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2. Site Description

2.1. Site Context

- 2.1.1. The Site lies in northern Dumfries and Galloway, approximately 5 kilometres (km) to the east of Carsphairn, 10 km north of St John's Town of Dalry, and 14 km to the west of Moniaive. **Figure 2.1** shows the location and wider context of the Site.
- 2.1.2. The Glenken Valley lies approximately 2 km to the south-west of the site. The valley contains a number of lochs, with associated hydro schemes. The A713 and a 132 kilovolt (kV) electricity line pass along the western side of the valley near the Site, whilst the B729 passes along the northern side of the glen and the southern edge of the site, linking Carsphairn with Moniaive. Dundough Hill with its telecoms mast lies within the Glenken valley, 2.5 km to the south of the Site.
- 2.1.3. To the south-west of the Glenken valley, in the vicinity of the Site, the terrain rises markedly to the Rhins of Kells, a line of Corbetts and Grahams, approximately 1.2 km from the site boundary, the highest of which is Corserine.
- 2.1.4. Approximately 2.5 km to the north-west of the Site lies the locally distinctive Cairnsmore of Carsphairn Corbett (797 m Above Ordnance Datum [AOD]), together with its lower associated hills, Beninner and Moorbrock. The terrain in general is noticeably higher to the north of the Site, although it falls away slightly within the extensive Carsphairn Forest.
- 2.1.5. The upper part of the Water of Ken River and its associated valley passes to the east of the Site and extends as far as Lorg, where it is bounded by steep sided slopes.
- 2.1.6. Open moorland lies immediately to the west of the Site and extends as far Brockloch to the north of Carsphairn. The Site is also adjoined by open moorland to the east and south-east with areas of plantation to the north and north-east, associated with the Water of Ken valley. There is a row of crags at Stroanfreggan, close to the south-eastern edge of the Site.
- 2.1.7. The Southern Upland Way passes to the east of the Site. To the north-east, it traverses higher ground associated with a local peak known as Benbrack and is mainly within plantation. It then crosses open moorland to the east and south-east of the Site, approaching to within 1 km at its closest point.
- 2.1.8. The Site is separated from the nearest settlements; however, there are a number of isolated dwellings within the vicinity. The nearest dwellings, from north to west, with their distance from the nearest turbines are as follows: Moorbrock (1,409m), Strahanna Farm (1,743 m), Craigengillan Cottage (770 m), Craigengillan (873 m), Stroanpatrick (2002 m), Smittons (1,358 m), Muirdrochwood 1 (1,286 m), Muirdrochwood 2 (1,297 m), Marscalloch Cottage (1964 m), Nether Loskie (1908 m), (Furmiston (1,432 m), Marbrack (1767 m)

and Marbrack Cottage (1708 m). There are also a number of properties to the west of the Site alongside the B729 at a range of approximately 2 km to 4 km.

- 2.1.9. There are a number of built wind farms within the local area. The closest of these are Windy Standard I and II, which lie on higher ground approximately 5 km to the north of the Site. The recently constructed Afton wind farm lies just to the east of these, approximately 6 km to the north of the Site. The Wether Hill wind farm lies approximately 5.5 km to the east of the Site. Further information on these operational wind farms, together with the other proposed wind farms in the area, is provided in Table 2.1 and at the end of this chapter.

Designations in the Wider Locality

- 2.1.10. The Site is not located within or near a national landscape designation, with the nearest, the Fleet Valley National Scenic Area, lying approximately 25 km to the south. The Merrick Wild Land Area lies approximately 20 km to the west, beyond the Rhinns of Kells. The Site is well separated from Inventoried Gardens and Designed Landscapes, with the nearest, Craignegillan, lying approximately 15 km to the north-west.
- 2.1.11. The main part of the Galloway Forest Park, a recreation based designation, lies approximately 12 km to the west of the Site at its nearest point, although there is a forested corridor based on the Polmaddy River which extends to the east to within 2.5 km of the site. The Dark Skies Park core area denotation lies approximately 12 km to the west of the Site.
- 2.1.12. The Galloway Hills Regional Scenic Area covers a large area of higher terrain to the west and south-west of the Site, including the Cairnsmore of Carsphairn group of hill, as well as the Glenken Valley. Part of the Site, at its north-western edge, lies within this Regional Scenic Area.
- 2.1.13. The southern-most part of the East Ayrshire Scenic Area lies approximately 5 km to the north of the Site, and the western most part of the Thornhill Uplands Regional Scenic Area is located approximately 8 km to the east.
- 2.1.14. The nearest statutory ecological designation is the Cleugh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which lies approximately 3.5 km to the south and is designated for its unimproved lowland neutral grassland. Dunduegh Wood, to the south of the Site, is listed in the Ancient Woodland Inventory.
- 2.1.15. The only statutory designated site for ornithological interest within 20 km of the Site is the Loch Ken and River Dee Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA) which is situated approximately 13 km to the south and supports wintering populations of Greenland white-fronted goose and greylag goose. There is a non-statutory Important Bird Area denotation that covers much of Galloway Forest Park, part of which extends along the Polmaddy Burn valley and over Dunduegh Hill and includes land to the south of Marscalloch Hill.
- 2.1.16. The closest scheduled monuments are as follows: Craigengillan, cairn, located within the north-eastern part of the Site, Stroanfreggan Craig fort located approximately 300 m from the south-east boundary of the Site, Stroanfreggan Bridge cairn located approximately 700 m to the south-east of the Site,

Dundeugh Castle circa 3.8 km to the south-west, Polmaddy medieval and post-medieval settlement located approximately 4.5 km to the south-west, and Braidenoch Hill, cross slabs located 4.5 km to the west of the Site.

- 2.1.17. The open moorland adjacent to the east of the Site on the opposite side of the Water of Ken, which includes the Stroanfreggan Craig fort Scheduled Monument and a number of locally designed archaeological features, is denoted as an Archaeological Sensitive Area in the adopted Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2014.
- 2.1.18. There are no Inventoried Battlefields, Inventoried Gardens and Designed Landscapes, or World Heritage Sites within 15 km of the Site; however, Loch Doon Castle, Property in Care is situated approximately 12.8 km west of the Site.
- 2.1.19. There are no category A Listed Buildings within 5 km of the Site; however, there are five Category B Listed Buildings within this distance with the closest being Smittons Bridge, adjoining the south-eastern extent of the Site, and High Bridge of Ken, 900 m to the south-east of the Site. The nearest Conservation Area is in Moniaive, approximately 14 km east of the Site.

Landscape Character

- 2.1.20. The Dumfries and Galloway landscape assessment was undertaken by Land Use Consultants in 1998¹ and formed part of the national programme of landscape character assessment commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in partnership with local authorities.
- 2.1.21. The majority of the Site and its immediate surroundings lie within the '19a: Southern Uplands with Forest' landscape character type and the 'Ken' landscape character unit. A small proportion of the Site is also located within landscape character type '4: Narrow Wooded River Valley'.
- 2.1.22. The key characteristics of the Southern Uplands with Forest are identified in the landscape assessment to be its "large, smooth dome-shaped hills with large scale dark green plantations on slopes and over lower summits". It was also identified that the area was a "changing landscape with large scale felling, ploughing and replanting".
- 2.1.23. The key characteristics of the Narrow Wooded River Valley include "narrow incised valleys with wooded slopes enclosing pasture floors, small pasture and arable fields enclosed by hedges/fences, dominant broadleaf woodland character with conifers on the higher slopes, lush trough shaped river valleys with pasture/arable floors enclosed by deciduous wooded slopes, intimate unspoilt landscape focusing on river views with some adjacent policy landscape". The key landscape issues identified for this character type include increase in coniferous forests and hedgerow loss.

¹ Land Use Consultants (1998). No 94, Dumfries and Galloway Landscape Assessment. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/snh-review-94-dumfries-and-galloway-landscape-character-assessment> [Accessed 06/11/2018]

2.2. The Site

- 2.2.1. The Site, which is shown in detail in **Figure 2.2**, rises from approximately 200 m AOD along Dry Burn (in the southern section of the Site) to 380 m at Marscalloch Hill in the south-western part of the Site and 400m at Craigengillan Hill in the northern part of the site.
- 2.2.2. The application Site area totals 752 hectares (ha). Photographs of the site are shown below in **Plate 2.3** and **Plate 2.4**.



Plate 2.3 view across the site from Goat Craig near Craigengillan Hill looking south towards Marscalloch Hill



Plate 2.4 view across to the site from Stroanfreggan Craig looking north west

Land use

- 2.2.3. The Site largely consists of commercial sitka spruce plantation, with some smaller areas of native broadleaf planting, and the remaining elements comprising open un-plantable land beyond the woodland edge. The commercial conifer crops are now moving into the second rotation, with ongoing felling and replanting of woodland.
- 2.2.4. There are a number of forestry tracks within the Site, with a main southern access at a point on the B729 between Muirdrochwood and Smittons Bridge, a secondary access near Black Burn Bridge near the middle of the site off the unclassified road along the Water of Ken valley, and a northern access along the track at Craigengillan.

Drainage

- 2.2.5. There are a number of named and unnamed tributaries of the Water of Ken within the Site, including Black Burn and Craigengillan Burn near the middle of the site and Dry Burn in the southern part of the site. Polifferie Burn is located outwith, but adjacent to, the north-eastern boundary of the Site. There are no sizeable lochans within or immediately adjoining the Site.
- 2.2.6. The high Water of Ken River passes to the east of the Site. The Stroanfreggan Burn joins the Water of Ken, to the south-east of Smittons Bridge. The Water of Ken discharges into Kendoon Loch, via an incised stretch, approximately 1.4 km from the Site near the High Bridge of Ken.

Geology

- 2.2.7. The British Geological Survey 1:50,000 scale mapping indicates that the Site is underlain by Wacke of the Portpatrick Formation. Minor dykes are noted in the north of the Site described as North Britain Siluro-Devonian Calc-Alkaline Dyke Suite comprising Microdiorite Porphyritic rocks.
- 2.2.8. Whilst published geological mapping indicates that the majority of the site is vacant of superficial soil cover, shallow peat typically exists within the steeper parts of the Site. Some limited areas of peat deeper than 1.5 m have been recorded within flatter areas, mainly in the north-western and central southern parts of the site.

Cultural heritage

- 2.2.9. There are 18 recorded cultural heritage features within the Site as detailed in Chapter 11. Most of these are from the post medieval to 19th century period and relate to features such as sheep enclosures. The Craignegillan burial cairn, which is a scheduled monument, lies within the plantation within the north-eastern part of the site, to the north of the Craignegillan Burn on land that slopes to the south.

2.3. The proposed Lorg and Longburn wind farm 132 kV grid connection

- 2.3.1. Scottish Power Energy Networks have undertaken consultation on a proposed pole mounted 132 kV electricity line to connect the Lorg wind farm (approved) and Longburn wind farm (pending appeal decision) to a point near Holm Hill approximately 7km to the north west of the Shepherds Rig site.
- 2.3.2. The proposal is at the consultation route (pre-scoping) stage at the time of writing (October 2018). The latest route passes through the narrowest part of the Shepherds' Rig site within the vicinity of Black Burn Bridge and Craignegillan Burn.

2.4. Other Wind Farms in the Vicinity of the Site

- 2.4.1. There are a number of wind farm schemes both, existing and proposed, within the wider context of the Site. Table 2.1 gives details of wind energy developments with turbines over 40 m in height that are in operation, approved, or at the planning application stage within a 10 km radius of the Site at the time of preparing this application (October 2018).

Table 2.1: Other Wind Farms within 10 km

Name	Number of Turbines	Tip Height of Turbines	Distance to Site Centre	Status
Longburn	10	134m	1.9km (E)	Planning appeal
Windy Rig	12	125m	3.0km (N)	Approved
Cornharrow	11	149.9m	4.9km (E)	Planning application
Glenshimmeroch	10	149.9m	6.4km (SE)	Planning application
Wether Hill	14	91m	7.6km (E)	Operational
Lorg	9	130/150m	7.6km (NE)	Approved
Wether Hill Extension	11	100m	8.3km (E)	Planning application
Margree	17	120m	8.3km (SE)	Planning application
Windy Standard	36	92.5m	8.6km (N)	Operational
Windy Standard II	30	100/120m	8.6km (N)	Operational
Windy Standard III	20	125/177m	8.6km (NW)	s36 application
Afton	27	120m	8.6km (N)	Operational
Torr's Hill	2	100m	10km (SW)	Approved