ScottishPower Renewables

Harestanes West Windfarm

Planning Statement

December 2024

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Abbreviations

ASA	Archaeologically Sensitive Areas
ALLVIMP	Aviation Lighting Landscape and Visual Impact Mitigation Plan
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CCUS	carbon capture utilisations and storage
CCC	Climate Change Committee
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
COP21	Conference of the Parties 21
COP29	Conference of the Parties 29
DAS	Design and Access Statement
DGC	Dumfries and Galloway Council
DGWLCS	Dumfries and Galloway Council's Windfarm Landscape Capacity Study
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LDP2	Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2
LDP3	Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 3
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Electricity Act	Electricity Act 1989
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
EIA Report	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
FLS	Forestry and Land Scotland
GDL	Garden and Designed Landscapes
GW	Gigawatts
GWh	Gigawatt hours
GVA	Gross Value Added

GHG	greenhouse gases
ha	Hectares
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
km	kilometre
OHMP	Outline Habitat Management Plan
OWPS	Onshore Wind Policy Statement
Megawatts	MW
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NSA	National Scenic Area
ND3	National Development 3
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
PAN	Planning Advice Notes
PMM	Permanent Meteorological Mast
PPA	Power Performance Assessment
PAC Report	Pre-application Consultation Report
RSA	Regional Scenic Area
RVAA	residential visual amenity assessment
SES	Scottish Energy Strategy
SPR	ScottishPower Renewables
S.57	Section 57
S.36	Section 36
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area

TCPSA	Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
UK	United Kingdom
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WSI	Written Scheme of investigation

1. Executive Summary

1. ScottishPower Renewables (UK) Ltd (SPR) (hereafter 'the Applicant') is submitting a Section 36 (S.36) application to the Scottish Ministers via the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) for the proposed Harestanes West Windfarm (hereafter 'the proposed Development', comprising of 12 turbines (6 with a height of up to 220 m and 6 with a height up to 200 m). It is proposed to have an installed capacity of around 84 megawatts (MW). S.36 Consent and deemed planning permission is sought for the 40-year operational life span of the proposed Development.

2. The proposed Development is situated north-west of the village of Ae, approximately 1.3 km to the Site and approximately 13 km north of Dumfries.

3. The Applicant is a licenced generator and has obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 which have been fully considered and accounted for throughout the design and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes.

1.1. Benefits of the Proposed Development

4. The proposed Development would result in a number of key benefits which will have a positive impact locally, regionally and nationally. These benefits are outlined below:

1.1.1. Contribution to Renewable Energy and GHG emission reduction targets

5. The proposed Development would generate approximately 186 GWh of renewable energy each year which equates to the annual power consumed by approximately 47,596 households in Scotland per year.

6. The proposed Development is predicted to deliver total emissions savings of 4,507,011 tCO_2e over a modelled 40 year lifetime and it is anticipated the construction phase carbon emissions of the proposed Development will be offset within 2.2 years.

1.1.2. Supporting Employment

7. Expected to generate £8.8 million Gross Value Added (GVA) and 125 years of employment in Dumfries and Galloway and £26.8 million GVA and 419 job years across Scotland during the construction phase.

8. £0.7 million GVA and 6 jobs in Dumfries and Galloway and £1.5 million GVA and 17 jobs across Scotland each year during operation.

9. The Applicant is committed to utilising local companies in the provision of contracts during the development and construction and operational phases.

1.1.3. Economic Benefits

10. If the proposed Development were to operate for 40 years the project expenditure is estimated to be £87 million, approximately £12.6 million would be spent in Dumfries and Galloway and £32.5 million within Scotland.

11. The local economy is expected to be boosted directly, indirectly and induced by a total of £7 million net GVA, with the wider Scottish economy benefiting from £16.58 million net GVA during the development and construction phase.

12. Expected annual contribution of £1 million towards non-domestic rates.

1.1.4. Community Benefit Fund

13. The Applicant is also committed to offering £5,000 per MW of installed capacity in a community benefit fund, resulting in an annual fund of around £0.4 million for the local community.

1.1.5. Habitat Management and Biodiversity Enhancements

14. The proposed Development will help to address the climate crisis by including habitat management and significant biodiversity enhancements. This includes:

- Blanket bog restoration of 2.82 ha which will compensate for the 0.01 ha of degraded blanket bog lost to the proposed Development and provide significant enhancement.
- Removal of approximately 7.53 ha of commercial plantation forestry. It may be possible to undertake further bog restoration in this area but where ground conditions are not suitable for bog restoration, native broadleaf planting will be undertaken over an area of approximately 15 ha.
- Native broadleaf planting is proposed across 13.33 ha of riparian habitat, which is proposed to connect with an area of ancient woodland. In time, this planting will create a strong nature network, linking to and strengthening habitat connectivity and, in doing so, enhance biodiversity in the local landscape

15. The proposed Development will secure a significant biodiversity net gain and will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including strengthening and creating networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

1.1.6. Recreational Enhancements

16. Subject to agreement, the Applicant proposes to implement enhancements in addition to the proposed Development. The enhancements are:

- Promotion of family friendly biking or horse riding routes around the proposed Development, using existing tracks;
- Provision of information boards regarding the proposed Development;
- Support for employment of a seasonal ranger to assist with the management of core footpaths in the area;
- Electric vehicle charging points in Ae Forest Carpark;
- Financial support to facilitate the purchase of E-bikes for rental at the 7 Stanes Forest of Ae Mountain Biking Centre; and
- Sponsorship of events in the Forest of Ae.

1.2.Energy and Climate Change Policy

17. At the UK Government level, The Climate Change Act 2008 sets out the requirement for GHG emissions to be reduced by 100% of 1990 levels by 2050. In Scotland, The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended by The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, has a legally binding target date of 2045 for Net Zero emissions.

18. Energy policies and strategies prepared by the Scottish Government and UK Government set out how they are going to achieve the delivery of Net Zero by 2045 and 2050 respectively, as well as onshore wind targets in Scotland. The Onshore Wind Policy Statement sets a target to deploy a minimum of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030. The OWPS recognises to meet the climate targets, taller and more efficient turbines will be required which will change the landscape.

19. Based on the latest statistic[1]s there is 9.756 GW of onshore wind capacity in Scotland and there is 14.7 GW in the pipeline (7.527 GW in planning, 5.296 GW awaiting construction, 1.857 GW under construction). The largest part of the pipeline forms applications in planning and there is no certainty that all of these applications will receive consent and be constructed.

20. The 2030 target is a minimum target and not a cap and there will be a continued need for onshore wind development post 2030 to meet the Net Zero target by 2045.

1.3. The Development Plan

21. The Development Plan for the proposed Development comprises of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) and relevant statutory Supplementary Guidance.

22. It is considered that Policy 11: Energy of NPF4 is the lead policy for the proposed Development. NPF4 Policy 11: Energy requires **significant weight** to be placed on the contribution of the proposed Development to renewable energy generation targets and on GHG reduction targets. In addition, Policy 1 Tacking the climate and nature crises of NPF4 requires **significant weight** to be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals.

1.4. Assessment

23. An assessment of the proposed Development against Policy 11 and other relevant policies from NPF4 and LDP2 has been undertaken in **Chapter 7** of this Planning Statement. The assessment has demonstrated that the proposed Development meets the requirements of the relevant policies in the Development Plan.

24. The proposed Development as a National Development will provide clean energy and will contribute to both national renewable energy targets and GHG emissions reduction targets and will provide an important contribution to Scotland's Net Zero commitments.

[1] *https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-energy-statistics/?Section=RenLowCarbon&Subsection=RenElec&Chart=RenElecPipeline*

25. The potential environmental impact of the proposed Development has been fully evaluated through the EIA process. As part of the EIA, competent, independent consultants have carried out detailed assessments on Landscape and Visual, Ecology, Ornithology, Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, Access, Traffic and Movement, Noise and Other Issues (Infrastructure, Forestry, Telecommunications and Television, Shadow Flicker, Climate and Carbon, Air Quality, Aviation and Radar, Seismic Array, Population and Human Health, Risks of Accidents and Other Disasters, Waste and Environmental Management).

26. As part of the EIA and design process, embedded mitigation and additional mitigation has been included, where necessary, to reduce any identified environmental impacts. The only residual significant impact is landscape and visual. NPF4 Policy 11 recognises that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected and where the impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable. The significant landscape effects are contained within approximately 7 km and significant visual effects would be contained within approximately 5 km to the north, approximately 1.9 km to the east and approximately 12 km to the southeast at Templand (however there would be less visibility within the core of Templand) and therefore only result in a localised impact.

2. Introduction

2.1.Introduction

27. Stephenson Halliday Ltd has prepared this Planning Statement to accompany an application for consent under Section 36 (S.36) of the Electricity Act 1989 (Electricity Act) and deemed planning permission under Section 57 (S.57) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (TCPSA) by ScottishPower Renewables (UK) Ltd (SPR) (hereafter 'the Applicant'), to the Scottish Ministers via the Energy Consents Unit (ECU).

28. The application is for consent to construct and operate a windfarm comprising of 12 turbines (6 with a height of up to 220 m and 6 with a height up to 200 m) with an installed capacity of around 84 megawatts (MW). S.36 Consent and deemed planning permission is sought for the 40-year operational life span of the proposed Development.

29. The Planning Statement is a standalone document which provides an overview of the planning, climate change and energy policy background and takes account of the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report), Design and Access Statement (DAS), Pre-application Consultation Report (PAC Report) and Socio-economic Assessment, which accompany the S.36 application.

30. This Planning Statement is set out as follows:

- **Chapter 3** provides the background to the proposed Development, outlining the Site and surrounding area and the relevant Planning History of the Site.
- **Chapter 4** describes the proposed Development.
- **Chapter 5** outlines the key benefits.
- **Chapter 6** provides the energy legislative and policy context which are relevant considerations to the determination of the proposed Development.
- **Chapter 7** provides the Planning policy context, including the Development Plan and relevant guidance.
- **Chapter 8** provides an assessment of the proposed Development.
- **Chapter 9** summarises the planning balance and conclusions of the assessment.

2.2. The Applicant

31. Harestanes West Windfarm is being proposed by SPR (hereafter 'the Applicant').

32. SPR is part of the ScottishPower group of companies operating in the UK under the Iberdrola Group, one of the world's largest integrated utility companies and a world leader in wind energy. ScottishPower only produces 100% green electricity – focusing on wind energy, smart grids and driving the change to a cleaner, electric future. The company has committed to investing over £8m every working day to make this happen, and to speed up the transition to cleaner electric transport, improving air quality and over time, driving down bills to deliver a better future, quicker for everyone. SPR is at the forefront of the

development of the renewables industry through pioneering ideas, forward thinking and outstanding innovation. Its ambitious growth plans include expansion of its existing onshore wind portfolio, investment in new large-scale solar deployment and innovative grid storage systems including batteries. The company is also delivering the Iberdrola Group's offshore windfarms in the Southern North Sea off East Anglia.

33. With over 40 operational windfarms, ScottishPower Renewables manages all its sites through its world leading Control Centre at Whitelee Windfarm, near Glasgow.

34. The proposed Development is a result of SPR's partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), where SPR was awarded exclusive rights to investigate the feasibility of onshore renewable energy projects within the National Forest Estate in the west of Scotland.

35. SPR is already well established in the southwest of Scotland and currently owns and operates 4 onshore windfarms in the Dumfries & Galloway region (Kilgallioch, Harestanes, Ewe Hill and Wether Hill). SPR currently operate in excess of 3 gigawatts (GW) of windfarm generating capacity in Scotland.

2.3. Statutory Framework

36. The application is to be determined under S.36 of the Electricity Act. S.57(2) of the TCPSA, allows Scottish Ministers to direct that planning permission shall be deemed to be granted upon granting consent under S.36 of the Electricity Act.

37. The Applicant, is a licenced generator and has obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act to:

"(a) have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and

(b) do what he reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects."

38. The Applicant is also obliged under sub-paragraph 3(3) to *"avoid, so far as possible, causing injury to fisheries or to the stock of fish in any waters."*

39. The requirements set out under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act have been fully considered and accounted for throughout the design and EIA assessment processes.

3. Site and Surrounding Area

40. This Chapter sets out the key characteristics of the Site and the surrounding area. Further information can be found in the EIA Report **Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution.**

3.1. Site Description

41. The Site is situated north-west of the village of Ae, approximately 1.3 km to the Site and 2.2 km to the nearest proposed turbine, and approximately 13 km north of Dumfries. The Site location is shown in **Figure 1.1** of the EIA Report, and the application boundary covers the area shown on **Figure 1.2** of the EIA Report.

42. The Site is comprised of two principal components. The 'turbine area' comprises the proposed turbines, crane hardstandings, substation, meteorological mast, network of connecting tracks and associated infrastructure. The centre of the turbine area is at NX9599391814. The 'access track to the turbine area' consists of the proposed access track leading from the A701 public road to the turbine area within the Site. Separate to these, there is also a proposed area for habitat improvement located to the east of the access track to the turbine area. The turbine area and access track to the turbine area are shown in **Figure 1.4** of the EIA Report.

43. The turbine area lies to the west of the Water of Ae and the Windy Hill Burn runs through the centre of the turbine area from north-west to south-east. The turbine area is made up of undulating hills that form part of the upland plateau or range of hills between Annandale to the east and Nithsdale to the West.

44. The A76 lies approximately 4.5 km to the west of the turbine area and the A701 lies approximately 5 km to the south-east, which connects to a minor road that then runs north through the village of Ae and north to south through the centre of the Site.

45. The area of Forest of Ae within which the turbine area is located, is managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) as a commercial forestry and has recreational facilities including car parking facilities and the Forest of Ae Café and Bike Shop located on the outskirts of the village of Ae. There are several waymarked walking routes and mountain bike trails within the Forest of Ae. Several core paths extend through the turbine area including one in the southern area which provides a circular walking path around Windy Hill. There is also an outer bend of a mountain bike path called Andy Hopkins in the north-eastern section of the Site going around Morins Hill. The immediate area surrounding the Site is rural with land used predominantly for agriculture and commercial forestry purposes. There is a relatively low population density within the vicinity, with no inhabited residential properties located within 1 km of the Site. The proposed Development would require forest restructuring works to enable construction and operation of the proposed Development.

46. The access track to the turbine area leads from the A701 4.6 km east of the village of Ae, largely following a network of existing access tracks built for the operational Harestanes Windfarm and forestry tracks forming part of the Forestry and Land Scotland estate. It follows the 'Romans and Reivers Route', one of Scotland's Great Trails, for a distance of

5.2 km, partly through the operational Harestanes Windfarm before crossing the Water of Ae.

47. There is one designation within the Site; the transition zone of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere Reserve which stretches along the western edge of the Site Boundary and crosses into the turbine area in the north-west corner. There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), or Listed Buildings within the Site.

48. The Site comprises an area of approximately 1,242hectares (ha), with the Site location and wider context shown in **Figure 1.1** of the EIA Report.

3.2. Surrounding Area

49. The Site primarily comprises commercial forestry. In contrast, the area to the south includes areas of pasture around the A701 and the village of Ae, as well as open moorland around Whitestanes Moor.

50. The operational 15-turbine Dalswinton Wind Farm is located approximately 0.6 km away from the turbine area to the southwest. The access track to the turbine area crosses through the operational Harestanes Windfarm, a 68-turbine wind development located approximately 3.1 km away from the turbine area.

51. The closest environmental designations within 10 km of the turbine area are shown in Figure 2.1 of the EIA Report and summarised in **Table 3.1** and **Table 3.2** below.

Table 3.1 Summary of Ecological and Geological Designated Sites within 10 km of the turbine area

Type of Designated Site	Name	Distance from Site
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Black Loch Shiel Dod Locharbriggs Quarry	2.3 km to the southeast 6.0 km north 8.1 km southeast
Geological Conservation Review site	Glenkiln Burn Locharbriggs North Quarry	3.5 km southeast 8.1 km southeast
Ancient Woodland Inventory site	509 individual parcels	Closest is 47 m southeast

Table 3.2 Summary of Cultural Heritage and Landscape Designated Sites within 10 km of the turbine area.

Type of Designated Site	Name	Distance from Site
Gardens and Designed Landscapes	Dalswinton Drumlanrig Castle Raehills Cowhill Tower	4.2 km south 8.8 km northwest 8.7 km east 6.0 km south
Scheduled Monuments	63 within 10 km, of which the nearest is Gawin Moor	614 m west
Conservation areas	Carronbridge Thornhill Kirkton East and West Cluden	8.9 km northeast 7.1 km northeast 7.3 km south 9.4 km south
Properties in Care of Scottish Ministers	Morton House	8.0 km northwest
Listed buildings	308 within 10 km	Closest of which is Gubhill 1.0 km east
Regional Scenic Areas	Thornhill Uplands	1.0 km west

3.3. Planning History

52. The Site has been subject to other planning applications which are outlined in **Table 3.3.** This information has been taken from the DGC planning portal.

Table 3.3 Site Planning History

Planning Ref No.	Address	Description	Decision
21/0900/DPA	Mitchellslacks Thornhill	Formation of 0.85km forest track	Prior approval is not required Decision issued: 11/05/2021
19/1673/FUL	Glencorse Hill Old Forest Of Ae Dumfries	Erection of 80-metre-high meteorological mast for a temporary period of 5 years	Grant conditionally Decision issued; 07/02/2020
19/1729/FUL	Big Craig Old Forest Of Ae	Erection of 70 metre high meteorological mast for a temporary period of 5 years	Grant conditionally Decision granted; 05/02/2020
16/1485/FUL	Gubhill Farm Ae Dumfries	Erection of entrance gates and fence up to 2.24 metres high (partially retrospective)	Grant conditionally Decision issued; 15/02/2017
16/1713/DPA	Loch Ettrick, 6km East Of Thornhill	Formation of 150m forest road.	Prior approval is not required Decision issued: 21/12/2016

4. Proposed Development

53. The proposed Development will include 12 three-bladed horizontal axis wind turbines, six with a maximum height of 220 m and six with a maximum height of 200 m with a total rated output of around 84 MW producing approximately 186 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity annually. This equates to the annual power consumed by approximately 47,596[2] average households in Scotland per year. The proposed Development would provide a flexible balance of energy and enabling the delivery of the full potential of renewable energy to meet the demands of the National Grid.

54. Onsite access tracks have been designed to use existing tracks as far as possible, whilst minimising cut and fill requirements in order to reduce the amount of ground disturbance, amount of material required for construction, loss of sensitive habitats and landscape and visual effects, particularly during construction. The proposed Development includes associated infrastructure including:

- 12 No. hardstanding areas at the base of each turbine, with an approximate total area of 3,856 m^2;
- transformer/switchgear housings located adjacent to turbines;
- site entrance from the A701, and 31.5 kilometres (km) of access track with associated watercourse crossings – of which 10.5 km are new access tracks and 21.0 km are upgrades to existing tracks;
- underground cabling linking the turbines with the substation;
- a permanent meteorological mast (PMM) and associated hardstanding area;
- an operations control building with parking and welfare facilities;
- a substation compound;
- a bellmouth and parking area adjacent to the A701;
- two temporary construction compound areas;
- extraction of material from up to three existing quarries owned and operated by Forestry and Land Scotland to provide suitable rock for access tracks, turbine bases and hardstanding;
- health & safety and other directional site signage; and
- additional development components to improve the overall ecological, environmental benefits accruing from the proposed Development in the form of peatland restoration, habitat improvement and native woodland planting.

[2] *Calculations from the Scottish Government Renewable electricity output and energy conversion calculator's website: https://www.gov.scot/publications/renewable-and-conversion-calculators/ [accessed September 2024]*

55. The full description of the proposed Development is detailed in **Chapter 3: Proposed Development** of the EIA Report.

5. Benefits of the Proposed Development

56. The proposed Development would result in a number of key benefits which will have a positive impact locally, regionally and nationally. These benefits are detailed below.

5.1. Contribution to Renewable Energy targets

57. The proposed Development would have a total rated output of around 84 MW which equates to approximately 186 GWh of renewable energy each year. This equates to the annual power consumed by approximately 47,596 households in Scotland per year.

5.2. Reduction in Carbon Emissions

58. The proposed Development is predicted to deliver direct total emissions savings of 4,507,011 tCO_2e tonnes over a modelled 40-year operational lifetime, against a fossil fuel mix of electricity generation. It is anticipated construction phase carbon emissions will be offset within 2.2 years.

59. There will also be considerable indirect carbon savings through the electrification of heat, transport and industrial energy supply.

5.3. Supporting Employment

60. The proposed Development is expected to directly and indirectly generate £8.8 million GVA and 125 years of employment in Dumfries and Galloway; and £26.8 million GVA and 419 job years across Scotland during the development and construction phase.

61. During the operation and maintenance period, it is estimated the proposed Development could generate each year:

- £0.7 million GVA and support 6 jobs in Dumfries and Galloway; and
- £1.5 million GVA and 17 jobs across Scotland.

62. The Applicant has committed to utilising local companies in the provision of contracts during the development, construction and operational phases. The Applicant intends to hold a '*Meet the Buyer'* event to provide early visibility of upcoming contracts which local suppliers could benefit from.

5.4. Economic Benefits

63. The proposed Development's project expenditure is estimated to be £87 million, approximately £12.6 million of which would be spent in the local economy and £32.5 within Scotland as a whole.

64. The local Dumfries and Galloway economy would be expected to be boosted directly, indirectly and induced, by a total of £7 million of net GVA during the development and construction phase. The wider Scottish economy would benefit by £16.5 million net GVA during the development and construction phase.

65. It is estimated that the economic impact generated by non-domestic rates is expected to make an annual contribution of £1 million towards non-domestic rates.

5.5. Community Benefit and Investment

66. The Applicant is committed to offering £5,000 per MW of installed capacity in a community benefit fund, resulting in an annual fund of around £0.4 million to be used to finance the aspirations and needs of the wider region, as well as the communities located close to the proposed Development.

67. It is anticipated that any potential income generated from the community benefit fund could be utilised to support local community projects. The local community would have the freedom to determine how the funds are allocated and prioritise the initiatives that are most important to them.

5.6. Habitat Management and Biodiversity Enhancements

68. The Outline Habitat Management Plan (OHMP) in **Technical Appendix 8.9** of the EIA Report outlines the positive land management for the benefit of biodiversity and nature conservation to compensate for any adverse impacts that the wind farm may have.

69. Two areas in the Site have been identified for habitat management and biodiversity enhancement. Area A which is located in the central area of the turbine area and Area B located to the east of the access track. These areas are identified on Figures 2 and 3 of the OHMP. These benefits will be secured through a condition of consent.

5.6.1. Area A

70. Blanket bog restoration proposals constitute the restoration of 2.82 ha of degraded blanket bog habitat. This area of restoration not only compensates for the 0.01 ha of degraded blanket bog that will be lost to the proposed Development but also provides significant enhancement by exceeding the required 1:10 compensation ratio and 10% enhancement threshold specified within the current NatureScot peatland guidance.

71. Approximately 7.53 ha of commercial plantation forestry would be removed. Following the commercial tree felling, further bog restoration in this area may be possible, subject to further peat surveys which will be undertaken post-consent.

72. Where ground conditions are not suitable for bog restoration, native broadleaf planting will be undertaken over an area of approximately 15 ha, subject to post-consent peat surveys. Planting native broadleaf trees has significant biodiversity benefits particularly in providing a valuable food and shelter resource to native invertebrates, birds and mammals.

73. The habitat management measures proposed in Area A will create a habitat mosaic of restored functioning blanket bog and native broadleaf woodland, which will significantly enhance the biodiversity of the Site.

5.6.2. Area B

74. Native broadleaf tree planting is proposed across 13.33 ha of riparian habitat within the application boundary, which will provide significant biodiversity enhancement. A key

reason why this area has been selected is due to its connectivity with an area of Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) listed woodland to the south. Additionally, the western side of the Garrel Water valley is covered with broadleaf trees and the aim is to create a similar habitat on the eastern valley side and along the tributaries. In time this riparian planting will create a strong nature network and in doing so enhance biodiversity in the local landscape.

5.7. Recreational Enhancements

75. The Applicant is aiming to support community assets in the vicinity of its projects in a diverse, useful and transparent way. The Applicant proposes to implement recreational enhancements in addition to the proposed Development, which are:

- Promotion of family friendly biking or horse-riding routes around the proposed Development, using existing tracks;
- Provision of information boards regarding the proposed Development;
- Support for the employment of a seasonal ranger to assist with the management of core footpaths in the area;
- Electric vehicle charging points in Ae Forest Carpark;
- Financial support to facilitate the purchase of E-bikes for rental at the 7 Stanes Forest of Ae Mountain Biking Centre; and
- Sponsorship of events in the Forest of Ae.

6. Climate Change and Renewable Energy Context

6.1. Introduction

76. This Chapter identifies the key international, UK and Scottish climate change and renewable energy policy and guidance relevant to the proposed Development. This provides an overall framework for the need for the proposed Development in respect of climate change and renewable energy generation.

6.2. International Context

6.2.1. The Paris Agreement

77. The Paris Agreement was adopted at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21), which was held in Paris in 2015. It is a legally binding international treaty on climate change, and its goal is to hold *"the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2oC above pre-industrial levels" and to pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels."*

6.2.2. The United Nations Gap Emissions Report 2024

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) prepare a yearly report on the progress in meeting the Paris Agreement. The October 2024 Key Messages reports *"...nations must use COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, as a launchpad to increase ambition and ensure the new NDCs collectively promise to almost halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. They must then follow up with rapid delivery of the commitments, building on actions taken now. If they do not do so, the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C will be gone within a few years and the 2°C target will be in danger. It remains technically possible to get on a 1.5°C pathway, with solar, wind and forests holding real promise for sweeping and fast emissions cuts. To deliver on this potential, sufficiently strong NDCs would need to be backed urgently by a whole-of-government approach, measures that maximize socioeconomic and environmental co-benefits, enhanced international collaboration that includes reform of the global financial architecture, strong private sector action and a minimum six-fold increase in mitigation investment. G20 nations, particularly the largest-emitting members, would need to do the heavy lifting."*

6.2.3. The IPCC's AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023

78. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) prepares comprehensive Assessment Reports relating to the gathering of knowledge on climate change, including its impacts, further risks and possible mitigation measures. The IPCC's recent Sixth Assessment Report consists of three Working Group contributions and a Synthesis Report.

79. Released in March 2023, the AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023 integrates the main findings from the working groups and outlines the impacts of global warming and recognises that human activity, principally through the emission of greenhouse gases

(GHG), has unequivocally caused global warming. The report finds that limiting human-caused global warming required Net Zero CO2 emissions.

80. The report emphasises that the severity of future climate change and its impacts are dependent on the level of future emissions. It also notes that not only have carbon dioxide concentrations increased, but the rate of increase has also accelerated. Over the next 20 years, global temperatures are expected to exceed or reach 1.5°C of warming. It is evident that without large-scale, sustained reductions in GHG emissions like carbon dioxide and methane, limiting global warming to 1.5°C is an improbable goal.

6.3. United Kingdom Government Context

81. This section provides an overview of the United Kingdom (UK) Government's climate change legislation, the climate emergency and the relevant policies and reports.

6.3.1. Climate Change

The Climate Change Act 2008

82. The Climate Change Act 2008 which was amended by The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 provides the basis for the UK's approach to adapting to and tackling climate change. The Act requires carbon dioxide and other GHG emissions to be reduced by 100% of 1990 levels by 2050 and for the UK Government to set legally binding carbon budgets to achieve Net Zero.

83. Under the Act, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) was established as an independent advisor to advise the UK and devolved Governments on emission targets and progress towards the reduction of GHG emissions and adapting to climate change.

6.3.2. The Climate Emergency

84. On the 09 of May 2019, the UK Government and Opposition parties unilaterally agreed to pass a motion to declare an environmental and climate emergency.

85. The UK Government reinforced the need to tackle the climate crisis at COP29 when, on 12 November 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer remarked that the *"government recognises that the world stands at a critical juncture in the climate crisis. and the United Kingdom not only has a critical role to play but also, an opportunity to grasp the chance to maximise opportunities for Britain and make us more secure in the here and now."*

6.3.3. The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's Path to Net Zero

86. On 09 December 2020 the CCC released the Sixth Carbon Budget which updates intermediary targets for the UK's progress to Net Zero to a reduction of 78% by 2035 and outlines that action is required across all sectors or the UK will not deliver Net Zero by 2050.

6.3.4. Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

87. On 19 October 2021, the previous UK Government published the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, which sets out the UK Government's policies and proposals for decarbonising the UK economy to meet Net Zero by 2050.

88. The strategy states that *"the Net Zero economy will be underpinned by cheap clean electricity, made in Britain. A clean, reliable power system is the foundation of a productive Net Zero economy as we electrify other sectors – so we will fully decarbonise our power system by 2035, subject to security of supply. Our power system will consist of abundant, cheap British renewables, cutting edge new nuclear power stations, and be underpinned by flexibility including storage, gas with CCS, hydrogen and ensure reliable power is always there at the flick of a switch."*

6.3.5. Progress in reducing emissions 2024 Report to Parliament Climate Change Committee

89. The CCC's latest progress report published in July 2024, outlines the country is not on track to meet the 68% reduction by 2030 target and that action is needed across all sectors of the economy. Setting out that in order to meet these targets *"Annual offshore wind installations must increase by at least three times, onshore wind installations will need to double and solar installations must increase by five times."*

6.4. UK Energy Context

90. The following section provides a summary of the UK Government's key energy policies and strategies. A number of these documents were published under the previous Conservative UK Government.

91. The Right Honourable Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero set out his priorities for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero on 08 July 2024 following the election of the Labour UK Government on 5 July 2024. His priorities included:

"• delivering our mission to boost energy independence and cutting bills through clean power by 2030;

•taking back control of our energy with Great British Energy;...

•leading on international climate action, based on our domestic achievements."

92. The UK Government published the Great British Energy Founding Statement on 25 July 2024. The Secretary of State Foreword outlines that the *"new government is taking immediate action on our mission. We lifted the ban on onshore wind within our first 72 hours in government and have set up a new 2030 Mission Control at the heart of government."*

6.4.1. The Energy White Paper

93. On 13 December 2020, the UK Government published the Energy White Paper: Powering Our Net Zero Future.

94. The Energy White Paper states to meet the electricity needs from retiring capacity and increased demand would require four times more clean electricity generation.

95. Page 45 of the Energy White Paper recognises the importance of onshore wind and states: *"Onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind. We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet Net Zero emissions in all demand scenarios."*

6.4.2. British Energy Security Strategy

96. The UK Government acknowledged in the British Energy Security Strategy published in April 2022, that onshore wind is one of the cheapest forms of renewable energy and they are *"...serious about delivering cheaper, cleaner, more secure power, so we need to consider all options. That is why we included onshore wind in the latest Contracts for Difference auction round and will include it in future rounds."*

6.4.3. Powering up Britain: Energy Security Plan

97. The Plan published in March 2023, outlines the UK Government's strategy to ensure the UK is more energy-independent, secure, and resilient and states: *"Our strategy to increase supply of low-carbon energy is dependent on enhancing our strengths on wind, solar and nuclear power generation alongside hydrogen production and carbon capture, usage and storage...."*

98. The Plan is supported by the Net Zero Growth Plan published on 04 April 2023.

6.5. Scottish Climate Context

99. The following section provides an overview of the climate change legislation, relevant climate change and energy policy and the progress towards meeting targets.

6.5.1. Climate Change

100. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 amended the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to set a target date of 2045 for reaching Net Zero emissions which Scottish Ministers are legally bound by.

101. On 18 April 2024, the Net Zero Secretary Mairi McAllan confirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to Net Zero by 2045. In response to the CCC's Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland – 2023 Report to Parliament the Net Zero Secretary confirmed *"that the 2030 target for emissions reduction is not achievable, this will no longer be a statutory target."* The Net Zero Secretary stated that *"new legislation will be brought forward to introduce multi-year 'Carbon budgets' replacing the current, annual targets."*

102. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) Scotland Bill was published on 05 September 2024 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 05 November 2024. The Act will replace annual emissions targets, with five-year carbon budgets from 2026-2045 and will change the current deadline for finalising the next Climate Change Plan for Scotland to align with the time scale for carbon budgets.

6.5.2. The Climate Emergency

103. On 14 May 2019, Climate Change Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham, declared a climate emergency in her statement to the Scottish Parliament.

6.5.3. Dumfries and Galloway Council Climate Emergency

104. On the 27 June 2019, DGC declared a climate emergency.

105. DGC agreed on 28 March 2024 that they will seek to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2033 and that they support the region becoming Net Zero on or before 2040, with a move to becoming carbon negative by 2045.

6.5.4. Securing a Green Recovery on to Path to Net Zero: Climate Change Plan Update

106. Published in December 2020, the Climate Change Plan sets out the Scottish Government's pathway to achieving the targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

6.6. Scottish Energy Context

107. The section below highlights the Scottish Government's commitment to renewable energy and the policy context for the energy sector in Scotland.

6.6.1. The Scottish Energy Strategy

108. Published in December 2017, the Scottish Energy Strategy (SES) sets the target of the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources.

6.6.2. Onshore Wind Policy Statement

109. On 21 December 2022, the Scottish Government published The Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) which sets out the Scottish Government's ambition to deploy a minimum of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030.

110. The Ministerial Foreword states that the world is facing a climate emergency and, in addition *"Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and the resulting extraordinary rise in the price of fossil fuels, in particular gas, demonstrates that continuing to rely on commodities that are subject to global price shocks is no longer an option.*

That is why we must accelerate our transition towards a Net Zero society. Scotland already has some of the most ambitious targets in the world to meet Net Zero but we must go further and faster to protect future generations from the spectre of irreversible climate damage."

111. Renewable energy has the ability to generate significant benefits for the Scottish public, particularly in the case of onshore wind, which *"has the ability to be deployed quickly, is good value for consumers and is widely supported by the public."*

112. The OWPS recognises that the deployment of wind energy projects must be delivered quickly. In paragraph 1.1.2 the OWPS states *"We must now go further and faster than before. We expect the next decade to see a substantial increase in demand for electricity to support Net Zero delivery across all sectors, including heat, transport and industrial processes."*

113. This ambition has been set to allow *"the rapid decarbonisation of our energy system, and the sectors which depend upon it, as well as aligning with a just transition to Net Zero whilst other technologies reach maturity."*

114. Paragraph 3.6.1 states *"Meeting our climate targets will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place. Meeting the ambition of a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030 will require taller and more efficient turbines. This will change the landscape."*

115. Chapter 5 of the OWPS outlines, that onshore wind developments already provide significant socio-economic benefits through investment, innovation and the creation of jobs. The Scottish Government anticipate that all onshore wind development will support the national and local supply chains.

116. The conclusion of the OWPS states that *"Deployment of onshore wind is mission-critical for meeting our climate targets. As an affordable and reliable source of electricity generation, we must continue to maximise our natural resource and deliver Net Zero in a way that is fully aligned with, and continues to protect, our natural heritage and native flora and fauna."*

6.6.3. Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan

117. The Scottish Government published the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan on 10 January 2023 for consultation. The Ministerial Foreword clearly states that we are entering a decade that will be critical in determining the future of Scotland's energy system and that *"we must deliver an energy system that meets the challenge of becoming a Net Zero nation by 2045, supplies safe and secure energy for all, generates economic opportunities, and builds a just transition.*

"We must deliver an energy system that meets the challenge of becoming a Net Zero nation by 2045, supplies safe and secure energy for all, generates economic opportunities, and builds a just transition."

118. The draft Strategy sets out key ambitions for Scotland's energy transition and those considered to be of particular relevance to the proposed Development are:

"• More than 20 GW of additional renewable electricity on- and offshore by 2030.

• Accelerated decarbonisation of domestic industry, transport and heat.

• Generation of surplus electricity, enabling export of electricity and renewable hydrogen to support decarbonisation across Europe.

• Energy security through development of our own resources and additional energy storage.

• A just transition by maintaining or increasing employment in Scotland's energy production sector against a decline in North Sea production."

119. Chapter 3: Energy supply outlines that Scotland will be a renewable powerhouse and states "We will continue to build a diverse renewable energy mix, with significant offshore and onshore wind deployment supported by technologies such as hydro and solar." Onshore Wind Sector Deal

120. The Onshore Wind Sector Deal, published in September 2023, outlines the Scottish Government's commitments to the onshore wind industry to deliver the ambitious target of a minimum of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030.

6.6.4. Green Industrial Strategy

121. The Green Industrial Strategy was published by the Scottish Government on 11 September 2024 and identifies areas of competitive global growth and opportunity for Scotland to realise the maximum possible economic benefit in the transition to Net Zero.

122. Under Part Two: Opportunity Areas on page 20, the Strategy outlines the significant opportunities for attracting onshore and offshore wind. Page 21 continues by stating, *"Onshore wind is the biggest single technology in Scotland's current mix of renewable electricity generation, comprising 62% of installed capacity. A thriving onshore wind sector is therefore critical to the decarbonisation in Scotland and the UK."* Progress Towards Energy and Emissions Targets

123. It is considered that the key targets for Scotland are:

- to reach Net Zero GHG emissions by 2045;
- to generate the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources by 2030; and
- A minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind by 2030.

124. **Table 6.1** presents the current position based on these key targets.

Table 6.1 – Energy Targets

Target	Timescale	Source	Current Position
Annual and Domestic Effort Targets 53.8% reduction from 1990 baseline (2022 target)	Annual 2022	The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009	Emissions reduced by 50% of 1990 emissions in 2022, therefore, the target was not met.
50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources	2030	Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland (2017)	The Q2 2024 Energy Statistics for Scotland outline that Scotland now generates the equivalent of nearly 29.5% of total final energy consumption from renewable sources.
Minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030	2030	Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022)	9.756 GW grid-connected in June 2024

125. The Scottish Government has confirmed that the 75% reduction in GHG emissions is now *"out of reach"*. However, the Net Zero target by 2045 still remains. It is also understood the interim target of a 90% reduction by 2040 is still in place.

6.6.5. Energy Statistics for Scotland Q2 2024 (September 2024)

126. The Energy Statistics for Scotland – Q2 2024 outlines that *"Scotland's renewable electricity generation in 2024 quarter 2 was 7,312 GWh - a 27.9% increase from 5,716 GWh in the same quarter in 2023. In the first half of 2024, Scotland generated 18,084 GWh of renewable electricity, up 13.7% on 2023."* In relation to grid connected onshore wind capacity, there is 9.756 GW as of June 2024.

127. The latest energy statistics published by the Scottish Government, demonstrate that as of June 2024, there is 9.756 GW of onshore wind capacity in Scotland, with 14.7 GW in the pipeline (7.527 GW in planning, 5.296 GW awaiting construction, 1.857 GW under construction[3]). The largest part of the pipeline forms applications in planning and there is no certainty that all of these applications will receive consent and be constructed.

128. BVG Associates, Scotland onshore wind pipeline analysis 2024-2030 April 2024 update, outlines that based on the Scenario 1 (low) dataset it is predicted there will be 15.2 GW of operational wind by 2030 which falls short of the 20 GW target. They do note that using Scenario 2 (medium) and Scenario 3 (high) datasets that 20 GW is achievable but *"is likely to be restricted by current resource constraints."* BVG's analysis predicts:

"The number of current consent decisions in the ECU will at least need to double for at least three of the next five years.

The current maximum number of abnormal loads required in any given year will increase from 2025 onwards under Scenarios 2 and 3. This will peak at:

Three times the current maximum capacity of Police Scotland (in 2029) under Scenario 2, and

Four times the current maximum capacity of Police Scotland (in 2029) under Scenario 3.

If future projects are to use the CfD framework as their route to market, allocation for onshore wind in the next four ARs (AR 6 to AR 9), compared to AR 5's actual allocation of 1.7 GW, will need to:

o Increase by 0.7 GW to around 2.5 GW per year on average to achieve the Scenario 2, and

o Almost double to around 3.4 GW each year to achieve Scenario 3."

129. This demonstrates it is going to be very challenging to meet the 2030 targets. It should also be recognised that the 2030 target is a minimum target and not a cap. There will be a continued need for onshore wind development post 2030 to meet the Net Zero target by 2045.

6.6.6. Scottish Greenhouse Gas Statistics 2022

130. The Scottish Government, Scottish Greenhouse Gas Statistics 2022, was published on 18 June 2024 and confirmed the GHG emissions reduced by 50% between the baseline period and 2022. Therefore, the target of 53.8% was not met.

6.7. Summary and Conclusion

131. This Chapter has outlined the demonstrable need for renewable energy developments to meet the legislative GHG emissions reduction targets and the renewable energy targets.

132. Many of the reports are clear that rapid progress is required to reduce GHG emissions.

[3] *https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-energy-statistics/?Section=RenLowCarbon&Subsection=RenElec&Chart=RenElecPipeline*

133. It has been shown that Scotland is not meeting the GHG emissions reduction targets and therefore more onshore wind development is needed to meet Net Zero by 2045.

134. The OWPS recognises that to meet the climate targets a *"rapid transformation"* is required and that taller and more efficient turbines will be required. *"This will change the landscape."*

7. Planning Policy Context

7.1. Introduction

135. This Chapter provides an overview of the Development Plan and other relevant planning considerations.

7.2. Development Plan

136. The Development Plan for the Site comprises:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which was adopted in February 2023 and provides a national spatial strategy for development in Scotland; and
- Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) which was adopted in October 2019 and relevant statutory Supplementary Guidance, including the Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations Supplementary Guidance (February 2020).

137. The Chief Planner letter published on 08 February 2023 outlined that in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of an LDP, whichever of them is later in date is to prevail (TCPSA, Section 24 (3)). Provisions that are contradictory or in conflict would be likely to be considered incompatible.

138. Therefore, at present, in the event of incompatibility between a provision of the NPF4 or the LDP, the NPF4 is to prevail.

7.2.1. NPF4

139. Annex A of NPF4 explains that the policies are to be read as a whole.

7.2.2. The National Spatial Strategy

Delivery of Sustainable Places

140. Part 1 – A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045 states *"The world is facing unprecedented challenges. The global climate emergency means that we will need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future impacts of climate change. We will need to respond to a growing nature crisis, and to work together to enable development that addresses the social and economic legacy of the coronavirus pandemic, the cost crisis and longstanding inequality."*

141. 'Sustainable places' are described under the National Spatial Strategy as *"Scotland's future places will be Net Zero, nature-positive places that are designed to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, whilst protecting, recovering and restoring our environment*:

Meeting our climate ambition will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place.

Every decision on our future development must contribute to making Scotland a more sustainable place. We will encourage low and zero carbon design and energy efficiency, development that is accessible by sustainable travel, and expansion of renewable energy generation."

142. Page 6 of NPF4 concerns the impact of climate change on Scotland and the delivery of sustainable places. It states *"Scotland's Climate Change Plan, backed by legislation, has set our approach to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2045, and we must make significant progress towards this by 2030... Scotland's Energy Strategy will set a new agenda for the energy sector in anticipation of continuing innovation and investment. "*Paragraph 3 of page 7 details that the Scottish Government will encourage the *"expansion of renewable energy generation"*.

143. Cross-cutting Outcome and Policy Links are outlined on page 8 of NPF4 which concerns the reduction of GHG emissions It states that the *"global climate emergency and the nature crisis have formed the foundations for the spatial strategy as a whole. The regional priorities share opportunities and challenges for reducing emissions and adapting to the long-term impacts of climate change, in a way which protects and enhances our natural environment."*

National Developments

144. NPF4 has identified eighteen national developments, which are defined within Annex A as *"...significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the spatial strategy. National development status does not grant planning permission for the development and all relevant consents are required. Their designation means that the principle of the development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, business and investors."* Therefore, whilst national developments will need to apply for consent, the principle of the development has been accepted and the national need for such developments has been explicitly recognised.

145. As a development over 50 MW, the proposed Development is designated as a 'national development' in NPF4 under National Development 3 Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure (ND3).

146. Page 103 describes ND3 of NPF4, and it asserts that: "*This national development supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid.*

A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its Net Zero emissions targets. Certain types of renewable electricity generation will also be required, which will include energy storage technology and capacity, to provide the vital services, including flexible response, that a zero carbon network will require. Generation is for domestic consumption as well as for export to the UK and beyond, with new capacity helping to decarbonise heat, transport and industrial energy demand. This has the potential to support jobs and business investment, with wider economic benefits.

147. *The electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity to consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. Delivery of this national development will be informed by market, policy and regulatory developments and decisions."*NPF4 outlines that the need for ND3 is*: "Additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale is fundamental to*

achieving a Net Zero economy and supports improved network resilience in rural and island areas."

7.2.2.1. National Planning Policy

148. It is considered Policy 11 Energy is the lead policy for the proposed Development

149. . Policy 11 Energy's stated intent is: *"To encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisations and storage (CCUS)".*

150. The policy outcome is for: *"Expansion of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies."*

151. Following the policy outcome, it outlines in relation to LDPs that *"LDPs should seek to realise their area's full potential for electricity and heat from renewable, low carbon and zero emission sources by identifying a range of opportunities for energy development."* Policy 11 is supportive of all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero-emission energy developments (as detailed in criteria a) and includes (i) wind farms where they are not located within a National Park or National Scenic Area (NSA) subject to a number of impacts (detailed in part e) of Policy 11) being addressed as part of the project design and /or mitigation.

152. Part c) of Policy 11 outlines that development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.

153. Policy 11 outlines that in considering the impacts (detailed in part e)) significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy targets and GHG emissions reduction targets.

154. It is considered that the following policies are also relevant to the proposed Development.

- Policy 1 Tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis
- Policy 3 Biodiversity
- Policy 4 Natural Places
- Policy 5 Soils
- Policy 6 Forestry, Woodland and Trees
- Policy 7 Historic Assets and Places

7.2.3. Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2

155. The LDP2 was adopted on 03 October 2019. The LDP2 outlines the DGC's aims and provides guidance for all future development and land use within Dumfries and Galloway.

156. It is considered that the following policies are relevant to the proposed Development (noting where there are incompatibilities the NPF4 will prevail):

- Policy OP1 Development Considerations;
- Policy ED10 Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere;
- Policy HE1 Listed Buildings;
- Policy HE2 Conservation Areas;
- Policy HE3 Archaeology;
- Policy HE4 Archaeologically Sensitive Areas;
- Policy HE6 Gardens and Designed Landscapes;
- Policy NE1 National Scenic Area;
- Policy NE2 Regional Scenic Area;
- Policy NE3 Areas of Wild Land
- Policy NE4 Sites of International Importance for Biodiversity;
- Policy NE5 Species of International Importance;
- Policy NE6 Sites of National for Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Policy NE7 Forestry and Woodland;
- Policy NE8 Trees and Development;
- Policy NE14 Carbon-rich Soils;
- Policy NE15 Protection and Restoration of Peat Deposits as Carbon Sinks;
- Policy CF4 Access Routes;
- Policy IN1 Renewable Energy;
- Policy IN2 Wind Energy;
- Policy IN7 Flooding and Development;
- Policy IN8 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems;
- Policy T1 Transport Infrastructure; and
- Policy T2 Location of Development / Accessibility.

7.2.3.1. Supplementary Guidance

157. The Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations Supplementary Guidance (February 2020) forms part of LDP2 (and the Development Plan) and provides more detail on Policy IN2: Wind Energy and *"It provides a statement of the main factors that will be taken into account in reaching planning decisions and details the criteria contained in the policy."* It does refer to the wind energy spatial framework, which is no longer applicable following the adoption of NPF4.

158. The Historic Built Environment Supplementary Guidance (February 2020) forms part of LDP2 and provides more detail on LDP2 policies HE1 to HE8.

159. The Trees and Development Supplementary Guidance (February 2020) supports LDP2 Policy NE8.

7.2.3.2. Technical Papers

160. The Archaeological Sensitive Areas (ASAs) Technical Paper, January 2018 provides background information to inform and support LDP2 Policy HE4: Archaeologically Sensitive Areas.

7.3. Emerging Policy

161. Following the publication of NPF4, DGC is gathering evidence to inform the third LDP (LDP3). It is anticipated that the Evidence Report will be finalised during Q3 2024, and the adoption of LDP3 is programmed for Q3 2027. It is considered, at this stage, LDP3 is not sufficiently progressed to be relevant in the determination of the proposed Development.

7.4. Planning Guidance

162. The Scottish Government has published a number of Planning Advice Notes (PANs) and planning guidance. Relevant guidance applicable to the proposed Development is detailed below:

- Biodiversity: draft planning guidance (November 2023);
- PAN 51: Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation (October 2006);
- PAN 60: Natural Heritage (January 2000);
- PAN 61: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (July 2001);
- PAN 75: Planning for Transport (August 2005);
- PAN 79: Water and Drainage (September 2006);
- PAN 1/2011 Planning and Noise (March 2011);
- PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology (July 2011);
- PAN 1/2013 Environmental Impact Assessment (August 2013);
- Flood risk: planning advice (June 2015); and
- Onshore wind turbines: planning advice (May 2014).

7.5. Other Relevant National Guidance

163. This section of the Chapter includes reference to other national guidance which is relevant to the proposed Development.

164. The Scottish Government published Tackling the Nature Emergency – Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045 in September 2023. The strategy sets out the Scottish Government ambition *"for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045."*

7.6. Summary

165. This Chapter demonstrates that planning policy is very supportive of onshore wind development.

166. The proposed Development is a national development and NPF4 recognises that *"a large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets."*

167. NPF4 is clear that onshore wind development is required in order to meet the GHG emission reduction targets and renewable energy targets.

168. Planning policy includes a number of impacts which are to be considered as part of a proposed Development and in considering the impacts, significant weight is to be given to the contribution of the development to the GHG emission reduction and renewable energy targets and to help tackling the climate and nature crises.

169. NPF4 recognises that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some types of renewable energy developments and where the impacts are localised and/or appropriate design has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.

8. Assessment

8.1. Introduction

170. This Chapter demonstrates that the proposed Development takes account of the statutory requirements of Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act, outlines the principle of the proposed Development and assesses the proposed Development against the Development Plan.

8.2. Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act

171. The Applicant has taken account of the requirements of Schedule 9, and this is evidenced in the EIA Report submitted with the application.

172. **Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution** of the EIA Report describes the design evolution process which has been undertaken. The proposed Development has gone through four principal iterations, which have been developed through the project design process. The design and layout represent a proposed Development which achieves the following:

- introduces development into a large-scale modified landscape where it can be accommodated with less impact on landscape character;
- introduces development into an area where wind energy development is present and with which it integrates reasonably well;
- minimises impacts on key views;
- minimises impacts on settlements and residents of scattered dwellings;
- is in accordance with Dumfries and Galloway Council Climate Emergency Declaration, National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and Onshore Wind Policy Statement;
- minimises and, where possible, avoid the loss of priority habitats and species, and creates opportunities for habitat enhancement, which will be delivered by a Habitat Management Plan, including an area of proposed riparian planting;
- protects watercourses and fish from the potential impacts of constructing the proposed Development;
- can be engineered and constructed safely;
- uses as much existing forestry road as possible, reducing the amount of new track and water crossings required for the construction of the proposed Development;
- avoids known designated assets through applying suitable buffers;
- respects the setting of historical assets; and
- minimises disturbance to and removal of carbon stores, such as trees and peat, to improve the carbon balance.

8.3. Principle of the proposed Development

173. The proposed Development is categorised as a National Development and therefore the principle of development does not need to be demonstrated.

174. The proposed Development would make a significant beneficial contribution to meeting current GHG emissions reduction targets as set out in **Chapter 6**. The proposed Development is predicted to deliver total emissions savings of 4,507,011 tCO2e over a modelled 40-year operational lifetime, against a fossil fuel mix electricity generation.

175. The proposed Development would estimate to generate approximately 186 GWh of renewable electricity annually, which could meet the energy needs of approximately 47,596 houses.

176. The proposed Development would help meet the objectives of ND3, which *"supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid."*

177. The proposed Development would have a capacity of approximately 84 MW which is a considerable contribution towards the need statement of ND3 and as discussed below in terms of helping to tackle the climate crises, renewable energy generation, GHG reduction and the Net Zero target.

8.4. Development Plan

178. This section of the Planning Statement assesses the proposed Development against the policies outlined in **Chapter 7**.

8.4.1. Policy 11 Energy

179. It is considered Policy 11 Energy is the lead policy. Policy 11 supports renewable energy developments.

National Parks and National Scenic Areas

180. Policy 11 b) confirms that proposals for wind farms in National Parks and NSAs will not be supported. The proposed Development is not located within either of these designations; therefore, this criterion is not applicable to the proposed Development.

Maximise Net Economic Impact

181. The Applicant is committed to maximising the net economic impact of the proposed Development.

182. The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment submitted with the application outlines a series of initiatives the Applicant would undertake to maximise the proposed Development's economic impact.

183. The proposed Development is expected to boost the local economy by a total of £8.8 million GVA and 125 years of employment during the development and construction phase in Dumfries and Galloway, with £26.8 million GVA and 419 job years across Scotland.

184. During the operation period, the proposed Development could generate each year, £0.7 million GVA and support 6 jobs in Dumfries and Galloway and £1.5 million GVA and 17 jobs across Scotland.

185. The proposed Development is expected to support the provision of local services and investment priorities of local communities. During its operation, it is expected to generate approximately £1.0 million in non-domestic rates yearly. It is also expected to provide an annual contribution of around £0.4 million in community benefits.

186. The Applicant is committed to maximising local procurement and is putting practices in place to achieve this. The Applicant is aiming to hold *'Meet the Buyer'* events along with the Tier 1 Principal Contractor to provide early visibility of upcoming contracts which local suppliers could benefit from.'

187. The Applicant also proposes a number of recreational enhancements which are detailed in **Chapter 5** of the Planning Statement.

188. It is therefore considered that the proposed Development maximises the net economic impact and is in accordance with part c) of Policy 11.

International or National Designations

189. It has been demonstrated through the EIA Report that the proposed Development will not impact on any international or national designations. Therefore, part d) is not applicable to the proposed Development.

Project Design and Mitigation

190. Policy 11 Energy, part e) outlines that project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts will be addressed. **Table 8.1** below outlines how each impact has been addressed in the project design and mitigation of the proposed Development.

191. The proposed Development has undergone a series of variations, including reducing the scale from 14 wind turbines of up to 220 m to tip height to the proposed 12 wind turbines (6 turbines of up to 200 m to tip height and 6 turbines of up to 220 m to tip). The design evolution process is detailed in **Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution** of the EIA Report.

Table 8.1 Policy 11e) Impacts

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
i. impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker;	**Residential Visual Amenity** The residential visual amenity assessment (RVAA) is detailed in Appendix 7.5 of the EIA Report. The RVAA considered 18 residential properties within 13 groups within the 2 km RVAA study area. The RVAA concluded mitigating factors would prevent the proposed turbines from appearing overbearing or at such a number, size or proximity that would make these properties an unpleasant or unattractive place to live. None of the properties assessed would reach the Residential Amenity threshold. **Noise** **Chapter 13: Noise** of the EIA Report assesses the potential noise effects associated with the construction and operation of the proposed Development. All residential locations are a minimum of 1 km to the nearest turbine hardstanding area, construction compound, substation and the nearest borrow pit. Construction The construction noise assessment concluded there would be no significant effects subject to the appropriate adoption of the Best Practicable Means approach which could include switching off vehicles when not in use, placing materials on the ground instead of dropping them and maximising separation distances between noise sources and noise sensitive receptors. Operation At all identified receptors, the direct operation noise impact from the proposed Development meets the applicable noise limits and is therefore not significant. The cumulative operational noise assessment identifies that the noise limits are met at all receptors except at R14 Shaws for some wind directions at wind speeds of 7 to 9 m/s by a margin of 0.1dB. The exceedance by 0.1dB at R14 Shaws is marginal. At this receptor, predicted noise levels are dominated by the Dalswinton Wind Farm development, with the proposed Development providing a minor contribution. Given this scenario and the +2dB uncertainty factor applied to both Dalswinton and the proposed Development, as well as other worst-case or otherwise conservative assumptions described in **Chapter 13** and **Appendix 13.1** of the EIA Report, it is considered unlikely that cumulative noise levels of 40dB would be exceeded in practice. Where there is the potential for this to occur, it would be infrequent, occurring only in downwind conditions, i.e. wind blowing from the north-east, which is uncommon in the UK (Met Office, 2023).

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	The cumulative noise at R14 Shaws is therefore considered to be Not Significant. **Shadow Flicker** The impact of shadow flicker has been considered and an assessment is detailed in **Chapter 14: Other Issues** of the EIA Report. Based on the realistic worst case scenario, which incorporates data from the Met Office and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's solar calculator, the assessment found that none of the identified receptors would experience shadow flicker exceeding the thresholds of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day. Therefore, the shadow flicker effects are Not Significant. **Conclusion** It has been demonstrated that this impact has been addressed.
ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;	**Landscape and Visual Impact** It is recognised by NPF4 that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy and where they are localised and / or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered acceptable. The OWPS also confirms that to meet the climate targets, taller and more efficient turbines will be required and the recognition that this will change the landscape. Design **Chapter 7: LVIA** of the EIA Report outlines the landscape and visual sensitives which have been considered in the design approach and mitigation. These are: • Consider the particular landscape sensitivities identified within the DGC Wind Energy Development: Development management Considerations, Supplementary Guidance (February 2020) and Appendix C Dumfries and Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study; • Located within the Ae unit of 18a Foothills with Forest (already characterised by wind energy development) and deemed suitable for wind energy development; • Minimise the prominence of the proposed Development in views from the Dumfries and Galloway Thornhill Regional Scenic Area (RSA) and the Nith Estuary NSA; • Reduce the prominence of the proposed Development in views from nearest residents in the Windyhill Burn valley and the village of Ae, as well as recreational users in the area;

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	• Consider the impacts with nearby cumulative developments including operational Dalswinton Windfarm, Harestanes Windfarm and Minnygap Windfarm, as well as other proposals such as Harestanes South Windfarm Extension; • Reduce the prominence of the proposed Development in views from key transport routes including the A76 and A701; • Avoid significant impacts on Tourist Routes and Dark Skies Core Area (see SG Map 6); and • Avoid significant impacts upon most valued landscape features on Site and seek enhancements where possible. There are also mitigation measures which have been embedded into the design of the proposed Development to reduce landscape and visual impacts. The embedded mitigation measures and mitigation during construction are detailed in **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report. **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report outlines in relation to design considerations and conclusions that the proposed Development would respect the main features of the Site and local area. Due to the set back into the undulating plateau, the extent of visibility would be limited in extent. Overall, the design of the proposed Development has responded to much of the sensitivities identified within the Dumfries and Galloway Council's Windfarm Landscape Capacity Study, 2020 (DGWLCS) and minimised impacts through design and embedded mitigation. <u>Construction Visual Effects</u> Significant construction visual effects would be limited to those recreational receptors within the Forest of Ae, on the core path Ae-Gawin Moor and within the Queensberry area of the Southern Uplands. <u>Operational Landscape Effects</u> In relation to operational effects on landscape character the extent is limited by the Site being located within commercial forestry and setback into the upland area. Significant effects would be contained within approximately 7 km within; the host Ae unit of Landscape Character Type (LCT) 18a Foothills with Forest; the adjacent LCT 19 Southern Uplands to the north; and LCT 16 Upland Fringe (Ae Fringe unit) to the southeast. Beyond this the effects would be not significant on other landscape receptors. <u>Operational Visual Effects</u> The nearest visual receptors significantly affected during the operational phase would be those living and visiting Ae (2 km southeast of the proposed turbines), the Forest of Ae (1.9 km east of the proposed turbines), Loch Ettrick and core paths within 5 km, and Queensberry (5 km north of proposed turbines). There would also be 'Significant' effects for those living to the south and southeast at Ae Bridgend/ Parkgate (5 km south east of the proposed turbines), Auchencairn and Kirkton (4.5 km-8 km south of proposed turbines), Shieldhill (7.9 km southeast of the proposed turbines)and Templand (12.5 km southeast of the proposed turbines) (however there would be less visibility within the core of the settlement due to the density of buildings

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	as illustrated on the screening ZTVs) and those using the A701 (5.3 km southeast). The ZTVs illustrate there is only potential for visibility on the 13 km southern section of the A701 route near Dumfries. As illustrated in the screening ZTVs, there would be no views north of Parkgate and on a section between Amisfield and Lanegate Road. Views within Locharbriggs and Dumfries itself are often screened by settlement along the road. There would be a 5 km section of the route with more consistent visibility of the proposed Development, as illustrated in Viewpoint 5. Designated Landscapes No significant effects were identified on any nationally designated landscapes including the Nith Estuary NSA. There was one significant effect identified on a localised part of the nearest Thornhill Uplands RSA, during operation. No other significant effects were reported for any other designated landscapes. Nighttime Effects The proposed Development will require visible aviation lighting. It has been agreed with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) that a reduced lighting scheme is acceptable. This will comprise a single 2000 candela steady red light mounted on the nacelle of 7 of the 12 turbines (T1, T3, T6, T7, T8, T9 and T12). Embedded mitigation includes automatic dimming of the lights (controlled by sensors installed on the turbines) to a nominal intensity of 200 candela during periods of meteorological visibility in excess of 5 km. The switching on and off of lights would be controlled by a timer (assumed 30 minutes before sunset until 30 minutes after sunrise), and not by photocells that respond to particular light levels, thereby not incurring effects in the daytime. Secondary mitigation has also been committed to in the Aviation Lighting Landscape and Visual Impact Mitigation Plan (ALLVIMP) detailed in **Technical Appendix 14.3** submitted with the EIA Report. This would consist of 'vertical directional intensity' which has the potential to reduce the intensity of the lights for nearby receptors located at elevations below the turbine nacelles. This mitigation is reliant on the specific design of the light which has not been specified at this time, therefore has not been included in the LVIA. However, the areas where this could reduce effects even further are illustrated with an area of hatching in Figures 7.11 and 7.1 of the EIA Report. Given the extent of mitigation incorporated into the proposed Development, significant impacts on the landscape or visual effects identified at night would be limited to a localised part of the adjacent Southern Uplands LCT, visual receptors in the village of Ae, Ae Bridgend / Parkgate, Auchencarin/Kirkton Shieldhill, and Templand, as well as recreational receptors in the southern Lowther Hills. **Conclusion**

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	Chapter 7 of the EIA Report concludes that overall, the significant impacts are considered to be localised. Significant landscape character effects would be contained within approximately 7 km. Significant visual effects would be contained within approximately 5 km to the north, approximately 1.9 km to the east and approximately 12 km to the southeast at Templand (however there would be less visibility within the core of Templand). There have been a number of onshore wind decisions which have discussed whether effects are considered to be localised. In the case of Glendye Wind Farm (ECU Reference: ECU00000676), paragraph 3.160 of the Reporters' Report outlined they agreed: *"with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the proposed development would have a significant effect on part of the landscape character unit of the Moorland Plateau Landscape Character Type and that this would extend up to 5km from the proposed turbines, as indicated within Figure 6.6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment."* Paragraph 3.284 of the Reporters' Report concluded that: *"The majority of the significant effects identified would be confined to viewpoints within 5km of the closest wind turbine (viewpoints 1 – 6). We consider these effects to be localised. The remaining viewpoints from which significant effects are predicted are limited to four regional locations (situated 9.6km, 14.5km, 17.7km, and 18.5km from the nearest visible turbine). Given the scale of the proposed development we find that the wind farm would be well positioned to minimise medium to long distance effects."* The Scottish Ministers agreed with the Reporters' conclusions and adopted them for their own decision. The decision notice for Chleansaid Wind Farm ECU Reference: ECU00002031 outlines that: *"The Scottish Ministers agree with the EIA report conclusions that the proposed Development will have some significant landscape and visual impacts but overall these would remain relatively localised with the majority of significant effects occurring not more than 12km from the proposed Development. It is therefore considered by the Scottish Ministers that the landscape and visual impacts are acceptable".* The Reporter for Sanquhar II Community Wind Farm (ECU Reference: ECU00001801) prepared a report pre NPF4 and post NPF4 and in both instances recommended by the Reporter that the development was consented by Scottish Ministers. In relation to landscape effects, the Reporter concluded in paragraph 3.101 of the original report that: *"significant landscape effects would be confined to within 7km of the proposed turbines."* In relation to visual effects, the Reporter outlined in paragraph 3.128 that: *"I consider that significant effects in views from the south and southwest would not generally extend beyond elevated areas of land within around 8 to 10 km of the turbines."* In the upland area, the Reporter outlined in paragraph 3.173 of the original report that: *"All told, I find the visual effects of the development in the upland area within around 5 km of the windfarm would be significantly adverse."* The Reporter considered these effects localised and the Scottish Ministers agreed.

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	These decisions demonstrate what has been determined to be acceptable in these cases in relation to significant landscape and visual impacts. It has been demonstrated in relation to the proposed Development that the design has considered landscape and visual sensitivities and while there will be significant localised impacts they are contained. It is therefore considered the landscape and visual impacts are acceptable.
iii. public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes;	**Chapter 3: Proposed Development** of the EIA Report outlines that where possible recreational access to the Site will be maintained along publicly accessible paths such as the Romans and Reivers Route and the network of walking and mountain biking trails within and near the Site. Where access along an existing route is not possible, a diversion will be agreed and implemented. There will likely be occasions when access to the Site for members of the public is not possible for short periods during the construction phase for health and safety reasons (e.g. during delivery of certain infrastructure components). Changes to access arrangements within the Site will be detailed in an Access Management Plan prepared in advance of construction commencing. These will include an arrangement for communicating changes in access to relevant stakeholders. The Access Management Plan details will be discussed with DGC's Outdoor Access Manager and shared with key stakeholders such as Ae Community Council. The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment submitted with the application outlines there are 62 core paths within 15 km of the proposed Development. There are also 16 recreational trails within 15 km from the proposed Development. The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment concludes that taking into consideration the increased recreational activity in the area and the wide variety of alternatives, it is unlikely that the motivations to use these trails would be affected by the proposed Development. For the majority of them, the closest point to the proposed Development is located within 10-15 km and none are crossing the site. In terms of core paths, a short part of the Dalswinton to Ae path passes through the Site, but it will remain open, accessible and in reasonable condition for the public. The Applicant is proposing recreational enhancements as detailed in **Chapter 5** of the Planning Statement. It is therefore considered this impact has been addressed.
iv. impacts on aviation and defence interests	**Chapter 14: Other Issues** assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development on aviation and defence, including seismological recording.

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
including seismological recording;	**Aviation and Defence** As part of the assessment, consultation has been undertaken with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and NATS (En Route) plc (NERL) and they did not raise any concerns in relation to radar. The Site is within a military low flying area. Notification of obstacle locations and heights before construction, and MOD accredited aviation lighting fitted to the wind turbines would address MOD concerns regarding military low flying aircraft. The assessment found that following the implementation of mitigation measures, the proposed Development is predicted to have no significant effects on aviation and radar. **Seismological Recording** The Scottish Government, the UK Onshore Wind Taskforce and the wind industry are now actively engaging with the MOD to approve the findings of technical reports demonstrating the overestimation and to secure the introduction of a new policy for budget allocation. Given the Array is 32.3 km from the proposed Development's closest turbine, the seismic footprint would be comfortably accommodated in any new budget without the need for seismic mitigation. The Applicant is confident that the ongoing work of the Eskdalemuir Working Group will result in the release of a sufficient seismic noise budget to facilitate the construction of the proposed Development. However, the Applicant acknowledges that the seismic noise budget for Eskdalemuir is finite and requires careful management to maximize wind energy deployment within the 50 km Consultation Zone. This strategic management is essential to enable Scotland to meet its legislated Net Zero 2045 targets, in line with the Scottish Government's Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022). It is therefore considered the proposed Development has considered this impact.
v. impacts on telecommunications and broadcasting installations, particularly ensuring that transmission links are not compromised;	**Telecommunications Impact** **Chapter 14: Other Issues** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development on telecommunications. Telecommunication infrastructure was identified through consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The assessment found that the proposed Development is predicted to have no significant effect on the existing telecommunications infrastructure, and therefore, no mitigation would be required. Therefore, it is concluded there will be no impact on telecommunications. **Broadcasting Installations**

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	Chapter 14: Other Issues assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development on television reception. The proposed Development is in an area now served by a digital transmitter. Therefore, television reception is not predicted to be impacted by the proposed Development. It is therefore considered the proposed Development has considered these impacts.
vi. impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;	**Chapter 12: Access, Traffic and Transport** of the EIA Report assesses the impact of the proposed Development on road traffic. The assessment notes that the proposed Development would temporarily increase traffic volumes on the A75 and A70 in the vicinity of the Site during construction. However, following the implementation of mitigation measures, including a Construction Traffic Management Plan and Abnormal Load Transport Management Plan, the impact would be reduced to have a minor temporary and reversible and not significant effect. **Chapter 12** of the EIA Report also considered the cumulative effects during construction and concluded there would be no significant effects. Post-consent, the Applicant would establish a Community Liaison Forum, in collaboration with DGC and local Community Councils. The forum would allow the community to be kept up to date with project progress and allow communication on the provision of transport-related mitigation and publicise the timings of turbine component deliveries. The Community Liaison Forum would be maintained until construction is complete and the proposed Development is operational. The Applicant would enter into a Section 96 (wear and tear) Agreement or a suitable alternative for the local adopted roads /routes to be used by construction vehicles. The Applicant would carry out regular monitoring of the carriageway condition during the construction of the proposed Development. Necessary repair works would be carried out in a timely manner to prevent further deterioration of the carriageway during the works. It is therefore considered the proposed Development has considered this impact.
vii. impacts on historic environment;	**Chapter 11: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** of the EIA Report considers the potential physical impacts related to the construction of the proposed Development on the fabric of heritage assets and impacts on the setting of heritage assets.

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	There are 35 known heritage assets within the Site and the Site itself is considered to have negligible to low potential for unknown archaeological remains. Within the Site there is potential for direct physical construction phase impacts on three heritage assets: MDG16887, a non-designated unroofed building and two compartment enclosure, MDG9667 and, a non-designated farmstead. Although outwith the Site, there is the potential for accidental direct physical construction phase impacts on, and LB10382, Garvald Churchyard, a Category C Listed Building. Direct physical construction phase impacts as a result of micrositing or accidental damage on MDG16887 and MDG9667 will in the first instance be avoided by fencing off these heritage assets. Should avoidance not be possible, impacts will be mitigated by a programme of archaeological recording. Listed building (LB10382), Garvald Churchyard, located immediately adjacent to the proposed access track leading to the turbine area, will be fenced off to avoid any direct physical impacts caused through accidental damage. Impacts on currently undiscovered archaeological remains elsewhere in the Site are unlikely. The scope and nature of any mitigation required will be agreed with DGC in advance of construction through a Written Scheme of Investigation which will be secured by a condition of consent. The assessment found that the proposed Development would have no significant residual physical effect following the implementation of the proposed programme for archaeological mitigation of construction phase impacts. In relation to settings impact, one of the key factors of the design strategy was for the proposed Development to respect the setting of historic assets and no additional mitigation beyond that embedded in the design is proposed. The assessment concluded predicted there would be no impact on the cultural significance of Shaw's Moor Scheduled Monument (SM59190 which results in an effect of no significance which is not significant. The assessment concluded there would be negligible effects which are not significant upon Morton Castle Scheduled Monument (SM90221) and Drumlanrig Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00143) and Listed Building (LB3886) and associated Listed Buildings. Therefore, it is considered the proposed Development has considered this impact.
viii. effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;	**Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development on hydrology, hydrogeology, geology and soils.

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	The assessment considered the sensitivity of nearby receptors, their proximity to the Site and any primary mitigation measures which have been incorporated into the design. A Drainage Impact Assessment has been produced for the proposed Development which includes an Outline Drainage Strategy. Sustainable drainage systems have been proposed to ensure runoff from the proposed Development post-development is no greater than that prior to development. The proposed sustainable drainage systems allow water quality to be managed at source, prior to any discharge, thereby helping to prevent any reduction in water quality in watercourses downstream of the application boundary. **Chapter 10** of the EIA Report sets out further mitigation measures which would be employed to minimise the impact of the proposed Development, including appropriate sediment control protection prior to groundworks, the retention of vegetation along watercourse banks, and water quality monitoring. The assessment found that there would be no significant effect taking account of the embedded and additional mitigation measures proposed. Therefore, it is considered the proposed Development has considered this impact.
ix. biodiversity, including impacts on birds;	**Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development on ecology and biodiversity. **Chapter 9: Ornithology** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impact on birds. **Biodiversity** The design of the proposed Development has aimed to avoid sensitive habitats as much as possible and incorporate mitigation measures into the layout. There are no statutory designated sites within 2 km of the Site. The nearest is Black Loch SSSI which lies 2.2 km south-east from the Site. In terms of non-statutory designated sites, a very small part of the Site (which does not include any turbines) is located within the outer transition zone of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. As the proposed Development is within the transition zone of the reserve and given that standard good practice measures would be applied (as detailed in the Outline CEMP in **Technical Appendix 3.1** of the EIA Report) it considered that this non-statutory site will not be significantly affected. It was scoped out of the assessment in **Chapter 8** of the EIA Report.

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	Chapter 8 of the EIA Report found there would be no significant effect to the aspects scoped into the assessment which includes habitats, Pine Marten, aquatics (Atlantic salmon and brown trout) and bats (excluding collision risk). Additional mitigation is proposed is proposed for bats during operation which includes reduced rotation speed while blades are idle known as feathering. There are therefore no significant residual effects predicted. **Birds** A series of bird surveys have been undertaken and the data gathered has fed into the design of the proposed Development. The impact assessment identified that the construction of the proposed Development would not result in the loss of any known nesting sites and that the loss of foraging habitat would be negligible. Similarly, disturbance of nesting and foraging areas is predicted to be negligible, incorporating mitigation in the form of best practice in relation to breeding birds to minimise disturbance of nest sites near the works. It was concluded in **Chapter 9** of the EIA Report that any effects of collision mortality on goshawks are expected to be no more than minor adverse, and therefore not significant. Mitigation is proposed during construction to negate the effects of disturbance on goshawks and other bird species. Although no significant adverse effects are predicted during the operational phase of the proposed Development post construction monitoring is proposed. A breeding goshawk survey of the proposed Development and 2 km buffer would be carried out in the year immediately after construction in order to ascertain whether there are any impacts on the distribution of goshawk and if territories become vacant. The extent of post construction monitoring would be agreed with consultees and secured as a condition of the development. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Development has considered this impact.
x. impacts on trees, woods and forests;	**Chapter 14: Other Issues** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development in terms of forestry. The current land use of the Site is predominantly commercial forestry and management plans for felling and planting across the Site have been considered in the design of the proposed Development. Forestry forms an integral part of the proposed Development as some trees would need to be felled, before planned plantation felling, around infrastructure positions to allow for construction of the proposed Development. The proposed Development has been designed to minimise forestry felling to a practicable level while allowing for the construction of the proposed Development and ancillary infrastructure.

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	As a result of the proposed Development, based on the parameters adopted up to 199.19 Ha of forestry would require to be felled, and require compensatory planting. Of this 72.53 Ha to be kept clear of forestry during the operational phase of the proposed Development and require compensatory planting. 31.12 Ha will be set aside for habitat improvements. These include a further area of new native woodland creation on shallow peat/mineral soils of approximately 15 Ha and an area of riparian woodland planting of 13.3 ha also committed to in the OHMP. There will be a requirement for 72.53 ha of compensatory planting to be agreed with Scottish Forestry. There will be no direct loss of ancient woodland as a result of the proposed Development. Therefore, it is considered the proposed Development has considered this impact.
xi. proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;	The proposed Development is anticipated to have an operational life of 40 years after which it would be decommissioned, and the turbines dismantled and removed. This is the proposed course of operations which is being applied for and any alternative would require separate consent. During decommissioning the turbines would be dismantled and removed, along with any associated above ground electrical equipment. This decommissioning work would be the responsibility of the Applicant, or any subsequent owner of the proposed Development. Underground cables would be left in place, and foundations would be removed to a depth of 0.5 m below ground level to avoid environmental impacts from deeper removal. Prior to decommissioning of the proposed Development, a method statement would be prepared and agreed with DGC.
xii. the quality of site restoration plans, including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and	It is anticipated there would be conditions on a consent which would include for a restoration strategy to be prepared and a financial guarantee to be agreed with the Planning Authority.
xiii. cumulative impacts.	Cumulative impacts are considered as part of the EIA and can be summarised as below: **Landscape and Visual**

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	In terms of the cumulative impact with other proposals (operational, consented and application proposals) **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report assesses the impact of the operational and consented baseline with Harestanes South Windfarm Extension and the operational and consented baseline with Dear and Rivox. This is defined as Scenario 3 in **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report which is the fully consented baseline with other proposed Developments with submitted planning applications. This is summarised below. In Scenario 3 with the other proposed Development of Harestanes South Windfarm Extension 4.1 km away, this development would also be located within the Forest of Ae unit of the Foothills with Forest LCT 18a and would appear as a direct extension of the Harestanes group, whereas Harestanes West Windfarm would be perceived between Dalswinton Windfarm and Harestanes Windfarm. Assuming Harestanes South Windfarm Extension was present in the landscape along with the operational baseline, the addition of Harestanes West would result in some localised increased impacts to landscape character and the Thornhills RSA 8, but no changes in level of effect from Scenario 1 (baseline). Similarly, for those recreational users within the Forest of Ae, from settlements and long distance paths to the south and east and road users on the A701, the addition of Harestanes West would result in some localised increased impacts to the view for visual receptors, but no changes in level of effect reported with Scenario 1. Scenario 1 is operational or under construction windfarms which have been included as part of the baseline assessed in **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report. In Scenario 3 with the other proposed developments of Daer (9.6 km away) and Rivox (11.3 km away), these two developments would be located within the Forest of Ae unit of the Foothills with Forest LCT 18a and adjacent Southern Uplands LCT and would appear as a single cluster if both were constructed. Assuming these two sites were present in the landscape along with the operational baseline, the addition of Harestanes West would result in some localised increased impacts to landscape character and the Thornhill Uplands RSA, but no changes in level of effect from Scenario 1. Similarly, for those settlements and long distance paths to the south and east and road users on the A701, the addition of Harestanes West would result in some localised increased impacts to the view for visual receptors, but no changes in level of effect reported with Scenario 1. **Ecology** With mitigation no residual cumulative effects are predicted. **Ornithology** No significant cumulative effects are predicted. **Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils** Although there are potential linkages between operational windfarms in the area and the proposed Development, cumulative effects on hydrogeology, geology, and soils are highly unlikely. Potential effects from windfarms in the operational phase are

Impact	How the Impact has been Addressed
	minimal compared to those in the construction phase. Water quality monitoring at the proposed Development will determine any pollution sources that may arise during the construction phase. **Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** No operational adverse effects of greater than negligible significance is predicted for any heritage asset in this assessment; significant cumulative effects are, therefore, not considered to be possible. **Access, Traffic and Transport** The assessment identified potential cumulative developments located within approximately 10 km of the proposed Development. The assessment identified no relevant developments which would likely lead to cumulative impacts. **Noise** No significant cumulative operational residual noise effects are predicted, with both night and daytime noise limits being able to be met at all noise-sensitive properties in the vicinity of the proposed Development. **Shadow Flicker** Operational wind turbines located in the vicinity of the proposed Development were taken into consideration and reviewed for potential cumulative effects. It was confirmed that there are no residential properties within overlapping areas with the potential of shadow flicker and therefore there would be no cumulative effects. **Conclusion** There would be no significant cumulative impacts, with the exception of landscape and visual. Overall, the significant impacts are considered to be localised and would be contained for all landscape and visual impacts. Therefore, it is considered the proposed Development has considered this impact.

Balancing the impacts with contribution to renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets

192. Part e) of Policy 11 continues by stating: *"that in considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets."*

193. The design iteration process of the proposed Development is detailed in **Chapter 2** of the EIA Report and in the DAS. Through project design and mitigation, the only residual significant effect of the proposed Development is the localised landscape and visual impact. NPF4 recognises that such impacts are to be expected for windfarm development and where the impacts are localised and / or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable. In addition, the OWPS recognises to be able to meet the targets, developments will require taller turbines which will change the landscape.

194. Significant weight is to be afforded to the contribution of the proposed Development to GHG emissions reduction targets and renewable energy target. The proposed Development is predicted to have a total GHG saving of 4,507,011 tCO2e over a modelled 40-year operational lifetime, against a fossil fuel mix electricity generation and will generate approximately 186 GWh of electricity annually which is enough to power the equivalent of 47,596 homes.

8.4.2. Assessment against other relevant NPF4 policies

195. **Table 8.2** provides the assessment against the other relevant NPF4 polices.

Table 8.2 Assessment against other relevant NPF4 policies

Policy	Assessment
Policy 1 Tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis	The proposed Development will deliver habitat enhancements through blanket bog restoration and native broadleaf tree planting across approximately 31 ha (including 13.33 ha of riparian habitat). When viewed in the context of the 18.8 ha of habitats being lost to the proposed Development (majority of loss being of ecologically low value habitat) it is considered that the habitat management proposals will significantly enhance the biodiversity value of the Site. **Chapter 14: Other Issues** of the EIA Report assesses the potential impact of the proposed Development on Climate and Carbon Balance. The assessment determines that GHG emissions that will arise from the manufacture, construction and decommissioning activities, including the loss of peat and forestry, from the construction of turbines and associated infrastructure are projected to be offset 2.2 years after the proposed Development becomes operational against a fossil fuel mix of electricity or 3.1 years against a grid mix of electricity. The proposed Development is predicted to deliver total emissions savings of 4,507,011 tCO2e over a modelled 40-year operational lifetime against a fossil fuel mix electricity generation. The overall impact is considered to represent a Significant and Positive effect and contribute to long-term climate change mitigation. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Development would meet the requirements of Policy 1 and significant weight should be afforded to the proposed Development's contribution to tacking the climate and nature crises.
Policy 3 Biodiversity	As noted in **Chapter 5** of the Planning Statement, the proposed Development will deliver significant biodiversity enhancements which is detailed in the OHMP submitted with the application. This covers two areas within the Site. Area A will include restoration of 2.82 ha of degraded blanket bog habitat which not only compensates for the 0.01 ha of degraded blanket bog that will be lost to the proposed Development but also provides significant enhancement, exceeding the required 1:10 compensation and 10% enhancement threshold in the current NatureScot peatland guidance. In addition, native broadleaf planting will be undertaken. The area will be approximately 15 ha subject to post consent peat surveys. This will have significant biodiversity benefits particularly in providing a valuable food and shelter to native invertebrates, birds and mammals. Area B proposes native broadleaf planting across 13.33 ha of riparian habitat. A key reason this area has been selected is to provide connection with an area of AWI. The western side of the Garrel Water valley is covered with broadleaf trees and

Policy	Assessment
	the aim of the OHMP is to create a similar habitat on the eastern valley side which, in time, will create a strong nature network and in doing so enhance biodiversity in the local landscape. It will also provide watercourse shading, soil stabilisation and flood alleviation. The OHMP provides long term monitoring proposals to ensure the habitat is monitored in relation to the objectives set out in the OHMP. It is therefore considered, it has been demonstrated that the proposed Development will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention as outlined in Policy 3b). It has been shown in **Table 8.1** there are no significant effects in relation to biodiversity (including cumulatively) as result of design measures and additional mitigation. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of and gains positive support from Policy 3.
Policy 4 Natural Places	Through project design and mitigation, the proposed Development will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment and therefore meets the requirements of part a). The assessments undertaken demonstrate that the proposed Development will not have a significant effect on an existing or proposed European Site and therefore is in accordance with part b). In terms of part c) of Policy 4. The Nith Estuary NSA is over 16 km from the proposed Development. **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report outlines that the proposed Development is not within the designation and therefore the physical integrity of the NSA would remain intact. Potential effects are limited to visibility from the NSA from the proposed Development. **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report outlines the special qualities of the Nith Estuary NSA as detailed in NatureScot Report 374. Most of the Special Qualities relate to the internal aspects of the NSA itself or the landmark feature of Criffel. The Special Quality which relates to views out, are to the south of the Cumbrian Fells, rather than north and this quality would not be affected. There would be no significant adverse effects on these Special Qualities. The Special Quality which mentions a backdrop is the first one listed in the Special Qualities which is 'A working, farmed landscape against a backdrop of hill and estuary'. The proposed Development would be part of the backdrop of hills if

Policy	Assessment
	looking north. From these few locations within the NSA, the proposed Development would be visible amongst the afforested foothills in an area already characterised by wind energy and from many locations would not break the skyline which is formed by the higher Lowther Hills behind. At over 16 km away, the proposed Development is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the appreciation of this Special Quality. The scale of change would be Small/Negligible across a Localised extent of this Special Quality leading to a Slight/Negligible magnitude and 'Moderate/Minor' effect and 'Not Significant'. The Solway Coast National Landscape is located approximately 34.5 km from the Site. There would no change to the physical elements of the National Landscape given the separation distance of over 34km. The only Special Quality which might be affected would be the 'Vast unbroken vistas across the Scotland'. Whilst there would be distant visibility of the proposed Development, this would very much form a distant feature. Much of this Special Quality relates to the views of Criffel across the Solway which forms 'a Border landmark rising above the coastal flatlands''. Views to the Southern Uplands only occur in excellent visibility and are more secondary. The scale of change to this Special Quality would be Negligible across an Intermediate extent of the National Landscape. This Long Term Permanent change would lead to a Slight/Negligible magnitude and Moderate/Minor effect and Not Significant. There are no statutory designated sites for nature conservation within 2 km of the Site. The potential for indirect effects upon the ecological qualifying interests of any statutory designated site for nature conservation, located greater than 2 km from the Site was scoped out of the assessment in **Chapter 8: Ecology** of the EIA Report, by virtue of the static nature of the site's qualifying habitats interests, spatial separation and/or absence of hydrological pathways of connectivity. The assessments undertaken demonstrate that the proposed Development will not significantly affect a National Park, NSA, SSSI or National Nature Reserve and therefore it is considered the objectives of the designations will not be compromised and there are no significant adverse effects on the qualities for which they have been designated and is therefore in accordance with part c). Even if significant adverse effects had been identified it is considered these would be clearly outweighed with the national benefits of the proposed Development. This includes significant biodiversity enhancements, significant contribution to the reduction of GHG emissions and renewable energy targets and the investment the proposed Development would bring to the local area and also nationally as detailed in **Chapter 5** of the Planning Statement.

Policy	Assessment
	In terms of part d) of Policy 4,.it should be noted that NPF4 Policy 11d) sets out that development proposals that impact on international and national designations will be assessed in relation to Policy 4. In relation to local designations, they are to be assessed under Policy 11 and part e) ii. details that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable. The assessment in **Chapter 7** of the EIA Report undertaken found there would be significant effect on a localised part of the Thornhill Uplands RSA, during operation which is considered to be acceptable as detailed in **Table 8.1** of the Planning Statement above. For completeness, an assessment against part d) of Policy 4 is outlined below. This RSA is described in LDP2, Regional Scenic Areas, Technical Paper (January 2018). The Thornhill Uplands RSA is described in the following way: *"Overall, though there are strong contrasts in relief, the topography is smoother and rounder than the Galloway Uplands to the west and the area is more highly populated and has a more managed feel.* *The hills of the Southern Uplands form large, smooth steep sided domes with complex spurs and ridges, dissected by numerous steeply sided clefts and several long, deep, U shape Upland Glens. The uplands are patterned with a mosaic of rough grassland, bracken and rushes, combined with heather moorland on the higher areas. The lower slopes of the glens are enclosed by stone dykes, and some valley floor pastures have been improved. There is relatively little tree cover though the forestry plantations to the west have encroached on the heads and sides of certain valleys. Roads to the heads of the glens give access to isolated farms. Further south the valleys become wider and less steeply sided and start coalescing to form Intimate Pastoral Valleys with scattered farms, hamlets and villages. The improved pastures of the valley sides are patterned with drystone dykes, and interspersed by farm and streamside woodlands. The intervening Foothills and Upland Fringe form open, sculptural ridges, though conifer plantations on the uplands outwith the designated area sometimes lap over the southern horizons.* *The main valley of the Nith has a varied character of strong contrasts. In the north it forms a steep wooded gorge, before opening out to the policy woodlands of Drumlanrig. The broad valley centred around Thornhill has a lush feel near the town with hedgerows rather than dykes, woodland and a little arable land. Further afield the landscape becomes more open, with pastures enclosed by stone dykes, and some plantation forestry, leading upwards to the remote, exposed landscape of the enclosing Southern Uplands.* *The main valleys are accessible from Dumfries, and the Middle Dale and Intimate Pastoral Valleys and are subject to pressure for residential development, as well as being popular for informal recreation. The flanks of the valleys see continued demand for forestry, and the flanks and summits have seen interest from windfarm developers" (Page 33).* The proposed Development would be outwith the RSA and therefore there would be no change to the physical attributes of the RSA. The main change would result from the perceptual changes to the RSA resulting from visibility of the proposed Development. The bare earth ZTVs submitted with the EIA Report indicate widespread visibility. However, given the extent

Policy	Assessment
	of deciduous tree cover and policy woodland within Nithsdale and screening by forestry, the screening ZTVs predict a much reduced extent of visibility across the RSA. From the upland part of the RSA, there would be open views to much of the proposed Development. However, it would not encroach any closer to the base of the Lowther Hills and Queensbury hill than the operational windfarms, albeit the proposed turbines would be notably larger in scale. However, the proposed Development would be setback into the Foothills from Nithsdale, which has meant that the influence of the proposed Development is much reduced on this dale at the heart of the RSA. Whilst it is still visible across scattered parts of the RSA, notable influence would be restricted to the upland area around Queensberry. With regard to views of the RSA, Queensberry hill forms a prominent feature in the landscape from the middle and lower Nithsdale and Annadale. In most cases, as illustrated in the EIA Report **Technical Appendix 7.3: Visual Analysis**, the proposed Development would not appear in front of Queensberry hill or other values strong upland features of this RSA. The scale of change is judged to be Medium at most within a Localised extent of the upland area on the eastern edge of this RSA. This Long Term change would result in Moderate magnitude of effect as a result of the proposed Development. The sensitivity of the landscape is High/Medium, leading to a 'Moderate' effect which would be 'Significant'. Beyond this area, the impacts would reduce to 'Not Significant'. It is therefore considered the proposed Development would not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the area and is therefore in accordance with part d). Notwithstanding this conclusion, limb ii sets out that development proposals can be supported where significant adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environment or economic benefits of at least local importance. The benefits for the proposed Development are of national importance. The proposed Development will result in a GHG saving of 4,507,011 tCO2e over a modelled 40-year operational lifetime, against a fossil fuel mix electricity generation and will provide approximately 186 GWh of renewable energy annually, will create employment and investment locally and nationally and will significantly enhance biodiversity in the area. The proposed Development is a national scale development which will provide benefits of national importance. In the case of Sanquhar II Community Wind Farm (WIN-170-2006, ECU00001801), the Reporter in the Supplementary Report outlined in paragraph 2.70:*"Even if the opposite conclusion was reached, and the integrity of the RSA was considered to be significantly adversely affected by this proposal, I consider part (d)(ii) of the policy would continue to give support to the development. This is because, in my view, a national development which by definition supports the delivery*

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	of the national spatial strategy, must offer benefits of more than local importance. Having regard to the benefits of the development in the round, as outlined in chapter 6 of my original report, I am firmly of the view that this proposal is capable of support under policy 4(d)(ii).” In the case of Shepherds Rig Wind Farm (WIN-170-2005, ECU00000735), the Reporters originally recommended refusal (pre-NPF4) and following NPF4, the Scottish Ministers asked the Reporters to reopen the inquiry process. The policy shift in the OWPS and NPF4 changed the Reporters' recommendation. Paragraph 3.14 of the Supplementary Report notes: *“In the updated policy context, we find that the proposal's obvious contribution to renewable energy targets causes the benefits as a whole to now clearly outweigh the significant landscape and visual effects.”* The Scottish Ministers in the decision letter note: *“The Scottish Ministers acknowledge that the proposed Development would result in adverse visual and landscape impacts. The Scottish Ministers have had regard to the balance of these impacts in relation to the benefits of the proposed Development and consider that the proposed Development is acceptable, on balance, in the context of the benefits it will bring through contributing to renewable energy and climate change targets.”* In relation to RSAs and Policy 4d) of NPF4, the Reporters outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the Supplementary Report that: *“Given the prominence of the Cairnsmore hills and their key role in designation of this part of the Regional Scenic Area, the significant landscape and visual effects would adversely affect the special qualities of the Regional Scenic Area, in particular the sweeping and dramatic views of the hills.”* Paragraph 3.13 of the Supplementary Report states: *“Looking at the environmental benefits, the proposal's benefits in relation to the nature crisis and the enhancement of biodiversity are unclear and cannot be relied upon. However, delivery of renewable energy, a national development, would clearly be a significant benefit, and one which gains significant weight from NPF4 policy 1 in relation to the climate crisis. In relation to NPF4 policy 11(e)ii, despite there being significant landscape and visual effects, the penultimate paragraph of policy 11(e) reiterates that significant weight should be placed on the contribution to renewable energy. Furthermore, while we have identified inconsistency with policy 4(d)i on the effects on the Regional Scenic Area, in terms of policy 4(d)ii, we conclude that the benefits overall are of more than local importance.”* Therefore, in the case of Shepherds Rig Wind Farm, the Reporters considered there would be significant landscape and visual effects which would adversely affect the special qualities of the RSA, however the contribution to renewable energy which is afforded significant weight in NPF4 meant the proposal met the requirements of limb ii of Policy 4d). In accordance with part e) the precautionary principle has been applied, where applicable, in the assessments undertaken in the EIA Report. The Site is not located within wild land and therefore part g) is not applicable to the proposed Development.

Policy	Assessment
	With the implementation of mitigation, the proposed Development will not have an adverse effect on species protected by legislation and is therefore in accordance with part f). It is therefore considered the proposed Development has met the requirements of Policy 4.
Policy 5 Soils	The proposed Development has avoided areas of deep peat, and an Outline Peat Management Plan (**Technical Appendix 10.2** of the EIA Report) has been prepared which demonstrates that any excavated peat would be reused on Site or nearby for peatland restoration. The proposed Development is therefore in accordance with part a). Part b) is not applicable as the Site is not located on prime agricultural land. **Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils** of the EIA Report outlines that NatureScot's Carbon and Peatland map demonstrates the soils within the Site are predominantly Class 4 (unlikely to include carbon-rich soils). There are some areas of Class 5 (peat depth greater than 50 cm but currently lacking peatland vegetation), distributed throughout the Site. Two small areas are identified as Class 3 (peaty soils that support some or mostly peat-forming vegetation) in the north western and south eastern corners of the Site. The remainder of the Site is Class 0 (mineral soils). Phase 1 and Phase 2 Peat Surveys have been undertaken which has shown peat death is variable across the Site. As outlined above, areas of deep peat have been avoided as part of the design process. Therefore, it is considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of part c). As noted above, a series of peat surveys have been undertaken which have shown the depth, condition and stability of carbon rich soils on the Site. **Chapter 10** of the EIA Report has assessed the potential impact on peatland and soil disturbance and with the mitigation measures in place there would be no significant effects. **Chapter 14: Other Issues** of the EIA Report calculates the likely net effects of the proposed Development on climate emissions and loss of carbon. The emissions related from the manufacture, construction and decommissioning activities, including the loss of peat and forestry are predicted to be offset 2.2 years after the proposed Development becomes operational against a fossil fuel mix of electricity. The overall impact is considered to be a significant positive effect and will contribute to long term climate change mitigation. The proposed Development therefore meets the requirements of part d). It has been demonstrated the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy 5.

Policy	Assessment
Policy 6 Forestry, Woodland and Trees	**Table 8.1** has outlined how the proposed Development has been designed to minimise forestry felling to a practicable level while allowing for the construction of the proposed Development and ancillary infrastructure. **Chapter 14: Other Issues** outlines that up to 199.19 net Ha of forestry would require to be felled and require compensatory planting. Of this 72.53 Ha to be kept clear of forestry during the operational phase of the proposed Development, 31.12 Ha will be set aside for habitat improvements. These include a further area of new native woodland creation on shallow peat/ mineral soils of approximately 15 Ha and an area of riparian woodland planting of 13.3 Ha also committed to in the outline Habitat Management Plan included in **Technical Appendix 8.9** of the EIA Report. There will be a requirement for 72.53 ha of compensatory planting to be agreed with Scottish Forestry. There will be no direct loss of ancient woodland as a result of the proposed Development. The OHMP proposes native broadleaf planting which will provide significant biodiversity enhancement and provide connectivity with an area of ancient woodland. The proposed Development therefore meets the requirements of Policy 6.
Policy 7 Historic Assets and Places	A detailed assessment has been undertaken in **Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage** of the EIA Report on the potential impact on historic assets. **Scheduled Monuments** There would be no direct impacts on Scheduled Monuments as a result of the proposed Development. **Chapter 11** of the EIA Report has concluded the understanding, appreciation and experience of Scheduled Monuments, Poldivan Bridge, cairn 730m ENE, Gawin Moor, cairns and field system, Auchencairn, Shaw's Moor, cairnfield and ring cairn S of Hospital Wood and Shaw's Moor, cairnfield and ring cairns SE of Hospital Wood and Morton Castle, castle, Morton Loch would be adequately retained such that the integrity of its setting would not be significantly affected. Whilst the proposed Development would change the views from and towards the Scheduled Monuments, it would remain possible to understand, appreciate and experience factors of their setting that contribute to its cultural significance. The proposed Development therefore meets the requirements of part h). **Garden and Designed Landscape/Listed Buildings** **Chapter 11** of the EIA Report has assessed the potential impact of the proposed Development on Dumlanrig Castle Garden and Designed Landscape and associated Listed Buildings. **Chapter 11** of the EIA Report has split the analysis into four parts – the mansion house, the gardens, the parkland and the wider designed landscape. It is these facets of the asset which could be sensitive to change within their setting and as such form the focus of the analysis. As part of this analysis,

Policy	Assessment
	four locations have been identified to understand the contribution that views to the south east make to the cultural significance of Drumlanrig Castle which are: • A view from the house and terrace over the east garden; • A view of the house from the parkland immediately to the north-west; • A view out to the south-east from part of the east garden; and • Views from the west side of the parkland towards the south-east. **Chapter 11** of the EIA Report finds of the four views listed here, the most sensitive to visual change is the first (over the east garden) as this is the only designed view in the list. The second view (the view towards the house from the north-west) is not the most attractive or important view of the house and the presence of the public car park in the foreground detracts from its significance. The house and its outbuildings in any case screen views of the landform in which the proposed Development from this location. The third view (from the east garden) is not central to the cultural significance of the garden and would, in any event, only be experienced from the northern side of the garden. The fourth and final location is not one specific viewpoint but the elevated west side of the parkland in general which has extensive screening from policy woodland. In all four cases, the area of land to the south-east where the proposed Development would be located does not itself specifically contribute to the cultural significance of Drumlanrig; rather it would simply appear in the background of a view. This tends to reduce the sensitivity of Drumlanrig to changes in this part of its setting. In relation to the predicted impact, proposed Development would be visible to a greater or lesser degree from all four of the locations at Drumlanrig identified in this analysis, however, as noted above, of these it is only the view from the upper terrace of the east garden of the mansion house that supports an overall understanding, appreciation and experience of the factors of setting which contribute to the cultural significance of the GDL and mansion house. **Chapter 11** of the EIA Report concludes that it is considered that there would be a negligible adverse impact on the cultural significance of GDL00143/LB3886 Drumlanrig Castle which results in an effect of negligible which is not significant. In terms of part c), the proposed Development would preserve the character, special architectural or historic interest of LB3886 Drumlanrig Castle and the other Listed Buildings within GDL00143. In terms of part i), the proposed Development would preserve the cultural significance, character and integrity of GDL00143 and would not significantly impact on important views to, from and/or within the GDL, or its setting.

Policy	Assessment
	In terms of part o), no impacts on the setting of non-designated sites were identified. In relation to the potential for direct impacts on the two non-designated assets within the Site, mitigation is proposed. Impacts on currently undiscovered archaeological remains elsewhere in the Site are unlikely. The scope and nature of any mitigation required will be agreed with DGC in advance of construction through a Written Scheme of Investigation which will be secured by a condition of consent. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Development meets the requirements of the applicable parts of Policy 7.

8.4.3. LDP2

196. The majority of the requirements from policies relevant to the proposed Development in the LDP2 have been addressed under the assessment of NPF4. **Table 8.3** provides an assessment against the applicable policies, as detailed in **Chapter 7**, and notes where the assessment has already been undertaken as part of the assessment against NPF4.

Table 8.3 LDP2 Assessment

Policy	Assessment
OP1 Development Considerations	The assessment of the proposed Development against NPF4 covers most of the requirements outlined in Policy OP1. With regard to part a) of the Policy, it has been demonstrated that in relation to noise, shadow flicker, residential visual amenity there not be an unacceptable impact on general amenity. In addition, in relation to vibration, **Chapter 13: Noise** of the EIA Report scopes out construction and operational vibration as the effects during construction will be negligible and during operation an ETSU study has found that vibration from wind turbines, as measured at 100 m from the nearest machine, was well below the BS 6472-12008 criteria recommended for human exposure in critical working areas. Therefore, at distances greater than 100 m will be even lower. In relation to air quality, **Chapter 14: Other Issues** of the EIA Report outlines while there are no properties within close proximity to the Site, effects associated with dust or vehicle emissions are possible, but these potential effects would be managed through good practice construction measures which would form part of the CEMP (detailed in **Technical Appendix 3.1** of the EIA Report). Parts b), c), d), e), f) and g) have all been assessed in **Table 8.1** and **Table 8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development is in accordance with Policy OP1.
Policy ED10 Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere	A very small part of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Transition Zone is located within the Site. There are no proposed turbines in this area. Please see the assessment against policy 11 in **Table 8.1**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development is in accordance with Policy ED10.
Policy HE1 Listed Buildings	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 7 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy HE1.
Policy HE2 Conservation Areas	There are no Conservation Areas within the 20 km study area used for the cultural heritage assessment as part of the EIA Report and therefore they were scoped out of the assessment. It is therefore considered the proposed Development is in accordance with Policy HE2.
Policy HE3 Archaeology	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 7 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy HE3.

Policy	Assessment
Policy HE4 Archaeologically Sensitive Areas	The Site is partially located within Archaeologically Sensitive Area Whitestanes Moor (ASA1). No development is proposed within the ASA. The assets within the ASA have been considered. This included the two scheduled monuments, SM5919 Shaw's Moor, cairnfield and ring-cairn S of Hospital Wood and SM5920 Shaw's moor, cairnfield and ring-cairns SE of Hospital Wood. The relationship between these monuments and the wider ASA was considered as part of the assessment. No significant effects were predicted. It is therefore considered the proposed meets the requirements of Policy HE4.
Policy HE6 Gardens and Designed Landscapes	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 7 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy HE3.
Policy NE1 National Scenic Area	Please see the assessment against Policy 4 of the NPF4 in **Table 8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE1.
Policy NE2 Regional Scenic Area	Please see the assessment against Policy 4 of the NPF4 in **Table 8.2**. Policy NE2 does not provide the balancing element or refer to integrity that is detailed in Policy 4d) and therefore it is considered the policy is not consistent with NPF4.
Policy NE3 Areas of Wild Land	The proposed Development is not located within an area of Wild Land and the closest Wild Land Area is, Talla Hart Fell (WLA 02) 22 km northeast of the Site. **Chapter 7: LVIA** of the EIA Report outlines the ZTV illustrates there would be minimal coverage and wirelines indicate the proposed Development would be seen within the context of Harestanes, Dalswinton and Minnygap windfarms. Effects on the special qualities of WLA 02 would be negligible and were not considered further in the LVIA assessment, as agreed at Scoping. Policy 4 of NPF4 confirms that effects of development outwith wild land areas will not be a significant consideration. It is therefore considered Policy NE3 is not consistent with NPF4.
Policy NE4 Sites of International Importance for Biodiversity	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 4 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE4.
Policy NE5 Species of International Importance	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 4 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE5.
Policy NE6 Sites of National for Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 4 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE6.

Policy	Assessment
Policy NE7 Forestry and Woodland	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 6 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE7.
Policy NE8 Trees and Development	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 and Policy 6 of the NPF4 in **Tables 8.1** and **8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE8.
Policy NE14 Carbon-rich Soils	Please see the assessment against Policy 5 of the NPF4 in **Table 8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE14.
Policy NE15 Protection and Restoration of Peat Deposits as Carbon Sinks	Please see the assessment against Policy 5 of the NPF4 in **Table 8.2**. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy NE15.
Policy CF4 Access Routes	A short part of the Dalswinton to Ae Core Path runs through the Site, but it will remain open and accessible for the public. Access to the Site will be via the existing access junction on the A701 used for the Harestanes Windfarm. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy CF4. In addition, a number of recreation enhancements (as detailed in **Chapter 5** of the Planning Statement) are proposed which will benefit the local area.
Policy IN1 Renewable Energy	The majority of the considerations in Policy IN1: Renewable Energy have been considered in the assessment against NPF4. Tourism is not an impact to be addressed in NPF4 Policy 11 and therefore there could be an incompatibility between NPF4 and LDP2 and in this instance NPF4 would prevail. Notwithstanding this, tourism is assessed in the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment submitted with the application. In 2021, BiGGAR Economics produced a report analysing the relationship between the construction of onshore wind farms and tourism employment at the national, regional and local level. The report concluded that, there was no pattern or evidence suggesting that the development of onshore wind farms in Scotland had any negative effects on the tourism economies across the country as a whole, the local authority areas or immediate areas surrounding wind farms.

Policy	Assessment
	In terms of the impact of the proposed Development on tourist attractions in the area, the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment outlined that most of the attractions are located in close proximity to other operational wind farms and there is no indication that these developments discourage tourists from visiting. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy IN1.
Policy IN2 Wind Energy	Policy IN2 Wind Energy refers to the Spatial Framework which is no longer applicable under NPF4. All the considerations detailed in Policy IN2 have been considered in the assessment against NPF4 Policy 11. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy IN2 Wind Energy.
Policy IN7 Flooding and Development	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 of the NPF4. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy IN7.
Policy IN8 Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 of the NPF4. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy IN8.
Policy T1 Transport Infrastructure	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 of the NPF4. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy T1.
Policy T2 Location of Development / Accessibility	Please see the assessment against Policy 11 of the NPF4. It is therefore considered the proposed Development meets the requirements of Policy T2.

8.5. Summary

197. The proposed Development has taken account of the requirements of Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act, and this is evidenced in the EIA Report submitted with the application.

198. The proposed Development has gone through a series of design iterations to achieve a design which minimises impacts on the environment. The only significant impact is landscape and visual which is contained and localised.

199. The proposed Development is a National Development, will provide clean energy and will contribute to both national renewable energy targets and GHG emissions reduction targets and will provide an important contribution to Scotland's Net Zero commitments.

200. NPF4 Policy 11 Energy requires significant weight to be placed on the contribution of the proposed Development to renewable energy generation targets and on GHG reduction targets. In addition, Policy 1 Tacking the climate and nature crises of NPF4 requires significant weight to be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals.

201. The proposed Development will secure a significant biodiversity net gain and will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including strengthening and creating networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. and is therefore supported by NPF4 Policy 3.

202. The assessment has demonstrated the proposed Development meets the requirements of the relevant policies in the Development Plan.

9. Conclusion

203. The proposed Development is a national scale development which will generate up to 186 GWh of renewable electricity each year the equivalent of powering 47,596 homes and is predicted to offset emissions 2.2 years from operation and to deliver a total emissions saving of 4,507,011 tCO_2e over a modelled 40-year operational lifetime. This is to be **afforded significant weight** in the planning balance.

204. In addition, the proposed Development will deliver the following benefits:

- Supporting Employment

- Expected to generate £8.8 million GVA and 125 years of employment in Dumfries and Galloway and £26.8 million GVA and 419 job years across Scotland during the construction phase.
- £0.7 million GVA and 6 jobs in Dumfries and Galloway and £1.5 million GVA and 17 jobs across Scotland each year during operation.
- The Applicant is committed to utilising local companies in the provision of contracts during the development and construction and operational phases.

- Economic Benefits

- The project expenditure is estimated to be £87 million, approximately £12.6 million would be spent in the local Dumfries and Galloway economy and £32.5 million within Scotland.
- The local Dumfries and Galloway economy is expected to be boosted directly, indirectly and induced by a total of £7 million net GVA, with the wider Scottish economy benefiting from £16.58 million net GVA during the development and construction phase.
- Expected annual contribution of £1 million towards non domestic rates.

- Habitat Management and Biodiversity Enhancements

- Blanket bog restoration of 2.82 ha which will compensate the 0.01 ha of degraded blanket bog lost to the proposed Development and provide significant enhancement, exceeding the 1:10 compensation ratio and 10% enhancement.
- Habitat management measures include the removal of approximately 7.53 ha of commercial forestry. It may be possible to undertaken further bog restoration in this area subject to further peat surveys post consent, to determine ground suitability. Where ground conditions are not suitable for bog restoration, approximately 15 ha native broadleaf planting will be undertaken.
- Will create a habitat mosaic of restored functioning blanket bog and native broadleaf woodland.
- Native broadleaf planting is proposed across 13.33 ha of riparian habitat which is proposed to connect with an area of AWI listed woodland. In time, this planting will create a strong nature network and in doing so enhance biodiversity in the local landscape.

- Recreational Enhancements

- Subject to agreement, the Applicant proposes to implement enhancements in addition to the proposed Development:

- Promotion of family friendly biking or horse-riding routes around the proposed Development, using existing tracks;
- Provision of information boards regarding the proposed Development;
- Support for the employment of a seasonal ranger to assist with the management of core footpaths in the area;
- Electric vehicle charging points in Ae Forest Carpark;
- Financial support to facilitate the purchase of E-bikes for rental at the 7 Stanes Forest of Ae Mountain Biking Centre; and
- Sponsorship of events in the Forest of Ae.

205. The Applicant is also committed to offering £5,000 per MW of installed capacity in a community benefit fund, resulting in an annual fund of around £0.4 million for the local community.

206. The Applicant has had regard to the matters detailed in Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989.

207. It has been demonstrated that the project design and mitigation has considered all the impacts detailed in NPF4 Policy 11 e) and the only residual significant effect is landscape and visual which is contained and is localised. It is therefore considered acceptable.

208. The OWPS recognises to meet the climate targets, taller and more efficient turbines will be required. This will change the landscape.

209. It is concluded that a Section 36 consent and deemed planning permission should be granted for the proposed Development.

10. References

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