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Ourack Wind Farm

Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (2019)

Non-Technical Summary

On behalf of Ourack Wind Farm LLP

VATTENFALL

Project Ref: 46685/002i2 | Rev: FINAL | Date: December 2019

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Project Ref: **46685**

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Date: **December 2019**

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Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved
FINAL	19.12.2019	Minor amendments in response to client comments	DS	NS	NS

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1 Project Context & History

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) accompanies a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report submitted by Ourack Wind Farm LLP to the Scottish Ministers regarding the proposed Ourack Wind Farm ('the proposed development') on land north of Grantown-on-Spey in the Highland Council area ('the site').

1.1.2 The purpose of the EIA Scoping Report is to request and facilitate the adoption of a new EIA Scoping Opinion for Ourack Wind Farm ('the proposed development') by the Scottish Ministers. In doing so, Ourack Wind Farm LLP intends to:

- Build on a previous EIA Scoping process completed for the proposed development in 2015-16;
- Take forward a revised design strategy. This strategy responds to environmental feedback provided in the previous EIA Scoping process as well as changes in wind turbine economics, technology and policy expectations in the interim period; and,
- Following the completion of EIA scoping, prepare a full EIA Report and submit consenting applications[1] for the proposed development in 2020.

1.1.3 Whilst not statutorily required, this NTS has been prepared on a voluntary basis to support a collaborative scoping process and due to the focus of the EIA Scoping Report on explaining a revised design strategy. It is intended that this NTS will be both provided to consultees and made available for wider public dissemination on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents portal alongside the full EIA Scoping Report. For full details of the revised design strategy and the proposed scope of the Ourack Wind Farm EIA, refer to the full Ourack Wind Farm EIA Scoping Report (2019).

1.2 Project Context

1.2.1 The proposed development is being put forward by Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd ('Vattenfall') through Ourack Wind Farm LLP ('the Applicant'), a Scottish limited liability partnership whose members are as follows:

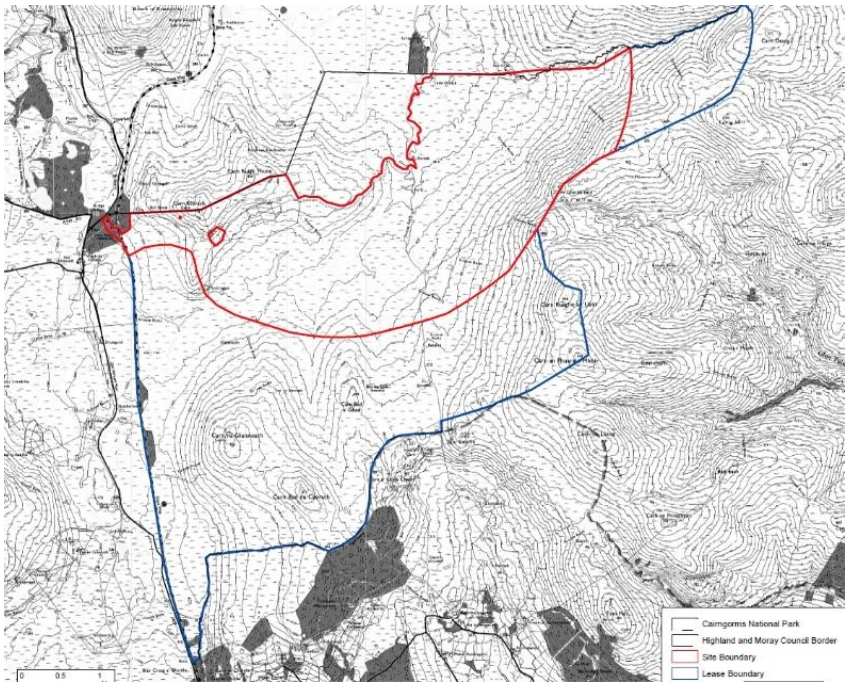
- Ourack Wind Farm One Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Vattenfall;
- Ourack Wind Farm Two Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Vattenfall; and,
- Viscount Reidhaven's Trustees, the owner of the site.

1.2.2 Vattenfall is a leading European energy company with a key market presence in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and the UK. Since 2008 Vattenfall has played an active role in the development of onshore and offshore wind farms within the UK and now has in excess of 1GW installed renewable energy generating capacity.

1.2.3 The proposed development is planned to be located on a 1100 hectare (approximate) moorland site situated approximately 9km north of Grantown-on-Spey and immediately east of Dava and the A939 / A940 in the Highland Council area. The site boundary, seen in red together with a wider lease area in blue under the control of the Applicant, is shown in **Figure 1.1** below. The site is abuts the Moray Council area to the north east and itself lies approximately 1.1km north of the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park, although proposed wind turbines would be located at greater distance from this boundary,

[1] To authorise the proposed development, Ourack Wind Farm LLP intends to make an application under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for consent to construct and operate the proposed development, accompanied by a request for a direction under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 that planning permission is deemed to be granted for the proposed development. Any conditions attached to the deemed planning permission will require to be discharged through the submission of relevant information to The Highland Council as the host local planning authority.

Figure 1.1: Ourack Wind Farm - The Site



1.3 Project History

1.3.1 The proposed development was previously subject to EIA Scoping in 2015-16, with an EIA Scoping Report submitted by the Applicant in December 2015 and an EIA Scoping Opinion subsequently adopted by the Scottish Ministers in February 2016. At that stage the initial design of the proposed development envisaged up to 50 wind turbines (at 125m blade-tip height) and associated wind farm infrastructure on a site extending to the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park.

1.3.2 Following a pause to consider changing market conditions, the project has now recommenced and is able to benefit from improvements in wind turbine economics, technology and policy expectations in the interim. Taking account of this and feedback provided by consultees in the previous EIA Scoping Opinion, a revised design strategy is now being progressed.

1.4 Collaborative Scoping and Design

Purpose

1.4.1 The purpose of the submitted EIA Scoping Report is to seek a new EIA Scoping Opinion from the Scottish Ministers on the proposed development. Understanding and where possible addressing likely significant effects on the environment is an integral part of the design process currently underway for the proposed development, as well as being required to enable the determination of relevant applications and authorisations.

1.4.2 The Applicant is committed to adopting a collaborative approach to the design of the proposed development and will maximise early consultee engagement. To this end:

- In light of consultee feedback previously provided in the 2016 EIA Scoping Opinion, the revised design strategy now affords greater protection to environmental sensitivities. The strategy now proposes the installation of a reduced number of turbines within a reduced site area. This means that the site and individual proposed turbines will be located at greater distance from the Cairngorms National Park;
- The full Ourack Wind Farm EIA Scoping Report was submitted in draft form to the Highland Council in mid-October 218 to facilitate the receipt of pre-application advice from key

consultees through the Council's major developments pre-application advice service prior to the report being finalised;

- The Applicant has requested meetings with Scottish Natural Heritage, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Moray Council during the EIA Scoping consultation period to discuss the issues raised in their pre-application advice in detail; and,
- A further design review, to be undertaken following the completion of EIA Scoping and Phase 2 peat probing. All consultee advice and the terms of a new EIA Scoping Opinion will be taken account of in this further design review prior to EIA Design Freeze (i.e. the final design of the proposed development) being reached,

Objectives

1.4.3 The EIA Scoping Report seeks to build upon the constructive pre-application engagement undertaken with key consultees in November 2019 by confirming the key issues which need to be addressed through iterative EIA and design processes and by setting out the Applicant's proposed approach to this. The approach includes committing to a number of key design principles from the outset and undertaking robust impact assessments.

1.4.4 Linked to the overarching purpose, the key objectives of the EIA Scoping process being undertaken are to:

- Explain and consult on the revised design strategy now identified for the proposed development;
- Facilitate input from consultees to the revised design strategy, resulting in an optimal design of the proposed development. This EIA Scoping stage is the best opportunity for consultees to directly inform the emerging design; and,
- Consult on the proposed scope of an EIA for the proposed development, based on the identification of likely significant environmental effects.

1.4.5 This will allow the EIA process to directly inform the revised design strategy, with the objective of minimising likely significant adverse effects from the outset and, wherever possible, reaching agreement with all key consultees regarding the acceptability of the final design. It will also enable a proportionate EIA to be undertaken that sufficiently addresses all likely significant effects whilst minimising potential duplication and avoiding unnecessary work.

2 Site Suitability

2.1 Site Selection

2.1.1 Photographs taken at the site (from existing access tracks) are shown in **Figure 2.1**:

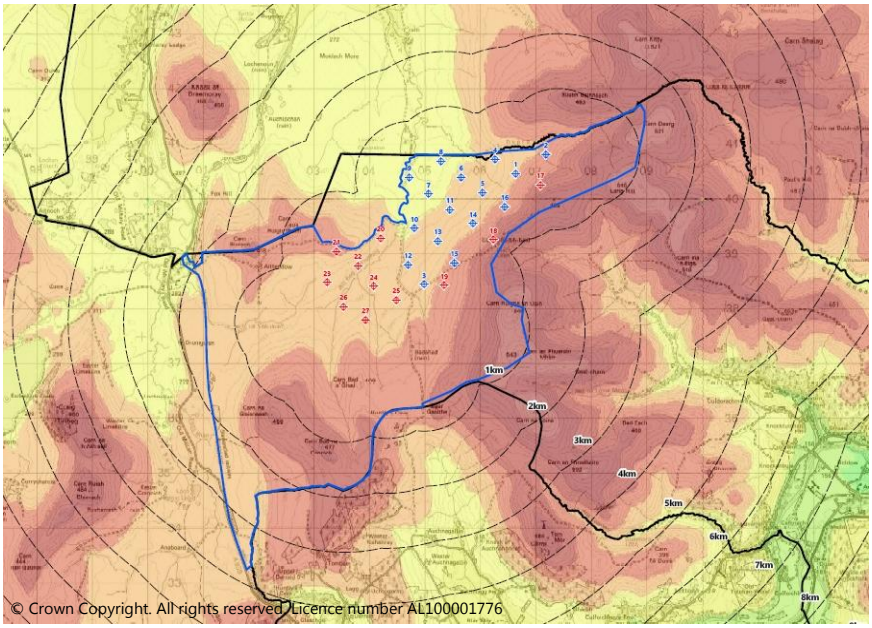
Figure 2.1: Site Photographs

2.1.2 In selecting the site for the development of an onshore wind farm, the Applicant gave careful consideration to a wide range of factors including:

- Environmental features (e.g. topography, watercourses, flood risk, habitats, etc.) within the site and the surrounding area;
- The amenity of local communities and their ability to benefit from the community development strategy that will accompany the proposed development;
- Relevant renewable energy and climate change policy considerations;
- Relevant environmental designations and planning policy considerations;
- Access and ground suitability, including for abnormal loads required to transport turbine components to the site;
- Proximity to grid connections;
- The wind resource at the site (monitored since 2015); and,
- Land ownership – the proposed development is being progressed by Vattenfall in partnership with the Reidhaven Estate as the landowner.

2.1.3 The topography of the wider lease area initially identified by the Applicant is shown **Figure 2.2** below (in relation to the current indicative layout of the proposed development).

Figure 2.2: Topographical Features[2]



2.1.4 Initial feasibility work concluded that the wider lease area (approximately 2600ha) would be suitable for the development of an appropriately sited and designed wind farm as it benefits from a good wind resource, proximity to grid connections, existing site access junction and limited onsite environmental and technical constraints.

2.2 Refining the Site Boundary

2.2.1 A critical landscape design review has established that the site area should be reduced (within the wider lease area) and set back from the Cairngorms National Park Area, with turbines positioned to avoid significant breaches of the visual watershed created by the Strathdearn Hills and maintain the integrity of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA.. In consequence the site area has been reduced by over 50% and the minimum separation distance with the National Park increased to approximately 1.1km. The resulting site boundary is not subject to any statutory environmental designations, is within a contained upland landscape separated from the Cairngorms National Park, and benefits from relatively stable topography.

2.2.2 In the context of the Scottish Ministers having declared a climate emergency and ambitious new targets having been set in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, it is therefore considered that the site is a suitable location for a wind farm and that now is the appropriate time to take forward consenting applications. However, the Applicant is clear that any wind farm development needs to respect the environmental characteristics of the site and surrounding area, including by:

- Protecting the integrity of the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA;
- Avoiding unacceptable adverse effects on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ) of the Cairngorms National Park, on the qualifying and special features of the Moidach More Special Area of Conservation, and on the setting of designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the site; and,
- Avoiding unacceptable likely significant adverse environmental and amenity impacts on other relevant receptors including watercourses, deep peat, nature conservation interests and archaeological interests (N.B. not an exhaustive list of all constraints).

2

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 Design Strategy

Overview

3.1.1 The previous Ourack Wind Farm EIA Scoping Report (December 2015) indicated that the proposed development would accommodate up to 50 turbines with 125m maximum blade tip height. An indicative layout was provided (hereafter 'the initial design of the proposed development') which allowed for a voluntary buffer of approximately 500m between the nearest turbine locations and the Cairngorms National Park (CNP).

3.1.2 Having regard to feedback provided in the previous Ourack Wind Farm EIA Scoping Opinion adopted by the Scottish Ministers (February 2016) and changes in wind turbine economics, technology and policy expectations, a revised design strategy is now being progressed by a new design team. In overall terms, this revised strategy affords greater protection to environmental sensitivities as it proposes the installation of a reduced number of turbines at higher blade-tip height within a reduced site area. In consequence, the site and individual proposed turbines will be located at greater distance from the Cairngorms National Park.

3.1.3 A structured approach is being adopted to underpin the revised design strategy, comprising the development and application of:

- Design objectives – overarching goals to optimise the design of the proposed development and determine its acceptability in planning and environmental terms;
- Key design principles – commitments and mitigation measures embedded within the emerging design from the outset to achieve the design objectives, avoid unacceptable adverse effects and address consultee feedback; and,
- Maximum development parameters – in line with best practice, iterative EIA and design processes are being undertaken in tandem to shape the proposed development. At this stage a set of maximum development parameters have been identified for the proposed development and the final design will be within these.

3.1.4 A collaborative design process is being adopted and comments are therefore sought at this stage from consultees regarding all aspects of the revised design strategy and the acceptability of a proposed indicative layout within the proposed set of maximum development parameters.

Design Objectives

3.1.5 The revised design strategy for the proposed development is underpinned by the following design objectives:

i. **Maximise the production of renewable energy generation**, in the context of the Scottish Ministers having declared a climate emergency and ambitious new targets having been set in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019;

ii. **Respond to feedback** obtained from the previous EIA scoping process and from engagement with consultees and local communities;

iii. **Avoid unacceptable adverse effects on relevant environmental receptors and designations**, including specifically:

   a. The Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ) of the Cairngorms National Park;

   b. The qualifying and special features of the Moidach More Special Area of Conservation (SAC);

c. The integrity of the locally designated Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA; and,

d. The setting of designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the site

iv. **Respect on-site environmental assets and constraints** including watercourses, areas of deep peat and topography, nature conservation interests, archaeological interests and other environmental qualities of the site and its surroundings. In doing so, the design should utilise existing infrastructure where appropriate and minimise the extent of construction works on previously undisturbed ground.

v. **Comply with industry best practice** in terms of wind farm design and turbine spacing to ensure safety and maximise wind yield.

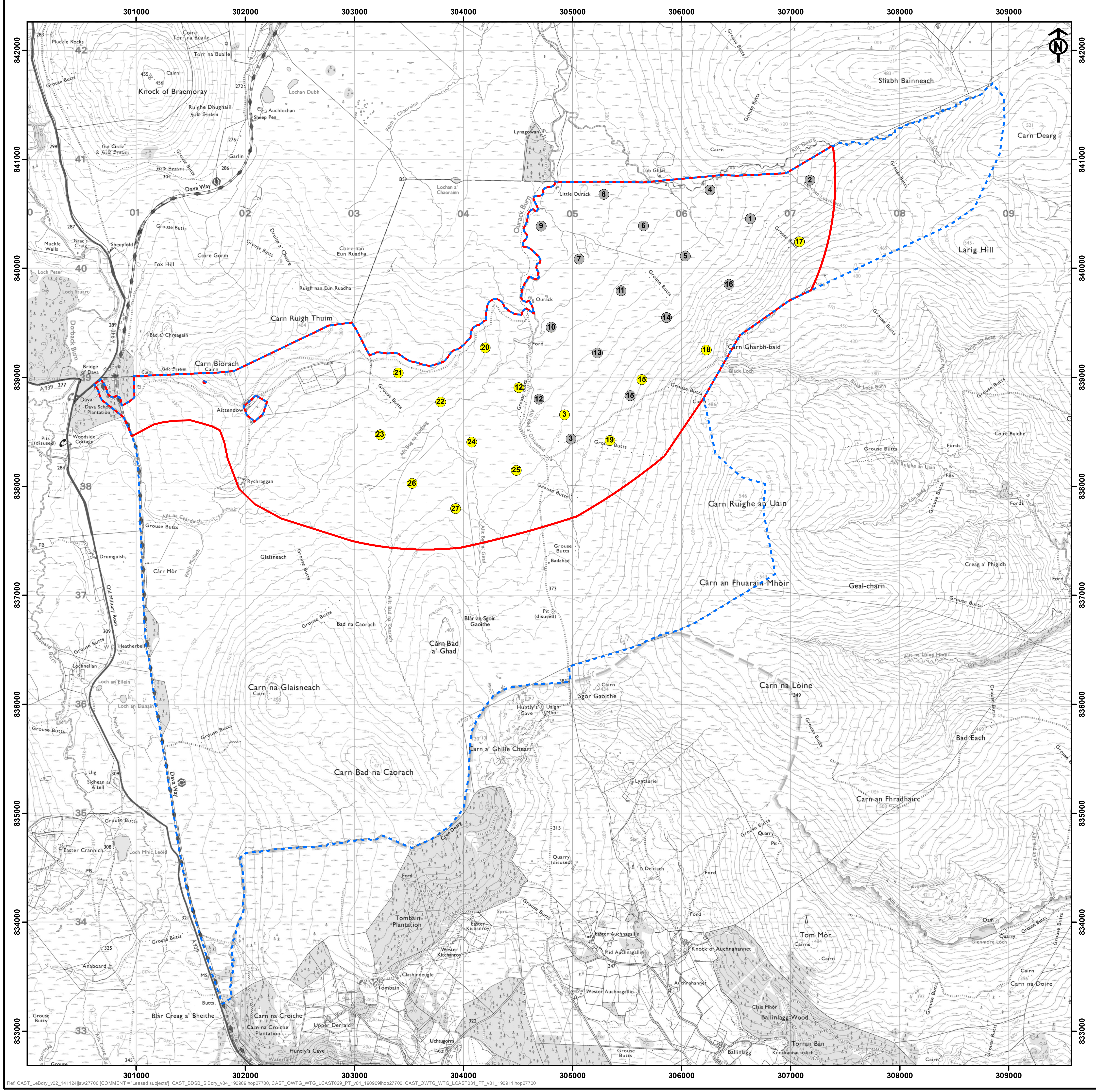
3.2 Maximum Development Parameters

3.2.1 As detailed in the full EIA Scoping Report, the Scottish Ministers are requested to provide a new EIA Scoping Opinion for the proposed development based on the following maximum development parameters within the site:

- 27 turbines at 180m blade-tip height:
  - 16 'core' turbines – theoretical visibility and landscape and visual effects confined to a relatively localised area;
  - 11 'additional' turbines – greater theoretical visibility and thus increased landscape and visual impacts, whilst still minimising or avoiding unacceptable adverse effects on relevant receptors; and,
- Associated wind farm infrastructure.

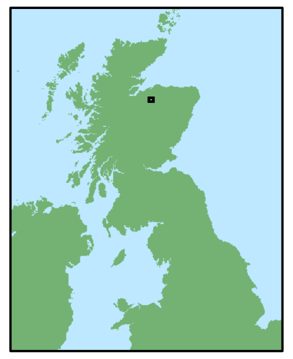
3.2.2 The final design of the proposed development will be within the ceiling of these maximum development parameters. The design process is still ongoing and will be informed by consultee feedback, the adoption of a new EIA Scoping Opinion and the completion of Phase 2 peat probing. At this point all consultee advice and Scoping consultation responses, together with the terms of the new EIA Scoping Opinion, will be carefully considered to inform EIA Design Freeze (i.e. the final design of the proposed development).

3.2.3 An indicative layout of the proposed 27 wind turbines forming the key element of the proposed development is illustrated on **Figure 3.1 – Indicative Layout** below.



Legend

- 🟥 Site boundary
- ● Indicative core wind turbine
- ● Indicative additional wind turbine
- ⬚ Leased subjects



Notes
1. Wind turbines 1-2, 4-11, 13-14 and 16 of Design Option 1 are identical to Design Option 2

VATTENFALL

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Rev	Date	Drawn By	Checked By	Comment
A	12/09/19	LHOP	RASM	First Issue

Datum	OSGB 1936
Projection	British National Grid
Plot	A2
Scale	1:25,000

0 0.5 1 km

OURACK WIND FARM
Scoping
Design Options

Confidentiality Class	C2 - Medium
Drg No	CAST-1AG-700-002
Rev	A
Layout	LCAST029 & LCAST031

Ref: CAST_LeBdry_v02_141124jjaw27700 [COMMENT = 'Leased subjects'], CAST_BDSB_SiBdry_v04_190909lhop27700, CAST_OWTG_WTG_LCAST029_PT_v01_190909lhop27700, CAST_OWTG_WTG_LCAST031_PT_v01_190911lhop27700

3.3 Construction Process

3.3.1 The construction of the proposed development would comprise the following activities broadly listed in sequence:

i. Upgrades to existing site entrance junction on the A940;

ii. Formation of the temporary construction compound, including hardstanding and temporary site office facilities;

iii. Construction of new and upgrade of existing onsite access tracks and passing places (as required), inter-linking the turbine locations and control building compound;

iv. Construction and upgrade of culverts under tracks to facilitate drainage and maintain existing hydrology;

v. Construction of crane hardstanding areas;

vi. Construction of turbine foundations;

vii. Construction of site control building and associated electrical infrastructure;

viii. Delivery and erection of wind turbines;

ix. Excavation of trenches and cable laying adjacent to access tracks;

x. Connection of onsite distribution and signal cables;

xi. Commissioning of site equipment and energisation of wind turbines; and,

xii. Site restoration.

3.3.2 The construction process will be phased such that, at different parts of the site, the civil engineering works can continue whilst turbines are being erected. Site restoration would be programmed and carried out to ensure it occurs as early as possible and in a progressive manner. During construction appropriate flood, sedimentation and pollution risk management measures will be adopted, including appropriate materials handling measures and site management procedures. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be developed, submitted for approval and thereafter implemented throughout the construction phase.

3.4 Proposed Embedded Mitigation and Design Principles

3.4.1 To achieve the objectives of the revised design strategy, the proposed development will incorporate a number of embedded mitigation measures and design principles to avoid, prevent or minimise likely significant adverse environmental effects. This includes undertaking a critical review of the initial design of the proposed development and the subsequent development of a landscape-led revised design strategy, underpinned by a suite of design principles and embedded mitigation measures. These are detailed in full within the EIA Scoping Report but in short include:

- Reduced site area and scale of development;
- Increased voluntary buffer from the Cairngorms National Park. Whereas the 2015 EIA Scoping Report indicated the site would extend to the boundary of the National Park and proposed a voluntary buffer of 500m between the closest turbines and this boundary, the site has now been set back approximately 1.1km from the boundary and the indicative

layout (**Figure 3.1**) now indicates a voluntary buffer of approximately 1.7km between turbines and the Cairngorms National Park;

- Avoidance of elevated turbine positions which 'breech' visual screening provided by the Strathdearn Hills along the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park;
- Existing track infrastructure will be used where practical, except where the water environment may be impacted and where new track infrastructure sited in an alternative location would result in reduced impacts;
- Undertaking additional peat depth probing and mapping as part of the emerging site design so that areas of deep peat are avoided where possible;
- Maintaining a 50m (minimum) buffer around onsite watercourses;

3.5 Design Input from Consultees

3.5.1 To inform the ongoing design process, consultees are asked to provide comments in respect of the:

- Objectives of the revised design strategy;
- Proposed maximum development parameters;
- Proposed indicative layout. To inform the iterative design process, comments should focus on the acceptability of individual turbines and clusters within the group of 11 'additional' turbines, including in respect of their location and height; and,
- Suite of proposed design principles and embedded mitigation measures.

4 EIA Scope

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 **Table 4.1** below provides a brief summary of the environmental topics proposed to be scoped in or out of the EIA for the proposed development. Please refer to the Ourack Wind Farm EIA Scoping Report (2019) for full details of the proposed assessment scope and methodology.

Table 4.1: Proposed EIA Scope

Environmental Topic	Scoping Report Chapter with details of Proposed Scope of Assessment
Population and human health	• Chapter 10 – Access, Traffic and Transport • Chapter 11 - Noise • Chapter 13 – Socio-economics (including tourism and recreation) • Chapter 14 – Shadow Flicker • Chapter 17 – Environmental Interactions: Health and Amenity Effects
Biodiversity, and in particular species and habitats protected under European Union Directives 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC[3]	• Chapter 9 – Ecology and Ornithology
Land, soil, water, air and climate	• Chapter 7 – Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology • Chapter 16 – Other Matters (including climate and air quality)
Material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape	• Chapter 8 – Landscape and Visual Amenity • Chapter 9 – Cultural Heritage • Chapter 15 - Aviation • Chapter 16 – Other Matters (including telecommunications and climate change)

[3] The EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Collaborative Scoping and Design

5.1.1 A collaborative scoping process is being undertaken to allow the EIA process to directly inform the revised design strategy which is being progressed for the proposed development, with the objective of minimising likely significant adverse effects from the outset and reaching agreement with all key consultees regarding the acceptability of the final proposed design.

5.1.2 To maximise the value of this EIA scoping process, all relevant consultees are requested to consider the acceptability of:

Design

i. The objectives of the revised design strategy;

ii. The proposed maximum development parameters and indicative layout of the proposed development;

iii. The proposed suite of embedded mitigation measures and design principles;

Impact Assessment

iv. The proposed scope of assessment and impact assessment methodologies; and,

v. A suite of key questions relating to each environmental topic, as set out in **Section X.10** within **Chapters 7 – 15** of the full EIA Scoping Report.

5.2 Next Steps

5.2.1 The next steps in the EIA process for the proposed development are:

- Ongoing engagement with consultees during statutory EIA Scoping consultation period. Building on the pre-application meeting held with THC and SEPA in November 2019, the Applicant has requested meetings with SNH, Moray Council and the Cairngorms National Park Authority;
- Receipt of formal EIA Scoping Opinion from the Scottish Ministers: February 2019 (i.e. 9 weeks after the submission of this Scoping Report);
- Completion of Phase 2 peat surveys: February 2019;
- Design Review, resulting in EIA Design Freeze: March 2019;
- EIA assessment phase: Spring – Summer 2020; and,
- Submission of section 36 application and accompanying EIA Report for the proposed development to the Scottish Ministers: Autumn 2020.

5.2.2 Whilst formal EIA Scoping consultation responses should be provided to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit for inclusion within a new EIA Scoping Opinion, any pre-application advice or queries regarding the contents of the EIA Scoping Report or this NTS should be directed to the EIA Co-ordinator acting for the Applicant:

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