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ARMADALE WIND FARM

**TECHNICAL APPENDIX 6.2
SEASCAPE AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

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A6 APPENDIX 6.2: SEASCAPE AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A6.1 INTRODUCTION

Figure 6.3a illustrates the location and extent of seascape and landscapes character types (SSLCTs) within the SLVIA Study Area.

Table 6.2.1 of this Appendix lists the landscape and seascape types that are present within the Study Area and which would be subject to theoretical visibility of the Development and provides a justification for their omission where effects are considered unlikely to be significant.

Table 6.2.2 provides a description of each designated/classified landscape and appraisal of its sensitivity to the type of development proposed.

SSLCTs have been drawn from:

- NatureScot’s 2019 on-line database¹;
- The Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance: Draft Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal (OWESG)²; and
- The assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the Scottish seascape in relation to windfarms³

It should be noted that the sensitivity study for Caithness, that is contained in the OWESG, does not cover the entirety of the Study Area. Where it does apply (i.e., Study Area to the east of the A897) details of the key characteristics and sensitivity assigned to character types described in it are included in the following baseline appraisal.

Table 6.2.1: Seascape and Landscapes Character Types

Seascape/Landscape Type	Approximate Distance and Direction from Designated/ Classified Landscape to nearest of Developments turbine	Assessed in LVIA	Justification for omission
NatureScot 134 (OWESG CT4) Sweeping Moorland and Flows:	900 m east of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 135 Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland	18.3 km southwest of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 136 Rocky Hills and Moorland	The Development would be located within this LCT.	Yes	-

¹ Available at <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions>

² The Highland Council - Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, November 2016 (with addendum, December 2017)

³ Scott, K.E., Anderson, C., Dunsford, H., Benson, J.F. and MacFarlane, R. (2005).

An assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the Scottish seascape in relation to offshore windfarms. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.103 (ROAME No. F03AA06).

NatureScot 138 (OWESG CT4) Lone Mountains	20 km south of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 140 (OWESG CT7)	7.5 km west/ northwest of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 141 High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays (OWESG CT8) High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays – Rubha Bhra to Dunbeath	2.3 km north of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 142 (OWESG CT10) Strath – Caithness & Sutherland	6.8 km west of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 143 (OWESG CT9) Farmed Lowland Plain	15 km east of the Development	Yes	-
NatureScot 144 (OWESG CT1) Coastal Crofts and Small Farms	1 km north of the Development	Yes	-
Seascape Unit 8 North Caithness and Penland Firth Seascape Character Unit.	Sensitivity to the type of Development proposed within this LCT: High.	Yes	-

Table 6.2.2: Seascape and Landscapes Character Types

SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed																											
NatureScot 134 (OWESG CT4)	NatureScot: Sweeping Moorland and Flows OWESG: Sweeping Moorland and Flows	<p>The Sweeping Moorland and Flows Landscape Character Type occurs extensively across Caithness and east Sutherland, forming a flat, gently undulating and generally smooth landform. Transitions between the Rocky Hills and Moorland and the Rounded Hills within Caithness & Sutherland tend to be subtle</p> <p>Landform Gently sloping or undulating landform which lies generally below 350 metres. Occasional isolated hills, such as Ben Alisky and Ben Dorrery, stand out amidst extensive areas of lower-lying moorland, despite their limited height. Sweeping moorlands often have lochs and mature meandering rivers which sit within the shallow valleys and basins in the landscape creating focal features. Large areas of flatter peatlands, the Flows, lie within the core of Caithness and are patterned with a dominant intricate network of water courses, dubh lochans and a diverse range of pool systems, with wet, spongy, vegetation. The Flows areas merge gradually with surrounding sweeping moorland.</p> <p>Land Cover and Land Use Simple composition or moorland and mire. Ground hugging vegetation accentuates the smoothness of the landform. Very distinct flora, dominated by sphagnum mosses, produced by the wetness and infertility of the flows. Areas of peat cuttings and haggings. Pockets of improved grazing, mainly within the outer fringes of sweeping moorland. Coniferous forest forming a dominant characteristic within some parts of this landscape character type. Ribbons of broadleaf woodland occasionally run along the water courses and loch edges.</p> <p>Settlement and Transport Very sparsely settled with dispersed crofts, farms and estate buildings largely found on the outer edges of this landscape or near a strath. Vehicular tracks within parts of the landscape. Wind farms, transmission lines, the A9 and a network of minor roads are key features within the more modified outer fringes within Caithness.</p> <p>Perception Long, low and largely uninterrupted skylines offering extensive views across this landscape and result in a feeling of huge space. Consistent views to the distant Lone Mountains and Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness & Sutherland. Great sense of exposure on areas of flat peatland on upland plateau. A strong sense of remoteness is associated within the largely uninhabited, inaccessible core flows and moorlands of this landscape.</p>	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs extensively across Caithness and East Sutherland. Gently sloping or undulating landform with strong horizontal composition – any vertical elements are highly prominent. Simple composition with dominant land: sky horizon. Long, low and largely uninterrupted skylines afford wide expansive views across Caithness. Forms setting to the Lone Mountains SLCT – these punctuate the horizon and form important landmarks. Strong sense of remoteness and wildness – largely uninhabited and difficult to access. Fringes of the SLCT transition with farming land, and often contain large scale blocks of forestry. To the west, transition between rugged Sutherland landscape to open flatter Caithness landscape is abrupt and clear. <p>Key Views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 360-degree views are available from any number of locations due to vast, open horizontal form of the landscape. Ben Freiceadain and Ben Dorrery Summits of Morven and Scaraben Locations with elevation from the immediate surrounding landscape. <p>Key Routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A836 Views from train <p>Gateways Crossing the transition from open flat moorland/ agricultural plain of Caithness to the undulating and rugged moorland of Sutherland.</p> <p>Current Wind Energy Developments Present in SLCT</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1472 1184 2193 1541"> <thead> <tr> <th>Operational</th> <th>Consented</th> <th>In Planning</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Causeymire</td> <td>Rumster</td> <td>Strathy Wood WF</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Camster</td> <td>Berriedale and Dunbeath</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bad a Cheo</td> <td>Limekiln</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Burn of Whilk</td> <td>Strathy South</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buolfreich</td> <td>Achlachan</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strathy North</td> <td>Achlachan2</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Golticlay</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Halsary</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The OWESG concludes that “there is some limited potential for further commercial scale development in this SLCT, to concentrate and consolidate with existing development. Well-designed extensions and repowering proposals should continue the scale and form and proportions of existing and consented development, avoiding unnecessary cumulative effects. However, significant constraints to development include the wild landscape of the Flow Country, which in addition contributes to the visual setting of Lone Mountains SLCT to the south and west, and the areas of transition to the adjacent character types. Open, clear and direct views, which allow the appreciation of this wild landscape, in particular from the A9 should be maintained. A geographical setting to any new development should be embedded into the design to ensure the logical relationship between development scale and landscape character is</p>	Operational	Consented	In Planning	Causeymire	Rumster	Strathy Wood WF	Camster	Berriedale and Dunbeath		Bad a Cheo	Limekiln		Burn of Whilk	Strathy South		Buolfreich	Achlachan		Strathy North	Achlachan2			Golticlay			Halsary		<p>Sensitivity to the type of Development proposed within this SLCT: High.</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. A key characteristic of the SLCT is it’s long, low and largely uninterrupted skylines which offer extensive views across the landscape, combined with a strong sense of remoteness and lack of habitation.</p> <p>Value: High. A Wild Land are found within the central part of this SLCT. In addition, the SLCT is also partially designated as an SLA.</p>
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SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed
			<p>maintained. Given the current prominence of Buolfruich, further extension of this development should be avoided. Further new commercial scale development to the west of this LCA should be avoided where it impinges upon the experience of the important landscape transition between Caithness and Sutherland. Given the openness of the Caithness landscape and sensitivity of transition, even wind energy development situated within 10 to 15 kms could significantly erode this experience.”</p> <p>Much of the OWESGs conclusion is of limited relevance as the proposed development is located outwith this SLCT. However, the matter of the openness and the juxtaposition and influence on the neighbouring Lone Mountains SLCT and wild land area have been considered in the SLVIA.</p>	
NatureScot 135	Rounded Hills - Caithness & Sutherland	<p>The Rounded Hills – Caithness & Sutherland Landscape Character Type occurs extensively across Caithness and Sutherland where, in south-eastern Sutherland it forms higher and more defined rounded hills adjacent to the lower and more gently undulating and lower-lying Sweeping Moorland and Flows. It also extends into Ross and Cromarty to the south of Loch Shin and the Dornoch Firth.</p> <p>Landform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rolling hills forming broad, subtly rounded summits but with some more pronounced hills also occurring, these often featuring steeper slopes along the coast or where truncated by deep glens. ▪ Hills cut by numerous narrow burns and small lochans lie within dips, corries and on plateau summits. <p>Land Cover and Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Predominantly dense heather ground cover and moorland grasses, but also some areas of bog. ▪ Fragments of broadleaf woodland in inaccessible locations. ▪ Scarcely settled with a largely uninhabited interior and widely scattered crofts and farms on lower slopes adjoining straths and farmed landscapes. ▪ Narrow glens and lower hill slopes often rich in archaeology with features such as standing stones, brochs and medieval townships. ▪ Wind farms located in more accessible and generally lower rolling hills, either close to extensive forestry or the high voltage transmission line aligned broadly parallel to the south-east Sutherland coast. ▪ Convex character of hill slopes limiting distant visibility and views of the hill tops when travelling through the landscape. ▪ Views into the interior of the hills very restricted. ▪ Strong sense of wild character can be experienced within the more remote and little modified parts of this landscape. <p>Perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The peripheral rounded hills are often important in providing the setting and attractive backdrop of steep-sided heather-clad hills, to settlements along the Sutherland coast and are integral components of the diverse scenic landscapes focussed on Loch Fleet and the Dornoch Firth. They are more visible from coastal areas, from major routes such as the A9 and A836 and from roads and settlement within the Straths – Caithness & Sutherland. ▪ A strong sense of wild character can be experienced in the more remote and less modified parts of the Landscape Character Type, especially in the remote Ben Armine Forest and also to some extent within the higher hills either side of Strath of Kildonan. 	Located outwith Caithness Study Area.	<p>Sensitivity to the type of Development proposed within this SLCT: High.</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. In respect of the wild character of this SLCT.</p> <p>Value: High, principally due to the role in the scenic quality of the backdrop to views from key routes.</p>

SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed
NatureScot 136	Rocky Hills and Moorland	<p>The Rocky Hills and Moorland Landscape Character Type is principally found in the far north-west of Scotland, in a broad coastal band west of Bettyhill to Cape Wrath, and around the Kyle of Tongue and Loch Eriboll. A small area is also present on the western fringes of the Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness & Sutherland of Ben More Assynt, where it merges gradually with the similarly rocky but much more complex, and generally lower-lying, Cnocan – Caithness & Sutherland Landscape Character Type which lies adjacent to the Lone Mountains of Suilven, Canisp and Quinag. The areas comprise a number of well-defined hills generally below 500 metres and extensive lower-lying rocky moorland.</p> <p>Landform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A number of often prominent rocky hills outcropping along the coast, increasing scenic diversity. <p>Land Cover and Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rough landcover with an abundance of scattered rocks, boulders and rock outcrops. ▪ Many lochans sited within rocky-edged cavities contributing to the complexity of the rocky moorland. ▪ Pockets of broadleaf woodland and scrub accentuating the rough texture of the rocky moorland. ▪ Particularly distinctive rocky hills lying on the fringes of the Kyle of Tongue and at the head of Loch Eriboll. ▪ Extensive moorland found in the Cape Wrath area with less exposed bedrock and some large areas of more gently undulating peatland. ▪ Currently largely uninhabited landscape, although abutting more settled coasts and loch shores. ▪ Numerous prehistoric and historic environment features, with concentrations around the straths and coasts. ▪ Highly visible from the coast road around north-west Sutherland. ▪ Provides the foreground to spectacular views over the coast and sea and also inland to the Lone Mountains. ▪ Feeling of containment and seclusion, increased by small knolls, dips and narrow valleys. <p>Settlement and Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The present landscape is largely uninhabited but abuts pockets of Coastal Crofts and Small ▪ Farms along more sheltered and fertile sections of coast and on loch shores. The intricate landform of dips, straths, glens and knolls give as strong sense of seclusion, even in areas lying close to roads and settlement. The area is very visible from the A638 coast road around north-west Sutherland. ▪ The area includes a range of prehistoric and historic features. These include a number of prehistoric cairns, duns, brochs and settlement sites such as Dun Dornaigil broch near Ben Hope. At Tongue there is a medieval castle (Caisteal Bharraich) and Tongue House with its associated historic garden and designed landscape. Further west at Kinlochbervie is the historic marine protected area. This is also a concentration of archaeological sites at Inchnadamph, including a number of cairns, and the medieval Ardvreck Castle and Calda House which was built as the castle's successor. <p>Perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This landscape provides a distinctive backdrop to the kyles and sea lochs of north-west Sutherland, contributing to the rich scenic diversity of sea, coast and mountains. It also provides the foreground to spectacular views over the coast and sea, and inland to the Lone Mountains 	Located outwith Caithness Study Area.	<p>Sensitivity: High.</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. Due to the distinctive form and small to medium scale of this landscape and its role as a distinctive backdrop to the kyles and sea lochs of north-west Sutherland</p> <p>Value: High, due to its contributing to the rich scenic diversity of sea, coast and mountains.</p>

SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed
NatureScot 138	Lone Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual mountains forming landmarks seen at considerable distance across expansive lower-lying Sweeping Moorland and Flows. ▪ Mountains possess a distinctive profile, usually comprising steep, sweeping, concave slopes, making them look elegant and graceful. ▪ Height of mountains varies, but even the smaller mountains can appear high because of their isolation, steep-sided profiles and when seen in juxtaposition with lower-lying Sweeping Moorland and Flows. ▪ Peaks generally topped by exposed rock and sparse dwarf vegetation which gradually merges into the moorland surrounds. ▪ Ribbons of broadleaf scrub woodland associated with the many water courses that tumble down steep glens. ▪ Largely uninhabited, creating a distinct sense of remoteness, although some of its peaks attract significant numbers of hill walkers, especially during the summer months. ▪ Peaks offer extensive views of the surrounding area including the distinctive watery landscapes of the Flows. <p>Representative VPs in Detailed SLCT Study Area: 20</p>	Located outwith Caithness Study Area.	<p>Sensitivity: High</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. The peaks in the detailed study area which form the focus of the SLCT are Morven and Maiden Pap (484 m and 706 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) respectively) which are typical of their type having graceful conical side-slopes and distinctive dished or pointed tops. They appear higher than they are as they rise dramatically from the comparatively flat and featureless adjacent flow country plain and form a distinctive feature throughout the study area because of this. To the south of them, in the same SLCT, rises Scaraben (626 m AOD) (VP20) which is more ridge-like. As they are by their nature remote and uninhabited, they are highly susceptible to change of the type proposed.</p> <p>Value: High. This SLCT lies within the Causeymire-Knockfin Flows WLA considered to have a high value. In addition, the WLA overlaps with the Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA denoting a regional level of landscape value.</p>
NatureScot 140 (OWESG CT7)	NatureScot: Sandy Beaches and Dunes OWESG: CT7 - Sandy Beaches and Dunes	<p>The Sandy Beaches and Dunes occurs along the east Sutherland coast and sporadically along the north and west coasts of Caithness.</p> <p>Landform and Land Cover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sandy beaches and Dunes consistently occur along the east Sutherland coast between the Dornoch Firth and Brora. ▪ A dynamic coastline with sand accretion, dune shifting and changes to vegetation cover constantly occurring. ▪ Dunes are covered with a diverse mosaic of marram grass, mosses and heather with some scrub occurring in wetter dune slacks. ▪ Sandy beaches are a rarer feature along the predominantly rocky coastline of Caithness and north and west Sutherland where they usually occur at the mouths of rivers or along the coastlines of the outer Kyles of Tongue and Durness. ▪ The long sandy beaches of Sinclair’s Bay and Dunnet Bay have a simple visual composition of sky, expansive sea and beach and a relatively narrow band of dunes backed by well-managed agricultural land and some remnant coniferous woodland. ▪ These bays are contained by rocky headlands. ▪ Areas of notably complex landscape pattern occur at Torrisdale Bay where sand dunes and machair has accumulated over, and against, large splays of sand and gravel outwash. There is a huge expanse of beach, saltmarsh and dunes, and a richly diverse vegetation cover. <p>Settlement and Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many small crofting communities located on the fringes of beaches, particularly in north and west Sutherland. ▪ Castles with historic gardens and designed landscapes, as well as prehistoric brochs and cists, cairns, and hut circles. ▪ Sandy beaches provide focus for recreation with camp sites, caravan parks and car parks located close to more accessible areas of coast with golf courses present where links and machair areas are more extensive. <p>Perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong sense of space, light and exposure, and extensive visibility on the larger and more open stretches of sandy beach. 	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rare feature within Caithness, occur as small areas contained by rocky bays. ▪ High scenic and landscape value. ▪ Backed by a well settled landscape. ▪ Natural qualities of sea, beach and dunes contribute to high qualities of wildness and seclusion. ▪ Important focus for recreation. <p>Key Views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sequential views from coastal routes (A836, A99). ▪ Scenic views from adjacent coastal cliffs, Noss Head, Ackergill, Brough Head, Warth Hill and Holburn Head. <p>Key Routes</p> <p>A836</p> <p>Gateways</p> <p>None</p> <p>Current Wind Energy Development</p> <p>None within the SLCT.</p> <p>The OWESG states that given “the relative rarity of this character type in Caithness, the small scales of areas and the recreational and scenic importance, there is considered to be no potential for development. Furthermore, the relatively abrupt transition of this character type to those adjacent, should be considered sensitive to change.”</p>	<p>Sensitivity: High.</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. Within the study area, the SLCT comprises small enclosed bays surrounded by high cliffs which provide expansive views towards the sea. The landscape has a remote character with small pockets of settlement and low-level human activity.</p> <p>Value: High. A small discrete area of the SLCT</p>

SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contained smaller beaches on the north coast with views focused along the beach to rocky headlands and out to sea to near shore islands. Strong contrast of the white/pale pink sands of the beaches in the north-west with surrounding darker cliffs and moorland. Wildness character to of all these seascapes, more intensely experienced on the more remote beaches along the north and west coasts of Sutherland. 		
NatureScot 141 (OWESG CT8)	NatureScot: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays OWESG: High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays – Rubha Bhra to Dunbeath	<p>The High Cliffs & Sheltered Bays Landscape Character Type is found along much of the coastline of north and west Sutherland and Caithness. The cliffs are particularly high and/or dramatic, distinguishing the areas from other Landscape Character Types which about the coast which have lower, more isolated cliff features.</p> <p>Landform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively even coastline of cliffs and small inlets between Helmsdale and Ulbster. Contrast of small bays and inlets with sheer cliff faces is striking. Prominent headlands: Duncansby Head, with high, fissured and blocky cliffs, jagged asymmetric rock stacks, arches and geos. Dunnet Head, with towering cliffs edged by low rocky reefs. Occasional inlets and coves, often with very deep and sheltered waters, and sometimes containing tiny harbours tucked between cliffs and not readily visible from the main coast road and settlement. <p>Land Cover and Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moorland largely abutting this Landscape Character Type which is particularly open and sweeping to the east and north within Caithness. A short area of vegetation covers the top edge of the cliffs and small ledges. Some of the more slumped cliffs are partially vegetated with banks of bracken, gorse and short grasses. The most prominent and exposed headlands are marked by lighthouses, making them a focal point for visitors. <p>Settlement and Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harbours on the east Caithness coast have a strong association with settlements which are perched above the cliff. The harbours are accessed by narrow roads or even by stone steps carved into cliff sides. While the headlands can be reached by public road, the remote Cape Wrath and its lighthouse also attract visitors, despite the difficulties of access. Historic environment features include Borve Castle near Farr Point on the northern coast and lighthouses at Durness, Duncansby and Strathy. <p>Perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhilarating experience of being precariously perched upon a high edge on the cliff tops, offering open elevated views and a perception of huge space. Views of turbulent currents at the juncture of the Pentland Firth and North Sea, heightening the sense of wildness experienced from the headland. The absence of development along the remote stretches of coast and a strong sense of naturalness creating a wild landscape character. The cliff tops offer open, elevated views, yet views of this coastline from adjacent inland areas are often restricted due to convex slopes and sheer cliffs. Views tend to be directed 	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found in sections along much of north Caithness. Comprise indented, intricate rocky headlands with small inlets and sandy bays. Narrow SLCT – key focus for scenic views and informal recreation and impacts a strong sense of place to Caithness. Immediate setting for several settlements. Elemental character influenced by proximity of often turbulent seas and heightened by its dramatic rugged character. Strong sense of wildness. <p>Key Views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open, elevated views from a number of locations along the coast. Prominent, exposed headlands are a key draw. Sequential views from the A836. <p>Key Routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A836 <p>Gateways</p> <p>None within the SLCT within the Study Area.</p> <p>Current Wind Energy Developments Present</p> <p>None within SLCT.</p> <p>The OWESG concludes that there is no potential for wind energy development “within this narrow character type due to narrow delineation and high scenic and recreational value. The transition to the adjacent character types, including Farmed Plain and Crofting, and Moorland Slopes is typically abrupt, and care should be taken in siting development away from this transition. Wind turbine development will appear disproportionately more prominent when sited in proximity to the Cliff coastline as the dramatic cliff landscapes form a key focus in views.”</p>	<p>Sensitivity to the type of Development: High.</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. While the experience of this landscape is largely focused on the sea and the coast, the absence of development and remote nature of the coastal landscape character type makes it highly susceptible to change associated with the type of development proposed.</p> <p>Value: High. Over half of the SLCT within the study area is designated locally as a Special Landscape Area (SLA). To the west, the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA extends across an approximately 31km stretch of cliff landscape, and to the north east, the Dunnet Head SLA also includes a portion of the High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays SLCT.</p>

SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed
		along the coast and out to sea, especially where there are offshore foci such as islands, rigs or boats.		
NatureScot 142	Strath	<p>The Strath – Caithness & Sutherland Landscape Character Type includes all of the major straths in this area. They create linear spaces, with open floors typically containing a river or loch.</p> <p>Landform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rounded Hills often forming prominent edges to the straths with shapely well-defined hills, providing a distinctive skyline and scenic backdrop. ▪ Straths range from fairly straight deeply incised troughs to more winding valleys with a number of minor side glens. ▪ River terraces and hummocky lower side slopes a common feature. <p>Land Cover and Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water is a key characteristic with straths accommodating a central river meandering across the floodplain, often traced by clumps of birch and alder. ▪ Lochs in some straths, where a string of small lochs add to the scenic richness of the lower strath. ▪ Areas of wetland often present on the strath floors. ▪ Smooth and fairly large pastures the predominant land cover on the floodplains of the straths, commonly enclosed by wire fences. ▪ Semi-improved pastures, heather and grass moorland and coniferous plantations covering lower side slopes. ▪ Increasing extent of moorland and woodland generally further up the straths, where the floodplain narrows and settlement is sparser. ▪ Smaller strip-fields present on often hummocky, lower side slopes and associated with croft houses arranged in linear groups raised on terraces above the floodplain and sometimes backed by woodland. ▪ Some crofts within the Straths more randomly dispersed or staggered on lower hill slopes. ▪ Occasional small farms located in the broader and more fertile parts of the straths. ▪ Settlement generally denser within the lower reaches of many straths, especially at bridging points, on the coast and close to major roads. ▪ Many areas rich in archaeology with cairns, roundhouses, brochs and old field systems, usually found on side slopes. ▪ Abandoned crofts, particularly within the upper straths and in narrow side glens. ▪ Focus in views from roads provided by a number of estate shooting lodges, and clustered, predominantly 19th Century, often estate style buildings. ▪ Narrow roads, commonly aligned along the edge of the floodplain, from which views are strongly channelled by the side slopes. ▪ Highly scenic backdrop of mountains often revealed in some of the upper reaches of these straths. ▪ Many of the straths are rich in archaeological features, including cairns, roundhouses, brochs and old field systems, usually found on the side slopes. These are particularly evident in Strath Brora, Strath More (most notably Dun Dornadilla or Dun Dornaigil broch and Strath Naver. Abandoned crofts are also present, particularly within the more remote. ▪ Wind farm development sited in the interior of these uplands is visible from some of the straths where the skyline of containing hills dips or is breached by side valleys. 	Located outwith Caithness Study Area.	<p>Sensitivity: High.</p> <p>Susceptibility: High. Due to the enclosure, form and small to medium scale of this landscape.</p> <p>Value: High. A relatively settle and culturally rich landscape with a high scenic quality.</p>

SLCT Ref.	Landscape Character Types and Units	Key Characteristics (SNH)	Key Characteristics (THC Onshore Wind Energy SG – Caithness Sensitivity Study)	Sensitivity to the Type of Development Proposed						
		<p>Settlement and Roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sheltered and often fertile straths are relatively well-settled and accommodate access roads and other communications. A number of settlements are located on the coast at the entrance to the Straths – Caithness & Sutherland, taking advantage of fertile alluvial fans and sheltered natural harbours. While these coastal areas are defined as the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms, a gradual transition occurs with the lower parts of the straths where settlement is generally more concentrated. Within the upper straths, settlement is sparser with occasional estate shooting lodges with associated mixed policy woodlands and some loosely clustered crofts present in places. <p>Perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views are generally focussed along straths from the narrow roads. A highly scenic backdrop of mountains is often revealed in some of the upper reaches, for example views from upper Strath Brora to the remote hills around Ben Armine and from Strath Cassely to Ben Mor Assynt. 								
NatureScot 143 (OWESG CT9)	NatureScot: Farmed Lowland Plain OWESG: Farmed Lowland Plain – North Caithness	<p>The Farmed Lowland Plain Landscape Character Type is located in the far north-east of Caithness. It forms a broad and relatively low-lying plain bounded by the sea and expansive Sweeping Moorland and Flows.</p> <p>Landform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A generally open, low-lying plain, gently undulating to form shallow broad valleys, which are often filled with lochs and mosses, and subtle low ridges. Wide horizontal emphasis. Open, light and exposed character. Occasional smooth hills rise above the more low-lying plain forming local landmarks. The broad and shallow valley of the River Wick forming the largest of a series of valleys generally aligned south-east/north-west across the plain. <p>Land Cover and Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture the predominant land cover. More intensively managed farmland near the coast around Thurso and Wick, and close to Loch Watten. Distinctive Caithness flagstone fences in some parts, creating low, sharp edges to fields. Sparse woodland, mainly comprising small angular coniferous plantations planted for shelter on farms. Larger conifer woodlands located at the transition with the Sweeping Moorland and Flows standing out where they are planted on poorer wetter ground on low ridges. Farm buildings and houses forming focal points within the landscape. Occasional loose clusters of croft houses located on more marginal upper slopes and near the coast. <p>Settlement and Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A network of often angular roads, the railway line and transmission lines cross this plain. Roads reinforce the settlement pattern, often following the field and property boundaries, running straight and then swinging around sharp corners. A number of large settlements, including the towns of Thurso and Wick, situated on the coast, as well as several smaller settlements. The long tradition of occupation of this landscape is evident in the many archaeological features dotted across farmland and on the less cultivated hill fringes. 	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive landscape character type – forms a broad, low lying plain and basin bounded by the sea, and by sweeping moorland and flows inland. A predominantly farmed landscape that is well settled with a range of field scales which relate to local topography. Considerable local variety between east and west of the SLCT – changes in scale of fields, presence of woodland and infrastructure and prominent built development. Local undulations in topography contribute to local diversity in landscape scale and pattern. Widely settled landscape – farm buildings form point features and, coupled with woodland plantations and the mosaic of fields, provide scale indicators. <p>The Key Views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically, wide views within and across landscape however few scenic views. High viewpoints on the A836 at Melvich. Sea views are open and expansive from the north coast between Mey and Melvich. <p>Key Routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sections of the A836. Forsinard to Scotscaidder railway Orkney Ferries from Scrabster and Gills Bay <p>Gateways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High point at Scrabster Hill on A836 – views to Dunnet Head and distant Orkney Islands. <p>Current Wind Energy Developments Present</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1466 1556 2193 1877"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1466 1556 1712 1604">Operational</th> <th data-bbox="1712 1556 1955 1604">Consented</th> <th data-bbox="1955 1556 2193 1604">In Planning</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1466 1604 1712 1877"> Baillie Wind Farm Forss Wind Farm (1&2) Weydale Farm Taigh Na Muir Dunnet Wathegar Wind Farm Wathegar 2 Wind Farm </td> <td data-bbox="1712 1604 1955 1877"> Lybster Road </td> <td data-bbox="1955 1604 2193 1877"> Hill of Lybster </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Operational	Consented	In Planning	Baillie Wind Farm Forss Wind Farm (1&2) Weydale Farm Taigh Na Muir Dunnet Wathegar Wind Farm Wathegar 2 Wind Farm	Lybster Road	Hill of Lybster	<p>Generally High, but with localised areas of reduced sensitivity are present at its southern extents, where there is increased forest cover that provides increased enclosure. There are a small number of locations in the northern part of this SLCT that have some reductions in sensitivity due to their scale and simplicity. The proposed development is set within one such.</p> <p>Susceptibility: Despite the extent of development in parts of this SLCT and the large scale of the landscape, it is considered to have a relatively high sensitivity to the type of development proposed due to: its openness and the number and distribution of sensitive receptors; and The limited scope for mitigation.</p> <p>Value: Medium. There are no designated landscapes within this SLCT. The landscape is valued locally by those who live, work and farm within it.</p> <p>Sensitivity to the type of Development proposed within this SLCT.</p>
Operational	Consented	In Planning								
Baillie Wind Farm Forss Wind Farm (1&2) Weydale Farm Taigh Na Muir Dunnet Wathegar Wind Farm Wathegar 2 Wind Farm	Lybster Road	Hill of Lybster								

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many historic features, including brochs and cairns, dotted across farmland and situated on hills within, or adjacent to, this area. These are an indication of past land use. A number of historic environment features, including conspicuous castles, Baronial mansions and tall 'Lairds' houses, usually with broadleaf shelter woods planted around them. Small groups of large wind turbines sited on some of the low ridges and hills and prominent visibility of larger wind farms in adjacent Landscape Character Types. <p>Perception</p> <p>Extensive views due to the openness of the landscape, and the clarity of northern air and light.</p> <p>Dramatic views from the northern part of this landscape to Dunnet Head and the distant Orkney islands, and views from the A9 on the western edge of this landscape of the Lone Mountains of Movern and Scaraben seen across the low-lying Sweeping Moorland and Flows.</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="1466 226 2193 323"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1466 226 1712 281">Bilbster Wind Farm (one turbine)</td> <td data-bbox="1712 226 1955 281"></td> <td data-bbox="1955 226 2193 281"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1466 281 1712 323">Achairn Wind Farm</td> <td data-bbox="1712 281 1955 323"></td> <td data-bbox="1955 281 2193 323"></td> </tr> </table> <p>The OWESG concludes that "there is limited scope for large scale commercial development. There is an opportunity to incorporate small and small to medium scale wind energy development in single and small clusters of turbines, tied into the existing field and settlement pattern. Turbine height and numbers should be carefully chosen to reflect the existing balance of development within the farmed basin, such that no one development type dominates. Proposed medium scale turbines should be pulled back from the boundary with Sweeping Moorland SLCT, to maintain the clarity of the transition and avoid unnecessary cumulative effects. Cumulative impacts along routes and around settlements should be avoided."</p>	Bilbster Wind Farm (one turbine)			Achairn Wind Farm			
Bilbster Wind Farm (one turbine)										
Achairn Wind Farm										
NatureScot 144 (OWESG CT1)	NatureScot and OWESG: Coastal Crofts and Small Farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow settled and farmed coastal fringe with subtle variations in topography. Pastures and occasional arable fields often divided by post and wire fences with the division of fields marked by crop colour and texture rather than boundaries. Low stone walls enclosing fields on the shelf above the High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays between Dunbeath and Wick. Small woodlands and clumps of trees present at the outlet of more sheltered straths. Settlement most concentrated where this SLCT broadens at the mouths of major rivers along the east coast, where larger farms and crofts are concentrated. Small, hunkered-down croft houses and outbuildings loosely clustered or sometimes aligned in a linear fashion on the top of terraces or ridges above the coast or a river floodplain. Dispersed settlement pattern outwith coastal villages which are often located at bridging points and at the junction with the straths, many with harbours. Major communications routes including the A9, A99 and transmission line aligned along the edge of this landscape. A number of historic sites including churches, castles, mills and cemeteries. Highly visible landscape seen from major roads Complex visual composition of views tending to focus on the detail of houses, field patterns and crops, yet with the wider context of backdrop hills and sea adding diversity. 	<p>Description</p> <p>A relatively smaller scale landscape comprising a settled and farmed fringe located in three sections between Castlehill in the west and eastwards around the coast to north of Wick. Narrow areas predominantly support crofting, with strip fields and linear patterns of croft houses forming a pronounced landscape pattern. The landscape is predominantly contained by the Sweeping Moorland LCT 'island' which forms an important backdrop. These smaller sections of coastal fringes have a proportionately greater number of scattered dwellings, with infill contemporary development being larger and more prominent in scale.</p> <p>Key Views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This landscape is highly visible being seen from major roads, in particular the A99 on the eastern coast of Caithness, outwith the SLVIA Study Area. <p>Key Routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A836 which run through this character areas parallel to the coast. B855. Orkney Ferries from Scrabster and Gills Bay. <p>Gateways</p> <p>None.</p> <p>Current Wind Energy Developments Present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No large, medium or smaller scale wind development existing. Infrequent smaller Scale single turbines, of different designs sit well within the crofting pattern, visually linked to existing buildings. <p>The OWESG concludes that due to the linear narrow, well settled and intimate landscape character of these crofting areas there is no scope for medium or large turbines, but that there is some scope for small and micro turbines less than 20 m to maximum blade tip height that would sit within the existing crofting pattern and relate well to the scattered Settlement and be sited and designed to avoid cumulative sequential impacts along routes and encirclement of residential properties.</p>	<p>Sensitivity: High</p> <p>Susceptibility: High due to the linear and narrow, well settled and intimate landscape character of these crofting areas.</p> <p>Value: High given the settled context and relationship to the coastal edge which is subject to designation as an SLA.</p>						
Seascape Unit 8	NatureScot: North Caithness and Penland Firth	Much of the western part of this unit comprises Type 1: Remote High Cliffs with Type 2: Mainland Rocky.	Located outwith Caithness Study Area.	<p>Sensitivity</p> <p>Generally medium sensitivity. Turbines could relate to the expansiveness of the sea and simple coastal forms.</p>						

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		<p>Coastline with Open Sea Views, occurring to the east. Small areas of Type 3: Deposition Coastline with open sea views also present.</p> <p>Key Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ tall cliffs particularly on headlands, interspersed with short sections of low rocky coastal edge with occasional beaches e.g. Sinclair’s Bay; ▪ views to Orkney Islands with Hoy especially visible in places; ▪ gently rolling hinterland with extensive Caithness peatlands inland and farmland and crofting; ▪ communities along coastal edge; and ▪ Pentland Firth major shipping lane. <p>Scale and Openness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pentland Firth relatively narrow with some views of islands, more open and expansive sea views further west. ▪ Generally low-lying open hinterland – big skies, large horizontal scale and very open character and turbines could relate to these characteristics. Sea cliffs can have a large vertical scale and turbines may affect the appreciation of this. <p>Form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generally simple rolling landform although indented in some places with dramatic high cliffs on headlands (e.g. Dunnet Head). Turbines would relate to simpler landform where high cliffs and headlands less prominent but would intrude on views of distinctive profile of Hoy further east. <p>Settlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequently scattered small farms and groups of housing sited along coastal fringe and in wider farmed plain. ▪ to the east, although few larger settlements. UK Atomic Energy Authority at Dounreay and associated power. ▪ lines locally intrusive features on coast. Coast road provides main access. <p>Pattern/Foci</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High cliffs and headlands and views to Orkney key foci. Small houses form minor foci due to open character. ▪ of hinterland. <p>Lighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ships, lighthouses, coastal settlements, Dounreay ex-power station. <p>Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although the Pentland Firth is a major shipping lane, overall, this is not an especially busy landscape. Ferries. ▪ to Orkney from Scrabster. <p>Aspect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northerly aspect, turbines potentially front lit for much of the day. ▪ How Experienced. ▪ From main coast road aligned parallel to the coast and from settlements. Ferries, beaches, Dunnet Head. ▪ Windsurfers. <p>Modification/Remoteness/Sense of Naturalness</p> <p>The sparseness of population gives this area a remote feel. Coastal features and extensive peatlands inland provide a sense of naturalness with human influence appearing minimal. Although an isolated feature, Dounreay affects the perception of this area being ‘undeveloped’ to some extent. The remote high cliffs are exhilarating and awe-inspiring coastlines due to the great height of cliffs giving elevated and distant views and being particularly</p>		<p>However, turbines could conflict with the form, scale and natural characteristics of the high cliffs.</p>

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		<p>dramatic when the sea is turbulent. The lower rocky coastlines with occasional sandy bays are generally backed by settled and farmed landscapes and have a settled but strongly rural feel.</p> <p>Degree of Exposure Can be very exposed with turbulent seas. This area is particularly popular with windsurfers.</p> <p>Forces for Change Pressure for onshore wind energy development along the coast may increase sensitivity due to potential cumulative impacts. Possible grid connection – overhead line along entire length of this area for onshore windfarms. Possible development of Nortrail coastal trail. Decommissioning at Dounreay power station.</p>		