaches Dufftown, giving rise to Negligible scale changes to views. There would then be a gap in visibility until the road approaches Craigellachie where there would be Small scale changes to views as a result of seeing the proposed turbines on the skyline ahead and to the right of the direction of travel as the road approaches and enters the village, with these views being similar to those illustrated by viewpoint 9. Between Craigellachie and Rothes the Development would be seen through gaps in the roadside trees, and more openly in winter, with the changes to views gradually increasing from Small to Large scale as the route nears Rothes, where it would be seen whilst driving along the High Street, similar to those shown by illustrative view A in Technical Appendix A5.3. Leaving Rothes and continuing north, close views of the turbines would be available above the valley sides and forestry to the east as shown by Viewpoint 1, until road users pass beyond the Site and views become more enclosed to the north of viewpoint 1 as shown by Figure 5.6. Taking account of these Permanent changes to views arising for approximately 9km of the route, a Localised extent, the magnitude of impact is judged to be Medium and effects would be **Moderate, Adverse and not significant for northbound road users**.

38. For road users heading south, the first views of the Development would arise between Lossiemouth and Elgin as shown by Figure 5.6, where the Development would be seen beyond the distant skyline formed by forestry and Brown Muir Hill and ahead of the direction of travel, giving rise to Small/negligible scale changes to views. Passing through Elgin, views would be enclosed by buildings until leaving the edge of the town, where the Development would become visible on the skyline as illustrated by viewpoint 10, giving rise to Small scale changes to views. Between Elgin and Fogwatt there would be occasional glimpses of turbine blades, and a long stretch of little or no visibility until the route approaches viewpoint 1, where there would be a brief close view of the Development giving rise to Large scale changes to views before passing beyond the Site. Taking account of the very Limited extent of close views and Limited extent of more distant views approaching and leaving Elgin, these Permanent changes to views would give rise to a small magnitude of impact and effects would be **Minor, Adverse and not significant for southbound road users**.

Designated Landscapes

Lower Spey and Gordon Castle Policies SLA (6.5km, NE)

This designated area includes Fochabers, Gordon Castle and its walled garden and policies and extends towards Spey Bay where it meets the coastal SLA. The special qualities of this locally designated landscape are described in the Moray LLDR as:

> *"The two contrasting components of this candidate SLA, the lower Spey Valley and Gordon Castle policies, complement each other. The richness of the Spey for wildlife but also recreational pursuits is recognised in the designation as is the relationship of the nationally important Gordon Castle policies to Fochabers and its value in providing an attractive setting to the town and to the lower Spey."*

Special Qualities of Lower Spey and Gordon Castle Policies SLA

Quality	Susceptibility	Effects
Richness of the Spey for wildlife	Low – wildlife on the river would not be likely to be affected by turbines.	Negligible – see Chapter 9 Ecology
Richness of the Spey for recreational pursuits	Medium – those using the water, walking or visiting Gordon Castle gardens may see the turbines as detracting features, but turbines would not affect recreational opportunities.	Small scale for a Limited extent – As shown by Figures 5.2 and 5.6, there would be limited visibility from the two main recreational routes (northeast 250 and Speyside Way); little or no visibility from the river and very limited visibility from Gordon Castle walled gardens as shown by viewpoint 17.
Policies provide an attractive setting to the town and lower Spey	High – views of turbines may detract from the appreciation of the setting of the town.	Small scale for an Intermediate extent – where seen, the turbines may distract from the appreciation of this setting, but will be obviously distant and well beyond the landscape setting of the town and lower Spey.

39. Taking account of the Regional value of the SLA, and the susceptibility of the affected special qualities as detailed above, sensitivity is judged to be High/medium. Considering the Permanent effects described above together, the magnitude of impact would be Small and effects would be Moderate/minor, Adverse and not significant.

Ben Rinnes SLA (10.4km, S)

40. As shown by Figure 5.2 this designation includes Ben Rinnes and the glen extending southwest from Dufftown within the study area. The special qualities of this locally designated landscape are described in the Moray LLDR as:

> *"This landscape forms part of the wider setting to Cairngorms National Park with remote uplands and sparsely settled glens displaying similar characteristics to the landscapes within the Park. It is important in comprising the remaining area of relatively little modified uplands within Moray as well as accommodating Moray's highest hill, Ben Rinnes, which is particularly popular with walkers."*

Special Qualities of Ben Rinnes SLA

Quality	Susceptibility	Effects
Remote uplands	Medium – turbines may reduce the perception of remoteness.	Negligible – the Development would be seen in the context of existing and consented closer wind farms.
Sparsely settled glens	High – turbines may introduce views of built form to the glens.	Negligible – Figure 5.2 indicates distant views (13-15km) of blade tips from valley sides near Dufftown, but no notable visibility from within the glens.

Quality	Susceptibility	Effects
Little modified uplands	High – turbines may reduce the perceptions of lack of modification.	Negligible – the Development would be seen in the context of existing and consented closer wind farms and clearly set within a distant, modified (forested) landscape.
Moray's highest hill – popular with walkers	Medium – turbines may alter views for walkers but would not be likely to affect the popularity of the summit.	Small/negligible for an Wide extent. As set out at paragraphs 25-26 above and illustrated by viewpoint 14 the turbines would give rise to changes to views for most of the ascent and descent from Ben Rinnes.

41. Only one of the special qualities would be notably affected – the experience of walking Ben Rinnes, and that is of Regional value, Medium susceptibility and Medium sensitivity. Changes to this special quality due to changes to views available during that walk would be Permanent and Small/negligible scale, affecting a Wide extent of the route, including the summit. The magnitude of impact would be Small/negligible and effects would be of Minor, Adverse and not significant.