SEI Non-Technical Summary

Balmeanach Wind Farm

Balmeanach Wind Farm Limited

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Table of Contents

Figures

1.0 Introduction

In August 2023, Balmeanach Wind Farm Limited (the Applicant) submitted an application to the Highland Council (THC) for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, to install and operate a wind farm (the Proposed Development) in the north west of the Isle of Skye within THC's administrative area (see **NTS SEI Figure 1)**.

The Proposed Development would be located on land (the site) approximately 3km to the south of Edinbane, approximately 8km to the east of Dunvegan and approximately 7km to the north of Struan, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 133900, 846750 (see **NTS SEI Figure 2**).

The application (Reference: 23/04194/FUL) comprised of up to 10 turbines, up to 149.9m to blade tip height and associated infrastructure. The application was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report which was prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations).

The Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI) Report has been prepared to provide further information to the EIA Report, including amendments to the Proposed Development since the original application was submitted, and to address certain information requests from consultees during the consultation period.

The SEI Report is intended to be read alongside and complement the EIA Report, to ensure that all relevant environmental information is available for consideration by the determining authority, THC. Unless otherwise stated, the information contained in the EIA Report remains valid.

In summary, the SEI Report for the Proposed Development is intended to provide additional information relating to the EIA Report, explain the amendments to the Proposed Development (and where appropriate reassess effects) and address key points raised by consultees during the consultation process for the application.

The application layout of the Proposed Development refers to the layout assessed in the EIA Report; and the revised layout of the Proposed Development refers to the layout assessed in this SEI Report.

In each chapter of the SEI Report, details are provided, where relevant, of the statutory or technical consultation responses received during the application consultation period and how these have been addressed, if necessary.

This SEI Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is additional to the original submitted NTS and both documents require to be read together to get the full, up to date summary of the environmental impact assessment of the Proposed Development.

This SEI NTS summarises the findings and content of the SEI Report, which has been prepared by SLR and also specialist subconsultants who prepared the EIA Report.

The submission of the SEI Report will trigger another round of consultation in the planning process, which will provide consultees and the public with the opportunity to make representations on its content to THC. These comments, along with the information presented in the EIA Report and SEI Report, will be used to inform the decision on the application.

2.0 Benefits of the Proposed Development

2.1 Proposed Community Shared Ownership

The Applicant continues to engage with the local Community Trusts to formalise the intention to work together towards implementing a shared ownership scheme for the Proposed Development, alongside the consented Ben Sca and Extension Wind Farm (or Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm[1] should it gain consent). A Shared Ownership Agreement of Intent (AoI) has already been signed by the three local community development trusts (Dunvegan Community Trust, Edinbane and Communities Trust and Struan Community Council) and the Applicant in relation to the consented Ben Sca and Extension Wind Farm.

2.2 Proposed Community Benefit

In addition to the shared ownership opportunity, should the Proposed Development gain consent, a Community Benefit Fund would be made available to the community of interest. It is estimated that the Community Benefit Fund alone would accrue benefits to the local economy of up to £9 million based on a 40 year operational life of the wind farm.

2.3 Habitat Management and Enhancement

SEI Technical Appendix 8.5: Outline Habitat Management Plan provides an update to the outline Habitat Management Plan submitted with the application.

The total peatland restoration and enhancement area for the Proposed Development has been increased to 293.47ha, which includes:

- 74.28ha of forest to bog peatland restoration;
- 195.85ha of blanket bog gully blocking and micro-erosion stabilisation;
- 18.52ha of blanket bog drain blocking; and
- 4.82ha of stabilising and re-vegetating bare peat.

The areas of peatland restoration and enhancement proposed meet the requirements of the current NatureScot guidance by providing peatland restoration of 10 times the amount of peatland loss (283.4ha) and an additional 10.07ha enhancement.

Whilst the enhancement proposals fall slightly short of 10%, the proposals for habitat management have been greatly increased to those previously proposed and are considered appropriate on this site as the areas identified need to be balanced with the continued use of the common grazings land.

Additionally, 19.15ha of wet heath will be restored to provide further enhancement.

The proposed peatland restoration areas would be additional to those proposed for the Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm, and are situated next to each other, which would provide further enhancement benefits due to the connectivity of habitat.

The combined peatland restoration areas (for Balmeanach and Ben Sca Redesign together) deliver 1:10 peatland restoration along with 13% to 18% of enhancement, which would exceed the requirements of NatureScot's guidance.

[1] The Ben Sca Redesign is a redesign of the consented development (comprising of the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm (Ref: 20/00013/FUL) and Ben Sca Wind Farm Extension (Ref: 21/05767/FUL).

Within 30 years, the aim of the Habitat Management Plan is to have created hydrological conditions suitable for the development and maintenance of carbon sequestering bog/ wet heath habitats that are largely self-sustaining, therefore making a significant contribution to the restoration of this habitat type at the local level.

The peatland restoration areas located away from the proposed turbines (amounting to 113ha) will provide additional enhanced foraging habitat for eagles and further mitigation and monitoring measures for supporting the eagle population in this area is discussed within the ornithology section (5.3).

3.0 Design Amendments to Proposed Development

3.1 Overview of Revised Layout

The design amendments, which form the basis of the assessment presented in the SEI, are proposed in response to consultee comments on the Proposed Development and are as follows:

- removal of Turbine 1 (T1)[2] and associated track and infrastructure to reduce predicted collision risk of white-tailed eagles;
- amendments to track to reduce the length of track required, remove spurs and turning heads where possible and reorientation of the crane hardstanding for Turbine 4 (T4) and Turbine 5 (T5), to reduce effects on peat;
- relocation of the proposed substation from the Ben Sca hill ridgeline to within the area of Borrow Pit 3, to provide a closer connection route to the Grid Supply Point (GSP) at the Edinbane 132KV collector substation;
- inclusion of proposed link track to be part of the Proposed Development in the event that the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm does not get built;
- addition of the permanent construction compound (Compound 1) to the south of the A850 to ensure that the proposed link track would be able to be built to the site (in the absence of the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm); and
- updates to the Outline Habitat Management Plan.

The revised Proposed Development layout (as shown on **NTS SEI Figure 3**) would comprise:

- nine variable pitch (three bladed) wind turbines, each with a maximum blade tip height of up to 149.9m and maximum rotor diameter of up to 138m;
- nine turbine foundations (approximately 25m diameter) and crane hardstanding areas to aid the installation process and provide storage for blade, towers, and nacelle components (approximately 3,350m^2) at each wind turbine location;
- one lattice met mast up to 83.5m height, including a foundation and a hardstanding area;
- up to 8.4km of new onsite access track and associated drainage with a typical 5m running width (wider on bends) and six turning heads;

[2] Turbine numbering has not been amended following the removal of T1 and therefore figures and references to turbines within the SEI do not include Turbine 1, with the nine remaining turbines numbered T2 to T10.

- approximately 1.4km of proposed track linking the existing Ben Aketil Wind Farm track with the site (note this would only be required if Ben Sca Wind Farm is not built);
- underground cabling and electrical infrastructure along access tracks to connect the turbine locations, and the onsite electrical substation;
- one onsite substation (in the location of Borrow Pit 3) which would accommodate 33KV Switchgear to collect electricity from different parts of the site. The substation compound would have a typical area of 35m x 30m and would include a control and metering building;
- search area for up to four borrow pits (covering approximately 48,900m^2);
- one permanent construction compound (Compound 1 - 100m x 50m) and one temporary construction compound (Compound 3 - 100m x 80m);
- upgrade to site entrance from the A850; and
- clearance of 64.73ha of conifer forest for habitat management purposes (**SEI Technical Appendix 8.5: Outline Habitat Management Plan Update**).

3.2 Reason for Design Amendments

The amendments to the design of the Proposed Development are primarily as a result of consultation feedback on the Balmeanach Wind Farm application, received from statutory and technical consultees including THC, NatureScot, RSPB, and SEPA.

In NatureScot's response to the Balmeanach Wind Farm application, they advised that Turbines T1 and T2 should be removed from the Proposed Development to reduce the collision risk for white-tailed eagles. In a further response, they amended their advice, recommending that the removal of just T1 would be likely to significantly reduce the collision risk for white-tailed eagle. RSPB also sought to reduce the potential effect on white tailed eagle through a reduction in the number of turbines. As a result, T1 has been removed from the Proposed Development.

SEPA requested further information on the peat and peatland across the site. To address this, an additional detailed Phase 2 peat survey of the site was undertaken. SEPA also requested various infrastructure amendments to minimise the Proposed Development's impact on peat. As a result of this, the track has been amended in the following key locations:

- T1: further to the removal of T1, the access track to the turbine has also been removed along with the turning head, turbine foundation and crane hardstanding.
- T3: the track alignment to the south of T3 has been simplified to remove the spur and minimise the length of track.
- T4: in the application and EIA Report there were two options for the orientation of T4 crane hardstanding – one of these options has been removed from the Proposed Development and the crane hardstanding is now proposed to be aligned from south west to north east. In association with this, an option for the track to connect T2 and T4 has been removed following the results of the additional peat depth survey.
- T5: the spur track to T5 has been removed along with the turning head, reorientating the hardstanding of T5 from south west to north east and realigning the track to the west.
- T8: the track between T5 and T8 has been realigned to follow shallower peat depths.

NatureScot, SEPA and THC also advised that the proposed area of peatland restoration was not sufficient to overcome the impacts of the development and further recommended that the enhancement should be in addition to the restoration proposed. RSPB also requested further peatland restoration, as well as recommending that the Outline Habitat Management Plan should provide options for increasing foraging habitat away from the proposed turbines. As a result, the Outline Habitat Management Plan has been updated which (along with the proposed Ben Sca Redesign) aims to include peatland restoration of 10 times the amount of peatland loss and aims to provide of an additional 10% enhancement, as well as improving foraging habitat for eagles outside of the turbine area by providing 113ha of foraging habitat over 500m from any wind turbines (including the neighbouring sites).

THC has noted that the application for the Proposed Development should ensure that access can be achieved to the site, either via the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm track (the 'proposed link') or via the proposed Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm track. The proposed link track is located fully within the application boundary and in the scenario where the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm does not get built, the proposed link track would be constructed as part of the Proposed Development. It is noted that the Ben Sca Redesign track route would be located outwith the application boundary for the Balmeanach Wind Farm, however, in the event that Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm is approved, this track would be constructed under that consent and then used to access the Balmeanach Wind Farm (without any new works being undertaken on that route). Only one track route up to the Ben Sca hillside would exist, via the proposed link/consented Ben Sca Wind Farm track or via the proposed Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm track. An appropriate and full assessment is included in the SEI Report considering the use of both track options.

THC also recommended that the construction compound proposed for Ben Sca should be included in the Balmeanach application and assessment, in case Ben Sca does not get built. As a result of this, the permanent construction compound (Compound 1) to the south of the A850 included in the consented Ben Sca Wind Farm application and the Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm application has also been added to this application and the Proposed Development.

In addition to the amendments made due to requests from consultees, the substation has also been relocated to within the area of Borrow Pit 3, to provide a closer connection route to the Grid Supply Point (GSP) at Edinbane. This also provides the benefit of a reduced visual impact on the control building due to its lower elevation and avoid the use of additional undisturbed peat areas.

4.0 Cumulative Development Update

Since the submission of the application, the cumulative wind farm situation in the study area has changed. The relevant changes to the cumulative baseline (as of 28 February 2025) are as follows:

- Ben Sca Redesign (application – revised layout);
- Ben Aketil Repowering and Extension (application);
- Glen Ullinish II (Redesign) (application);
- Beinn Mheadhonach Redesign (application);
- Edinbane Repowering and Extension (scoping); and
- Edinbane – Land at 4 Edinbane (screened as non EIA).

5.0 Environmental Impacts

5.1 Landscape and Visual

SEI Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual has considered the potential changes to effects to landscape and visual amenity as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout. The application layout was predicted to result in significant residual effects on the following viewpoints, all of which lie within 7.5km of the Proposed Development:

- Viewpoint 2 (Edinbane Top Road);
- Viewpoint 4 (residents at Roag);
- Viewpoint 6 (Lonmore); and
- Viewpoint 12 (Greshornish).

For the application layout, no significant effects were identified on the landscape character areas or any designated landscapes.

Cumulatively, no additional significant effects were identified for the application layout.

5.1.1 Assessment of Design Amendments Effects

5.1.1.1 Landscape

The reduction in turbine numbers to nine in the revised layout of the Proposed Development would lead to reduced adverse effects on the landscape and its character. However, the perception of that change would be limited, due to the remaining nine turbines included, although still reduced compared with the application layout.

T1 would have been one of the more elevated turbines, positioned within the northern part of the site and to the east of the summit of Ben Sca and its cairn. Its removal from the Proposed Development layout would reduce the horizontal extent of the wind farm from certain locations, contributing to a more compact array. It would also remove one of the turbines that is closest to the settlement of Edinbane. In addition, as T1 would have been one of the more elevated turbines within the wind farm, its removal would make a small contribution to reducing the overall prominence of the Proposed Development.

A reduced adverse change in landscape effects overall is predicted although would not reduce the level of landscape effects originally presented in **EIA Chapter 7** and the conclusion of no significant effects on landscape character and designations remains valid.

5.1.1.2 Visual

The change resulting from the removal of T1 is most notable from locations closer to the site e.g. Viewpoint 2 at Edinbane. T1 was located towards the centre of the wind farm and its removal would not alter the horizonal extent of the Proposed Development but would remove one of the more prominent turbines. It would also improve the composition of the wind farm from this location by reducing the overlap between the turbines in seen towards the centre of the array. Similar improvement to composition by reducing the potential for overlapping turbines is noted from Viewpoint 1 (A863, Junction with road to Feorlig), Viewpoint 3 (A863 road near Gearymore), Viewpoint 5 (A850 between Dunvegan and Edinbane), Viewpoint 6 (Junction of A863 and B884 at Lonmore), Viewpoint 7 (Minor road to Greshornish) and Viewpoint 17 (A87 road near Cuidrach).

As T1 was positioned on the northern edge of the Proposed Development, there are locations where its removal reduces the horizontal extent. Examples of where this is evident are Viewpoint 10 (A850/A87 (West of Borve), Viewpoint 11 (Macleod's Table North/Healabhal Mhor) and Viewpoint 15 (The Storr).

At certain locations the influence of removing T1 is less apparent. The change becomes less noticeable with increasing distance, particularly when this is considered in the context of the baseline wind farms close to the site. There are also locations where the intervening landform limits the visibility of T1 and therefore reduces the change associated with its removal. This is notable at locations such as Viewpoint 1 (A863, Junction with road to Feorlig), Viewpoint 8 (B885 Road) and Viewpoint 14 (Totaig).

Overall, it is concluded that the visual change from the application layout to the revised layout of the Proposed Development would be limited but result in reduced adverse effects, compared with the application layout.

Given the low level of change identified from the viewpoints, no change to the levels of effects identified in the summary of **EIA Chapter 7** are predicted.

Therefore, the revised layout would also result in significant residual effects on the following receptors all of which lie within 7.5km of the Proposed Development:

- Viewpoint 2 (Edinbane Top Road);
- Viewpoint 4 (residents at Roag);
- Viewpoint 6 (Lonmore); and
- Viewpoint 12 (Greshornish).

5.1.2 Cumulative Effects

The revised layout would not increase the extent of visibility of the Proposed Development and therefore would not alter the nature of visibility in relation to baseline cumulative wind farms as described in **EIA Chapter 7**. In relation to all the proposed wind farms within the study area, Balmeanach Wind Farm would not be seen where other proposed wind farms are not predicted to be visible. In addition, the amendments to the Proposed Development would result in relatively limited changes to the landscape of the site.

The Balmeanach Wind Farm would make a notably reduced contribution to cumulative effects resulting from all the proposed wind farm developments in the study area, compared with the current baseline scenario. Similar to the baseline scenario, Balmeanach Wind Farm would be located between the proposed wind farms. It would reinforce the overall pattern of development. However, the nine turbines of the Proposed Development are relatively limited in relation to the total number of turbines proposed.

In addition, the Proposed Development involves a lower blade tip height compared with Ben Aketil Repowering, Glen Ullinish II and Edinbane Repowering and this height difference is apparent in the cumulative wireline visualisations in **SEI Volume 3b-3d**. The lower height of the turbines within the Proposed Development also means that visible aviation lighting would not be required on the nacelles.

The removal of T1 would result in limited alterations to the appearance of the Proposed Development and a reduction in its potential landscape and visual effects, including its contribution to cumulative effects. When considered in relation to all other proposed wind farm developments in the study area, the relative increase in the scale of wind farm development surrounding the site would mean that the contribution that Balmeanach Wind Farm would make to cumulative effects would reduce. Therefore, the potential contribution

that Balmeanach Wind Farm would make to cumulative effects are not predicted to be significant.

In EIA Chapter 7, significant effects are predicted in relation to visual receptors at Edinbane, Roag, Lonmore and Greshornish, within 7.5km to the north east, north, west and south west of the site and this judgement would be applicable to the baseline cumulative wind farms. The restricted scale of visual change (identified in the review of visual effects viewpoints) as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development i.e. the removal of turbine T1, indicates that no notable changes to this judgement would occur for any visual receptors considered in the EIA Report and therefore effects remain significant for these visual receptors within 7.5km of the site. The cumulative scenario that includes all proposed wind farm developments would reduce the overall contribution that Balmeanach Wind Farm would make to cumulative visual effects. It would result in a situation where Balmeanach Wind Farm would be less prominent due to the relative size/scale of the other proposed wind farms, in terms of the number of turbines proposed and/or the blade tip height of the proposed turbines. Therefore, no additional significant cumulative effects are identified when considering all proposed wind farm developments and significant effects would remain at visual receptors with 7.5km of the site.

5.1.3 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

The landscape and visual assessment contained within the **EIA Chapter 7** remains valid due to the limited reduction in landscape and visual change, caused by the amendments to the Proposed Development.

The cumulative scenario that includes all proposed wind farm developments would reduce the overall contribution that Balmeanach Wind Farm would make to cumulative visual effects. It would result in a situation where Balmeanach Wind Farm would be less prominent due to the potential context of the proposed wind farm developments and no additional significant effects are identified.

5.2 Ecology

SEI Chapter 8: Ecology has considered the potential changes to effects on **ecology** as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout. Beneficial effects were identified in relation to habitats for the application layout. No significant adverse effects were identified in relation to the application layout for any of the fauna assessed (including fish, reptiles, otter, bats and deer) or on designated sites. Given the stand-off distance of 50m for all infrastructure and mitigation measures that will be in place, no significant cumulative effects were predicted for the application layout.

5.2.1 Assessment of Design Amendments Effects

5.2.1.1 Habitats

The revised layout of the Proposed Development has aimed to reduce effects on peatland but would still result in the direct/indirect loss of up to 30.62ha of blanket bog, 4.15ha of wet heath habitat and 2.72ha of dry heath habitat.

The loss would be compensated for through measures to restore and manage peatland and wet heath habitat across a 293.47ha restoration area with an additional 19.15ha enhancement area, which would be delivered via the Habitat Management Plan as discussed in **section 2.3**. This restoration and enhancement would provide a beneficial effect on peatland habitats.

5.2.1.2 Fauna

Effects on protected fauna (considered to be fish, reptiles, otter, bats and deer) would not change as a result of the amendments to the design. No significant adverse effects are considered likely to these species as a result of either direct or indirect impacts due to the Proposed Development.

Pre-construction surveys will be undertaken to ensure protection of fauna.

5.2.1.3 Designated Sites

No effects on designated sites were identified for the application layout and this conclusion remains valid for the revised layout.

5.2.2 Cumulative Effects

No significant negative cumulative effects are predicted in combination with Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm, and a significant positive cumulative effect on habitats is predicted due to the connectivity of the proposed peatland restoration areas.

The updated cumulative baseline does not change the cumulative assessment in relation to fauna (including fish, reptiles, otter, bats and deer) presented in **EIA Chapter 8**. The mitigation measures that are presented in the EIA Report would ensure there are no effects beyond the site.

5.2.3 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

There are no significant adverse effects predicted for ecology.

The area of proposed peatland restoration and enhancement has increased from 77.5ha to 293.47ha, which is substantially greater than that proposed in the EIA Report providing a beneficial effect. 74.28ha of the restoration proposed is forest to bog, which represents a significant benefit given the relatively low value of the habitat in its current state (conifer plantation).

Additional to this, enhancement is proposed in the form of 19.15ha of wet heath restoration.

It should also be noted that the proposed peatland restoration areas would be additional to those proposed for the Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm, and are situated next to each other, which would provide further enhancement benefits due to the connectivity of habitat.

The combined peatland restoration areas (for Balmeanach and Ben Sca Redesign together) deliver 1:10 peatland restoration along with 13% to 18% of enhancement, in line with NatureScot guidance.

5.3 Ornithology (Birds)

SEI Chapter 9: Ornithology has considered the potential changes to effects on birds as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout. No significant adverse effects were predicted for any of the species assessed (white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, hen harrier and golden plover) during construction or operation of the application layout.

Collision risk mortality from the application layout was predicted to effect white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, hen harrier and golden plover, but the predicted mortality for these species was not considered to be significant.

Cumulatively, collision risk was considered to have a low-level impact at the regional level for white-tailed eagles, however, this was not considered to be significant.

5.3.1 Assessment of Design Amendments Effects

5.3.1.1 White-tailed Eagle

Based on the prediction of a substantial reduction of collision mortality by 32.6% arising from the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout, the level of effect is reduced although the conclusion of **EIA Chapter 9** of no significant effects for white-tailed eagle for the Natural Heritage Zone (NHZ) 6 and national populations is unchanged.

5.3.1.2 Golden Eagle

The amendments to the Proposed Development have decreased the collision risk for golden eagle by 36.67%. It can be concluded that collision risk would be low for this species in the context of the Proposed Development. On this basis, this is not considered significant at the NHZ level.

5.3.1.3 Other Species

Collision risk calculations have also been updated for hen harrier and golden plover, with results as follows:

- Hen harrier collision risk is reduced by 9.9% for the revised layout. The conclusions of **EIA Chapter 9** are unchanged (remain not significant).
- Golden plover collision risk is reduced by 18.2% for the revised layout. The conclusions of **EIA Chapter 9** are unchanged (remain not significant).

5.3.2 Cumulative Effects

Based on the Golden Eagle Terrain (GET) modelling undertaken for Balmeanach and Glen Ullinish II, the amount of good eagle habitat that would be lost to these developments is less than 1% of that available to dispersing eagles within a 20km buffer. This is considered to be not significant in the context of the NHZ.

Taking into account the updated cumulative situation around the Proposed Development (including Ben Sca Redesign, Ben Aketil Repowering and Extension and Glen Ullinish II, all of which are projects at application stage and currently under consideration), cumulative collision rates have been updated.

The predicted cumulative collision rates for eagles in NHZ 6 have increased from 3.4 to 7.7 for white-tailed eagle and from 0.8 to 1.02 for golden eagle This is due to the updated information now being available for Ben Aketil Repowering, Ben Sca Redesign and Glen Ullinish II.

For white-tailed eagle the predicted cumulative collisions are potentially high when compared to the numbers reported in **EIA Chapter 9**, but population modelling indicates that impacts on the NHZ and Skye populations will not be significant if these maximums were reached.

For golden eagle the predicted collisions have increased slightly when compared to the numbers reported in **EIA Chapter 9** but are not considered to be significant.

5.3.3 Mitigation and Monitoring Commitments

Measures to be implemented to mitigate and monitor eagles include:

- Creation of 113ha peatland restoration providing enhanced foraging for eagles in areas greater than 500m from the turbines.

- Carrion removal (a livestock carcass search project would regularly identify and remove carcasses during the lifetime of the wind farm).
- Collaboration with other renewable energy developers to ensure that a joined-up approach to wider habitat management for eagles is promoted on Skye. This will include funding for an eagle research programme to cover an agreed wider area and consider suitable mitigation strategies.
- A post-construction monitoring programme to be established for the wind farm, including collision monitoring, flight activity surveys and breeding raptor surveys.

5.3.4 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

Due to design amendments, the collision rates for eagles, hen harrier and golden plover have all decreased. When considered along with the mitigation and proposed habitat enhancement measures, there are no significant effects predicted for ornithology.

5.4 Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Soils

SEI Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Soils has considered the potential changes to effects on hydrology and peat as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout.

For the application layout, following adherence to good practice measures, the potential effects on all hydrological receptors were predicted to be negligible and therefore not significant during construction, operation and cumulatively. No potential flood risk was identified for the application layout and there were no private or licensed water abstractions within or at risk from the site.

For the application layout, the effects on peat generated from the proposed excavations were limited without significant environmental impact. No surplus peat would be generated, and peat would be used to reinstate track verges, turbine bases, crane hardstandings and restoration of onsite borrow pits, as well as a small amount used in the peat restoration areas.

The site-specific Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment for the application layout confirmed that there are very few areas of peat instability risk across the site and concluded that, with the employment of appropriate mitigation measures, all of the areas of peat instability could be considered as an insignificant risk.

5.4.1 Assessment of Design Amendment Effects

5.4.1.1 Water Environment

The amendments to the site layout do not change the findings of **EIA Chapter 10** which were not significant, including the private water supply assessment which is presented in **EIA Technical Appendix 10.3.** Best practice and mitigation detailed within **EIA Chapter 10** remains applicable and can be used to mitigate potential adverse effects on the local hydrology and hydrogeology.

5.4.1.2 Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment

Review of the revised layout indicates that there are some further areas of peat stability risk identified (as detailed on **SEI Figure 10.1.8: Peat Slide Risk**), however, the conclusions and recommendations within **EIA Technical Appendix 10.1** for the previous peat stability risk areas remain valid. For the further areas of peat stability risk identified, these areas can be mitigated through excavation to allow tracks to be built on firm foundations, and through the

employment of good practice construction measures to mitigate against risk (with further detail available in the SEI Chapter) as per the measures already reported in **EIA Technical Appendix 10.1**. Predicted effects remain not significant.

5.4.1.3 Peat Management Plan

As a result of the amendments to the site layout, the peat excavation volumes have decreased compared with those presented in **EIA Technical Appendix 10.2: Peat Management Plan** and effects remain not significant. The recommendations on excavation and re-use of soils and peat detailed within **EIA Technical Appendix 10.2** remain applicable and will be updated in a final Stage 2 PMP.

5.4.2 Cumulative Effects

The updated cumulative baseline does not change the cumulative assessment in relation to hydrology and peat presented in the **EIA Chapter 10**. The mitigation measures that are presented in the EIA Report would ensure there are no effects beyond the site.

It is therefore considered that no cumulative effects on hydrology and soils are anticipated as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development.

5.4.3 Conclusions of SEI Assessment

The potential effects on peat are improved when comparing the revised layout to the application layout through reduction in proposed track length and positioning on areas more suitable for infrastructure.

The amendments do not result in any change to the significance of effects as presented in **EIA Chapter 10**, which were not significant.

5.5 Cultural Heritage

SEI Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology has considered the potential changes to effects on cultural heritage and archaeology as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout.

The application layout had the potential for a direct impact on five undated cultural heritage assets of low significance but with mitigation the effects would be slight and not significant. There were no predicted significant operational effects on the setting of any cultural heritage assets as a result of the application layout.

No cumulative effects were identified for cultural heritage and archaeology for the application layout.

5.5.1 Assessment of Design Amendment Effects

The changes to the layout of the Proposed Development do not affect the proximity of the onsite cultural heritage assets to the proposed infrastructure and therefore the level of predicted effects do not change from **EIA Chapter 11** and remain slight and not significant.

The mitigation outlined within **EIA Chapter 11** is still recommended to ensure protection during construction.

The only change within the revised layout which would affect setting impacts during the operational phase is the removal of T1. The removal of this turbine would not cause an increase or decrease in the potential setting impacts of any of the cultural heritage assets and therefore would cause no change to the setting impacts during the operational phase as outlined in **EIA Chapter 11**.

5.5.2 Cumulative Effects

No significant cumulative effects have been identified for the revised layout and the conclusions of **EIA Chapter 11** remain valid.

5.5.3 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

Overall, no significant effects have been identified in EIA terms for the revised layout, which remains consistent with the conclusions of **EIA Chapter 11**. The revised layout would result in no changes to the previously predicted direct, indirect, setting and cumulative impacts outlined.

5.6 Traffic and Transport

SEI Chapter 12: Site Access, Traffic and Transport has considered the potential changes to effects on traffic and transport as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout.

For the application layout, no significant adverse effects were identified during construction, operation or cumulatively, as long as appropriate measures outlined in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) are employed.

5.6.1 Assessment of Design Amendment Effects

The revised layout is expected to reduce vehicle movements on the road network when compared to the application layout. This is because the revised layout requires less material to construct, and therefore requires fewer deliveries, when compared to the application layout. The removal of T1 also results in fewer Abnormal Load movements for the revised layout. The assessment presented in **EIA Chapter 12** therefore remains valid which concluded that the Proposed Development would lead to a not significant adverse effect on traffic and transport.

5.6.2 Cumulative Effects

No significant cumulative adverse effects are identified on the A850 due to potential increases in traffic and the measures outlined in the CTMP will ensure that this is managed.

It is reiterated that in the event that construction of the Proposed Development and any of the identified cumulative wind farm schemes occur concurrently, this would not lead to any additional environmental effect in transportation terms, beyond that already assessed, provided that:

- abnormal load movements are programmed in conjunction with Police Scotland and the Roads Authorities (THC and TS) so as not to occur on the same day; and
- days of specific high density vehicle movement (e.g. concrete pour days) are programmed so as not to occur on the same day (to be enforced through inclusion as a factor within the CTMP, and to be agreed with Police Scotland and the Roads Authority accordingly).

5.6.3 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

The revised layout of the Proposed Development would result in fewer vehicle movements than the application layout. No change to the significance of effects is predicted as presented in **EIA Chapter 12**, which were not significant. The consultation responses provided by both roads authorities to the EIA Report remain valid and suitable traffic management and control measures would be implemented through planning conditions.

5.7 Noise

SEI Chapter 13: Noise has considered the potential changes to effects on noise as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout.

For the application layout no significant construction, operational or cumulative effects were identified. The application layout of the Proposed Development would operate within the consented noise limits and would therefore be acceptable.

5.7.1 Assessment of Design Amendment Effects

The revised layout would not introduce any amendment to the methods employed to construct the wind farm that would materially change the construction noise assessments previously undertaken. Therefore, an additional construction noise assessment has not been undertaken, and effects remain not significant.

The predicted noise levels for the revised layout of the Proposed Development are lower than for the application layout. For all receptors, noise levels due to the operation of the Proposed Development are predicted to not exceed site specific noise limits agreed with the Highland Council and would therefore be acceptable and not significant.

5.7.2 Cumulative Effects

The Proposed Development is far enough below the cumulative noise limit such that it will not contribute to an overall wind turbine noise level above the agreed cumulative noise limit. Therefore, the revised layout for the Proposed Development would result in a cumulative effect that is not significant in EIA terms.

5.7.3 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

The revised layout would reduce operational noise at nearby receptors compared to the application layout and would also result in no significant adverse effects.

5.8 Socio-Economics and Land Use

SEI Chapter 14: Socio-Economics and Land Use, has considered the potential changes to effects on socio-economics and land use as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout.

Whilst the local economy would benefit from the construction of the application layout and significant beneficial effects are identified for individual businesses, effects were not predicted to be significant for local employment and the local area of influence as a whole. No significant adverse effects on tourism and land use (including recreation and shooting) were identified.

During operation whilst the size of the local economy is predicted to increase by around 0.02% and between 11 and 14 full-time equivalent jobs in the Highland Council area could be created for the application layout, this was not considered to be significant. For the application layout, improved access to paths would be beneficial, although no significant effects on tourism and land use were identified.

No significant cumulative effects on socio-economics and land use were predicted for the application layout.

5.8.1 Assessment of Design Amendment Effects

The amendments to the Proposed Development would not result in any changes to the significance of effects presented within **EIA Chapter 14**. All of the information contained

within the chapter and associated technical appendices remain valid in terms of existing conditions, assessment methodology and significance of effects.

As with the application layout whilst the local economy would benefit from the construction of the revised layout and significant beneficial effects are identified for individual businesses, effects are not predicted to be significant for local employment and the local area of influence as a whole. No significant adverse effects on tourism and land use (including recreation and shooting) are identified.

During operation whilst the size of the local economy is predicted to increase by around 0.02% and between 11 and 14 full-time equivalent jobs in the Highland Council area could be created for the revised layout, this is not considered to be significant. For the revised layout, improved access to paths would be beneficial, although no significant effects on tourism and land use were identified.

5.8.2 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects on socio-economics and land use are predicted to be no different to that assessed in **EIA Chapter 14** and remain not significant. The Skye Developers Forum, consisting of representatives from companies with operational, consented and in development projects on Skye, was inaugurated in 2022 to address potential cumulative construction issues such as accommodation and transport and meets regularly to discuss issues which may affect each development and in combination.

Cumulative effects on socio-economics and land use are predicted to be no different to that assessed in **EIA Chapter 8** and remain not significant.

5.8.3 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

There are no changes to the significance of effects presented in **EIA Chapter 14** as a result of the amendments that have been made to the Proposed Development and no significant effects on socio-economics or land use are identified.

5.9 Other Considerations

SEI Chapter 15: Other Considerations, has considered the potential changes to effects in relation to the following topics as a result of the revised layout of the Proposed Development when compared to the application layout:

- shadow flicker;
- climate and carbon balance;
- aviation;
- risk of accidents and other disasters;
- population and human health;
- air quality;
- telecommunications and other infrastructure;
- television reception; and
- waste and environmental management.

Due to the nature of the amendments to improve the Proposed Development layout by removal of a turbine and reduction of track length, it was not considered necessary to reassess the effects on ‘risk of accident and other disasters’, ‘population and human health’, ‘air quality’, ‘telecommunications and other infrastructure’, ‘television reception’ and ‘waste

and environmental management'. The predicted effects on these areas remain unchanged from those set out in **EIA Chapter 15**, which predicted no significant effects.

Shadow flicker, climate and carbon balance, and aviation are considered in more detail below.

5.9.1 Shadow Flicker

The removal of T1 would not result in any change to the assessment of shadow flicker as presented in the EIA Report, which concluded that no shadow flicker effects would be experienced. The nearest residential receptor is to the south of the site, closest to T8 and the location of this turbine has not changed as a result of the proposed amendments to the layout.

5.9.2 Climate and Carbon Balance

The overall anticipated carbon payback time for the amended Proposed Development (compared to a fossil fuel mix of electricity generation) is 2 years. This is the same as the 2 year anticipated carbon payback time as assessed and presented in the EIA Report for the application layout.

The potential CO_2 emissions savings are also similar for the revised layout of the Proposed Development (63,781 tonnes of CO_2 per year over a fossil fuel mix of electricity), compared to the figures presented in the EIA Report for the application layout.

5.9.3 Aviation

The removal of T1 would not fundamentally affect the position conveyed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and National Air Traffic Service (NATS). It is accepted by the Applicant that planning conditions relating to aviation and infra-red lighting for the Proposed Development will be employed, should it be consented.

An agreement is being entered into between NATS (En-Route) Plc, NATS (Services) Ltd (NATS) and the Applicant for the design and implementation of an identified and defined mitigation solution in relation to the Proposed Development which would ensure that no unacceptable impact on the radar would result.

5.9.4 Conclusion of SEI Assessment

The SEI design amendments would not result in any change to the significance of effects as presented in **EIA Chapter 15** and do not materially alter the Proposed Development's expected carbon saving potential.

6.0 Summary of Residual Effects

None of the effects identified in the EIA Report have changed in their level of significance as a result of the revised layout. The revised layout has resulted in improvements although these do not alter the conclusions of the EIA Report.

Topic	Mitigation	Residual Effects
Landscape and Visual	Design	Significant visual effects remain at four viewpoints within 7.5km of the Proposed Development: • Viewpoint 2 (Edinbane Top Road) • Viewpoint 4 (residents at Roag) • Viewpoint 6 (Lonmore) • Viewpoint 12 (Greshornish) Cumulatively (when considering all proposed wind farm developments within the study area) the overall contribution that the revised layout of Balmeanach Wind Farm would make to the cumulative effects would be reduced and no additional significant effects are identified.
Ecology	Design, Pre-Construction Surveys, CEMP, updated Habitat Management Plan	None. No change in significance. The area of proposed peatland restoration and enhancement has increased from 77.5ha to 293.47ha which is substantially greater than that proposed in the EIA providing a beneficial but not significant effect.
Ornithology	Design, Pre-Construction Surveys, updated Habitat Management Plan, Post consent monitoring	None. Reduction in predicted collision risk for all species including eagles but no change in significance.
Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils	Design, CEMP, Water Quality Monitoring, Peat Management Plan.	None. Reduction in predicted disturbance to peat but no change in significance.
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	Design, Fencing off Features, Targeted Watching Brief	None. No change in significance.
Site Access, Traffic, and Transportation	CEMP, CTMP, AMP.	None. Reduction in traffic numbers but no change in significance.
Noise	Design, CEMP, Mitigation Strategy.	None. Reduction in noise levels but no change in significance.
Socio-Economics and Land Use	Design.	None. No change in significance.

Topic	Mitigation	Residual Effects
Other Considerations	An agreement is being entered into between NATS and the Applicant for the design and implementation of an identified and defined mitigation solution.	None. No change in significance.

6.1 Other Notable Effects

The following additional positive effects are identified for the revised layout:

- Production of an average of approximately 150,000MWh of electricity annually; which equates to the power consumed by approximately 46,500 average UK households.
- In addition to the value of the investment in the local economy through the operation of the wind farm, additional long term social and economic benefits would arise from community benefit payments (£9 million over 40 years) and the opportunity for community investment in the wind farm.
- The Proposed Development would provide 215.97ha of additional peatland restoration in comparison to the application layout.
- Potential for enhanced access for walking and cycling on site, with the possibility for circular routes remains.

7.0 Next Steps and Further Information

THC will consider the SEI, alongside the findings of the EIA Report, as part of the determination of the planning application. THC will consult a number of consultees, including NatureScot and SEPA.

A copy of this SEI NTS will be made available for download from the Applicant's website at: www.balmeanachwindfarm.co.uk.

Paper copies of this SEI Report NTS are available free of charge from:

info@wind2.co.uk

07570 948886

Wind2 Limited,

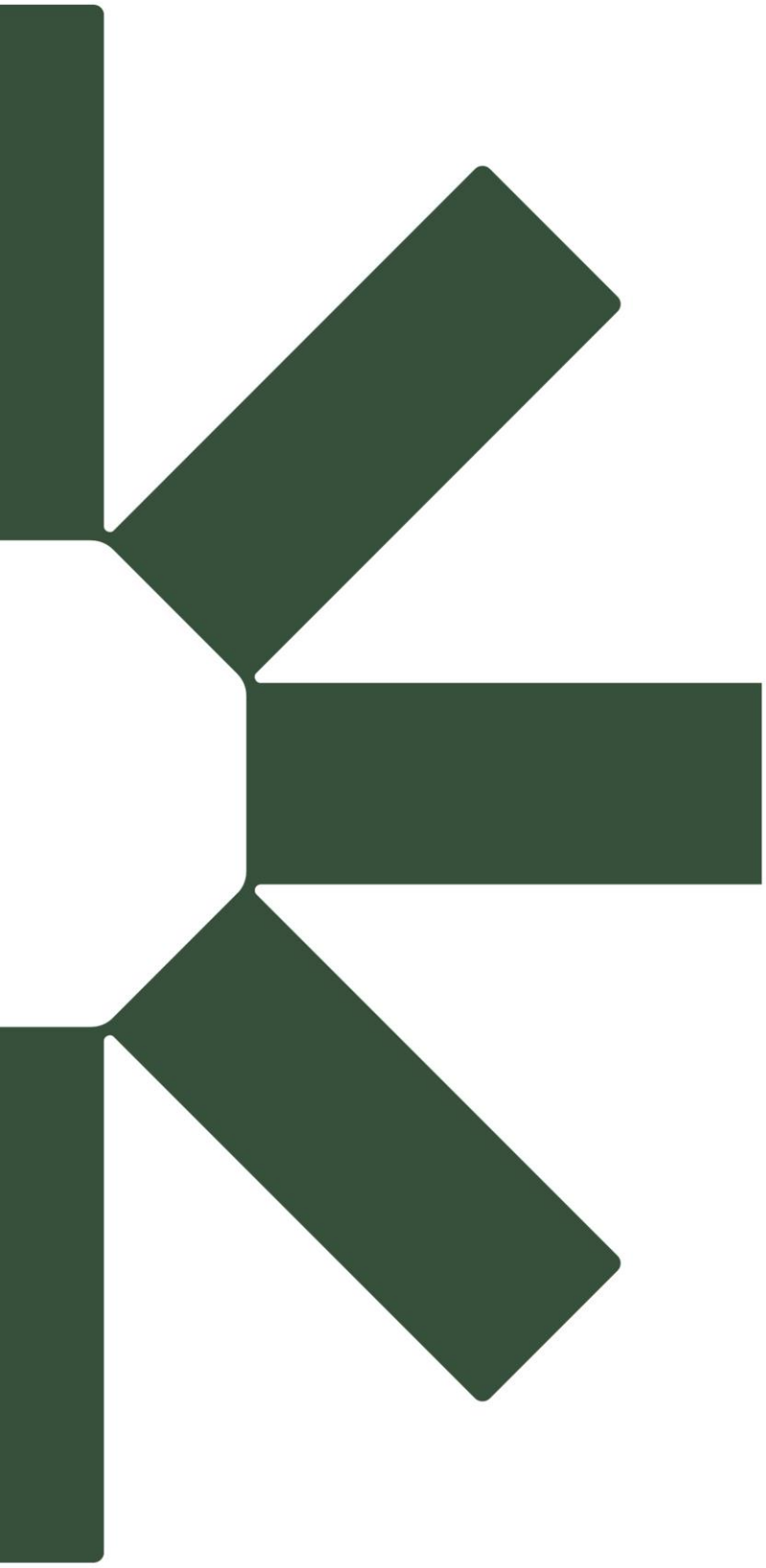
2 Walker Street,

Edinburgh,

EH3 7LB

Paper copies of the SEI Report may be purchased by arrangement from the above address for £3,800 per copy, or £15 per USB memory stick copy. The price of the paper copy reflects the cost of producing all of the Landscape and Visual photomontages at the recommended size. As such, a USB memory stick version is recommended.

Hard copies of the SEI Report and the EIA Report can be viewed at Portree Community Library, Viewfield Rd, Portree IV51 9ET.



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