

# Appendix 6.2 Information to be Read in Conjunction with Visualisations

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# Appendix 6.2 Information to be Read in Conjunction with Visualisations

## *Introduction*

This appendix provides background information in relation to the suite of visualisations presented in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report).

The following text explains how the visualisations have been prepared and presented; includes instructions for how the visualisations should be viewed and explains the limitations of the visualisation material. The visualisations have been prepared in accordance with the published best practice, *Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2* (February 2017) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and also with regard to the consultation draft document 'Assessing the Impact of repowered wind farms on nature' in June 2018.

## *Viewpoint Photography*

The following text explains how the baseline photography was taken for each viewpoint.

Baseline photographs of the existing view were taken using either a high quality Canon 5D Mark II digital camera with a Canon EF 50mm f/1.4 USM lens or a high quality Nikon D600 with a 50mm f/1.4 lens. In accordance with the SNH guidance (2017), both cameras have a full frame digital sensor.

Neutral density graduated filters were used as appropriate at some viewpoints to balance the exposure within some scenes – typically where there was a contrast between bright sky and darker landform. Other than this, no other filters were used during photography.

Photographs were captured in high resolution JPEG and RAW format.

At each viewpoint the camera was mounted on a levelled tripod at a height of approximately 1.5 m above ground level (providing an approximation of average adult eye level).

The camera was set up on a panoramic rotating head and photographs were taken at 30 degree increments of rotation from left to right.

In each case the camera focus was locked on the distant horizon (infinity). In doing so, the photographs are in each case focussed on the development site, whilst very close objects in the foreground may in some cases be out of focus. This approach is in line with best practice photography techniques. The exposure was set correctly for the centre of the development site and then locked off so that it remained constant as the camera was rotated through the panorama.

As far as possible, photographs were taken in good weather and clear visibility conditions, however during 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted the opportunities for site photography to be undertaken in the usual manner and in some cases photography may have been collected in less preferable weather conditions. However, all photography collected remains suitable for the production of visualisations in line with best practice guidance. Wherever possible photographs were taken with the sun behind the camera although this was not possible for all viewpoints i.e. those that are broadly north of the site.

Inevitably with distance from the site, atmospheric moisture increasingly reduces the clarity of visibility and therefore photographs from the distant viewpoints typically depict the development site less clearly than the nearby viewpoint photographs. This is an unavoidable limitation of viewpoint photography.

## *Stitching of Panoramas and Post-Photographic Processing*

Each of the panoramic images presented is comprised of three single frame photographs stitched together in Adobe Photoshop and then cropped down to a particular horizontal and vertical field of view.

The panoramic baseline photographs which illustrate a 90 degree horizontal angle of view are stitched in cylindrical projection as per the SNH guidance (2017).

The photomontages which show a 53.5 degree horizontal field of view have been based on the same single frame panoramic photographs but have been stitched in planar projection in accordance with the SNH guidance (2017).

A limited amount of post photography processing of the image files has been undertaken to enhance the quality of the baseline photographs. As stated in the SNH guidance (2017):

*‘Photographic processing involves judgements - there is no process by which a ‘pure’ photograph can be produced without the application of human decision-making, from exposure timing to the specification of the camera, and whether this is applied manually or automatically.’*

*‘In reality there is no way to avoid a photograph being enhanced as this is an integral part of photography and photomontage production.’*

*‘Overall, there should be a minimum of post-processing image enhancement’.*

The extent of image enhancement undertaken in the production of the photomontages has been limited to that which would conventionally occur in a darkroom to improve the clarity of an image and does not in each case change the essential character of the image. Overall, there has been minimal post-photography image enhancement and during the stitching process none of the photographs were distorted in terms of scaling (other than that which is an inherent and unavoidable product of stitching photography in planar projection).

## Wirelines

A wireline visualisation (sometimes also referred to as a wireframe visualisation) is a computer generated 3D outline of a particular structure (in this the proposed wind farm) placed on top of a 3D ground terrain model, which again is represented by a wireline. No rendering is given to any of the surfaces.

The wireline images of the Proposed Development (as well as any other cumulative turbines modelled) were generated utilising the actual dimensions of the proposed turbines and a model of the structures was placed in position over a ground terrain model generated from Ordnance Survey Landform Panorama height data.

The coordinates of the viewpoints were recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) in the field. Checks on these coordinates were made with reference to Google Earth. These coordinates were used to set up viewpoints in the model from which to view the turbines. The wirelines were generated using Resoft Windfarm.

The wireline images are generated on a bare ground model and therefore do not take account of any vegetation or the built environment between the viewpoint and the Proposed Development. As such, they represent a worst case view. Each of the wirelines was checked on site to ascertain whether there was any screening of the view caused by vegetation or buildings.

For each viewpoint a 90 degree cylindrical projection wireline is presented to scale beneath the ‘future baseline’ photograph (discussed below) to illustrate the view from each viewpoint. This wireline illustrates the Proposed Development with other operational, consented and proposed wind farms (including those under construction).

In addition, for each viewpoint an enlarged 53.5 degree planar projection wireline of the Proposed Development only is presented on a separate sheet to correspond in scale with the subsequent photomontage.

The wireline images only illustrate the anticipated scale and position of the turbines in relation to the terrain. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the images, it must be appreciated that no wireline image could ever claim to be 100 % accurate as there are a number of technical limitations to the model which are discussed further below.

It should be noted that wirelines are just a ‘snap shot’ of the view from a single fixed location and the wirelines presented represent only a small number of locations where the Proposed Development will be visible from. In reality views will change as receptors move through the landscape. Therefore, the wirelines are simply a tool to assist the Landscape Architect in their assessment of effects. The assessment of visual effects in this chapter does not rely solely on the accuracy of the wireline images. Professional judgement has been used to evaluate the significance of effects.

## Photomontages

In simple terms, a photomontage is the superimposition of a rendered, photorealistic, computer generated model of a development (in this case the proposed wind farm) on to a baseline photograph to illustrate how it will appear in the surrounding landscape context.

A 3D wireline model was generated of the turbines as described above. Resoft Windfarm software was used to generate the 3D model of the turbines. The model of the structures was rendered and lighting was set appropriate to the date, time and orientation on which the photograph was taken.

A digital ground terrain model was generated in Resoft Windfarm and the Proposed Development was overlaid on top of it. Using world coordinates in the computer modelling programme the photographic viewpoints were replicated such that a view was set up looking at the turbines from exactly the same location as where the baseline photograph was taken from. The view from the model was then superimposed over the original photograph and edited as necessary in Adobe Photoshop to give a final photomontage.

The photomontages illustrate the Proposed Development set into a 'future baseline' view (i.e. in the context of the consented wind farms in the local area being present in the landscape where visible).

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the photomontages, it must be appreciated that no photomontage could ever claim to be 100 % accurate as there are a number of technical limitations in the model relating to the accuracy of information available from Ordnance Survey and from the GPS. In particular, it should be recognised that baseline photographs on which photomontages are based can, at best, only ever be a 'flattened' 2D representation of what the eye sees in 3D on site. A photograph will never capture as much detail as the eye would see in the field, it therefore follows that a photomontage can never truly capture the sense of perspective and detail which would be possible in reality. In some of the photomontages, the visibility of the turbines has been slightly digitally enhanced to ensure that they are visible when printed out. Taking account of the inherent technical limitations in producing and presenting photomontages, the photomontages have been produced according to best practice.

The photomontages are simply a tool to assist the Landscape Architect in his/her assessment of effects. The assessment of visual effects in this assessment does not rely solely on the accuracy of the photomontages. Professional judgement has been used to evaluate the significance of effects.

Each of the photomontages should be viewed flat and at comfortable arms length.

## Presentation of Visualisation Sheets

The following visualisation sheets are presented in the EIAR:

### Sheet A: Baseline Photograph and 'Future Baseline' Photograph

This sheet provides a baseline view and a 'future baseline' photomontage. Both images present a 90 degree horizontal field of view and a 14.2 degree vertical field of view. Both of the images on this sheet are presented in cylindrical projection and the principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 500 mm when the image is curved through the same radius.

For the purposes of clarification, the 'future baseline' photomontage on this sheet includes the consented wind farms in the vicinity of the site which are yet to be constructed. It does not show any schemes in planning.

### Sheet B: 'Future Baseline' Photograph and Cumulative Wireline

This sheet provides a cumulative wireline image of the Proposed Development directly beneath the corresponding 'future baseline' view as replicated from Sheet A. Both images present a 90 degree horizontal field of view and a 14.2 degree vertical field of view. This sheet presents the information required of the '*Baseline Panorama and Wireline*' as set out in Annex C of the SNH guidance (2017). Both of the images on this sheet are presented in cylindrical projection and the principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 500 mm when the image is curved through the same radius.

For the purposes of clarification, the wireline on this sheet illustrates the Proposed Development and other operational, consented and proposed wind farms/turbines.

### Sheet C: Wireline of the Proposed Development

This sheet provides an enlarged and cropped wireline image of the Proposed Development. The image illustrates a 53.5 degree horizontal field of view and an 18 degree vertical field of view. Whilst it is essentially an enlargement of the wireframe presented in Sheet B, this wireframe is presented in planar projection. As such the image should be viewed on a flat surface. The principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 812.5 mm. This sheet presents the information required of the 'Wireline' as set out in Annex C of the SNH guidance (2017).

### Sheet D: Photomontage of the Proposed Development

This sheet provides an enlarged and cropped photomontage of the Proposed Development added into the 'future baseline'. The image illustrates a 53.5 degree horizontal field of view and an 18 degree vertical field of view. It is presented in planar projection, and as such the image should be viewed on a flat surface. The principal viewing distance (the distance at which one should view the image to obtain a geometrically accurate impression) is 812.5 mm. This sheet presents the information required of the 'A1 Panorama' as set out in Annex C of the SNH guidance (2017).

For the purposes of clarification this sheet illustrates the Proposed Development added into the 'future baseline' photomontage. In agreement with the relevant statutory consultees, it includes the consented wind farms in the vicinity of the site which are yet to be constructed. It does not show any schemes in planning or scoping.

## Limitations of the Visualisations

Annex A of 'Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2 (SNH, February 2017) sets out a summary of the key limitations of visualisations and recommends that these are set out for each wind farm application. The following text is therefore reproduced from Annex A of the aforementioned SNH guidance (2017):

*'Visualisations of wind farms have a number of limitations which you should be aware of when using them to form a judgement on a wind farm proposal. These include:*

- *A visualisation can **never show exactly** what the wind farm will look like in reality due to factors such as: different lighting, weather and seasonal conditions which vary through time and the resolution of the image;*
- *The images provided give a reasonable impression of the scale of the turbines and the distance to the turbines, but can **never be 100% accurate**;*
- *A static image cannot convey turbine movement, or flicker or reflection from the sun on the turbine blades as they move;*
- *The viewpoints illustrated are representative of views in the area, but cannot represent visibility at all locations;*
- *To form the best impression of the impacts of the wind farm proposal these images **are best viewed at the viewpoint location shown**;*
- *The images **must** be printed at the right size to be viewed properly (260mm by 820mm);*
- *You should hold the images **flat at a comfortable arm's length**. If viewing these images on a wall or board at an exhibition, you should stand at arm's length from the image presented to gain the best impression.*
- *It is preferable to view printed images rather than view images on screen. If you do view images on screen you should do so using a normal PC screen with the image enlarged to the full screen height to give a realistic impression. Do not use a tablet or other device with a smaller screen to view the visualisations described in this guidance.*

