
Appendix 8.3 Viewpoint Assessment

Contents

Introduction	1
Viewpoint 1 – Stroanfreggan Bridge (B729)	2
Viewpoint 2 – Stroanfreggan Craig	4
Viewpoint 3 – Guttery Glen (B729)	6
Viewpoint 4 – Smittons Bridge (B729)	7
Viewpoint 5 – Stroanfreggan Cairn	9
Viewpoint 6 – Head of Ken Valley	11
Viewpoint 7 – Southern Upland Way at Culmark Hill	13
Viewpoint 8 – Minor Road South of B729	15
Viewpoint 9 – High Bridge of Ken (B7000)	17
Viewpoint 10 – Southern Upland Way, Benbrack (Striding Arch)	18
Viewpoint 11 – B7000 north of East Ardarroch	20
Viewpoint 12 – Dundeugh Hill	22
Viewpoint 13 - Beninner	24
Viewpoint 14 – Cairnsmore of Carsphairn	26
Viewpoint 15 – Craig of Knockgray	28
Viewpoint 16 – Alhang	30
Viewpoint 17 – Southern Upland Way at Waterside Hill	32
Viewpoint 18 – A713 north of Stroangassel	34
Viewpoint 19 – A713 south of Carsphairn	35
Viewpoint 20 – Woodhead Mines	37
Viewpoint 21 – Corserine (Hennessy's Shelter)	39
Viewpoint 22 – Carsphairn War Memorial	41
Summary of Effects	43

This page is intentionally blank.

APPENDIX 8.3 Viewpoint Assessment

Introduction

This Appendix provides an assessment of the visual effects of the Proposed Development from a selection of 22 viewpoints. For each of the assessment viewpoints a short description is given of the baseline view followed by a description of the features of the Proposed Development which would be visible from that viewpoint. For each viewpoint there is a comment on how vegetation, buildings or topography would affect the visibility of the turbines. A comment on the sensitivity of the viewpoint, the magnitude of change experienced and the significance of visual impacts is given for each viewpoint. Finally, a judgement is provided regarding whether the overall effect for each viewpoint is considered to be significant or not in terms of the EIA Regulations.

A summary of the sensitivity of the viewpoint, magnitude of change in the view and significance of effect is given in Table 8.3.1 of this Appendix and is replicated at Table 8.12 of the LVIA (ES Volume 1, Chapter 8). Where a viewpoint is representative of more than one type of visual receptor, the significance rating carried forward to Table 8.3.1 (replicated at Table 8.12 of Chapter 8) is the rating that represents the most sensitive receptor group represented by the viewpoint. Each assessment viewpoint is illustrated in Volume 3 of the ES. In order to illustrate the potential cumulative situation, 360 degree cumulative wireframes have also been produced for six of the viewpoint locations, illustrating all schemes in the local area which are operational, under construction, consented and the subject of a full planning application. The cumulative wireframes are presented in Figures 8.59 to 8.64.

Viewpoint 1 – Stroanfreggan Bridge (B729)

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the views from the B729 at Stroanfreggan Bridge, looking west towards the Site. Viewpoint 1, as illustrated on Fig. 8.37, was taken from the road verge at an area of hard standing just off the route, east of Stroanfreggan Bridge.

The view comprises the near pasture and upland grassland of Stroanfreggan Craig and Round Craigs and the residential property of Stroanpatrick. The Old School House is not visible due to the presence of vegetation, but the outbuilding directly opposite the dwelling is visible beyond Stroanfreggan Bridge which occupies the foreground view. Beyond the higher ground of Stroanfreggan Craig, the coniferous plantation that occupies the Site is seen alongside the hill formation of Marscalloch Hill, which is partly forested. The landform of the Site and Marscalloch Hill curtail views further west.

To the south of Marscalloch Hill the landscape becomes lower lying which enables views to open up to the Rhinns of Kells which form the backdrop to the view from the road. Dundeugh Hill is also visible in the far left of the baseline photograph at Fig. 8.37 as a relatively small rounded hill covered with plantation.

As the viewpoint represents the view from a minor road used by local residents and tourists/walkers/cyclists, it is considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

From this viewpoint five of the proposed turbines will be clearly visible alongside the met mast, with one further turbine partially visible above the near horizon. However, the associated ground level infrastructure of the Proposed Development would not be noticeable due the presence of the intervening landform and the plantation within the Site.

At a distance of c. 2.2 km from the nearest turbine, the Proposed Development would form prominent feature in the view when travelling in a westerly direction along the road. They would occupy a relatively small proportion of the overall view available from the road and would be seen set down in the landscape

beyond the near horizon, although it is acknowledged the turbines would appear taller in scale than Marscalloch Hill. The open view towards the Rhinns of Kells would remain as such.

There would be a high magnitude of change from the B729 at Stroanfreggan Bridge resulting in a high magnitude of change in the view from this location.

Significance of Effect

It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a major level of effect on the views and visual amenity experienced by receptors using the route throughout the year. This level of effect is therefore deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 2 – Stroanfreggan Craig

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the views available from Stroanfreggan Craig, a local hill feature of heritage importance which forms part of a signposted walk from the B729, located c. 1.4 km from the nearest proposed turbine. The photograph was taken to the north east of the cairn to enable uninterrupted views towards the Site to the west.

The viewpoint allows open views across the Water of Ken valley towards the hill shoulder in which the Site is located. Smittons Bridge can be seen in the photograph as the B729 passes over the watercourse. The extensive plantation that covers the Site is clearly visible, in all of the various stages of crop rotation from mature trees to immature stock and recently felled areas.

Beyond the Site, there are views towards the distinctive hill formations of Beninner and Cairnsmore of Carsphairn, with longer distance views available to the Rhinns of Kells to the south west.

There are also open views available to the south of the viewpoint, looking towards Culmark Hill, with views to the north towards Round Craigs. The view to the east comprises further large scale plantation with glimpsed views of the existing Wether Hill turbines.

As this viewpoint represents the view from a local heritage feature and walking route, receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

The rounded landform of Marscalloch Hill forms the southern extent of the proposed turbines. The majority of the proposed turbines, and the met mast, will be clearly visible in direct and open views to the west. There would also be views of ground level components of the Proposed Development located on the eastern periphery of the Site. The five northernmost turbines will be located beyond the landform of Craigengillan Hill and thus the lower portions of the turbine towers and all associated ancillary development will be screened from view.

It is acknowledged that the temporal nature of the plantation within and surrounding the Site will alter the nature of the view over the lifetime of the Proposed Development. The restocked forest on the eastern flank of the Site will establish to further screen the lower portions of the turbine towers and the associated ground level components. The immature tree planting within the valley bottom will also establish and mature to alter the nature of the river landscape.

The mature tree belt in the immediate view will also be felled in stages, allowing further glimpsed views of the access route within the Site, which follows an existing forest track. However, any such views are likely to be relatively short lived in comparison to the lifespan of the Proposed Development due to the establishment and maturity of trees immediately beyond.

At this distance, considering the direct view in which the turbines will be seen from the elevated position, and in the context of the existing view available, it is considered that there will be a high magnitude of change.

Significance of Effect

The Proposed Development would result in a high magnitude of change giving rise to a major level of effect on the views from this viewpoint. This effect is deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 3 – Guttery Glen (B729)

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the view to the west from the B729 as it passes through Guttery Glen, a localised and enclosed valley north of Blackmark Hill. The viewpoint has been selected to represent the variable visual experience from the B729 as it passes through the landscape local to the Site. The viewpoint is located c.3.4 km from the nearest turbine.

The view to the north west and north of the minor road is relatively open with deciduous woodland seen flanking the watercourse that flows through the lowest lying land in the view. The increasingly distant landform features of Round Craigs, Manquill Hill and Benbrack can be seen to the northwest of the view alongside the distant, distinctive hills of Beninner and Cairnsmore of Carsphairn to the west, beyond the northern part of the Site.

The view to the south west and west of the road is completely enclosed by coniferous plantation at this location. The view to the north and east is also curtailed by trees and landform.

As this viewpoint is representative of a minor road used by local residents, tourists, cyclists and walkers, receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity.

Magnitude of Change

From the B729 at Guttery Glen, the Proposed Development will be seen in the direct view for a short distance as the route winds through the valley landscape.

Although the ZTV at Fig. 8.12 suggests that all of the proposed turbines will be visible, in reality the five southernmost turbines of the Proposed Development will be located beyond the coniferous plantation that covers Blackmark Hill and thus would be screened from view or be barely perceptible in the landscape. The plantation would also screen views of the lower portions of a small number of the turbines located within the central core of the Site.

It is recognised that there would be up to 11 of the proposed turbines visible from Guttery Glen, however none of the ancillary ground level components of the Site would be seen at this distance. The turbines would be seen in the same part of the view as Cairnsmore of Carsphairn, but they would be set down in the

landscape below the landform feature and they would not appear greater in scale than the Corbett.

Overall, the addition of the proposed turbines to the view to the west would result in a high magnitude of change.

Significance of Effect

It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development would result in a major level of effect on the views from this viewpoint which is deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 4 – Smittons Bridge (B729)

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of views available from the B729 as one approaches Smittons Bridge. The view has been chosen to illustrate the likely views experienced as receptors travel in a westerly direction in close proximity to the Site from Moniaivie to Carsphairn. The nearest turbine is located c. 1.3 km from the viewpoint. The photograph has been taken from a pull in at the side of the road from which there is a signposted walking route to Stroanfreggan Craig Fort and thus is a likely place for people to stop.

The view on the approach to Smittons Bridge when travelling west is generally limited to the coniferous plantation at Smittons. There are also views of the immediate river corridor and the stone bridge itself, alongside the property also known as Smittons.

There are longer distance views from the road at this location to the south and north due to the lower lying nature of the landform and lack of vegetation. However, it should be noted that immature tree planting is present within the valley to the immediate that will eventually mature to screen views in a northerly direction.

As the viewpoint represents the view from a minor road used by local residents and tourists/walkers/cyclists, it is considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

The ZTV suggests that up to all of the proposed turbines would be visible from this viewpoint. In reality, views of the turbines would be considerably more restricted due to the presence of coniferous plantation in the direct and immediate view.

As can be seen in the visualisation shown at Fig 8.40, the majority of the turbines would be significantly screened by the vegetation of Smittons Plantation. The turbine hubs and the blades of two turbines will be visible above the canopy level of the trees, with a further turbine completely visible to the far north of the Site. The moving blades tips of a further four turbines would be visible above the tree line. Twelve turbines would be completely screened from view by the plantation. The turbines that are visible will be seen against the back drop of the sky apart from the turbine to the far north which will be back clothed by landform.

It is acknowledged that the proposed turbines that are seen from the viewpoint will be perceived to be large in scale due to their visibility above the plantation. There would therefore be a medium to high magnitude of change to the view.

It is also acknowledged that Smittons Plantation is due to be felled within the lifetime of the Proposed Development and so in theory views of more of the proposed turbines would become available. However, it is proposed that the felling of the plantation will be phased as such that the nearest trees would remain in situ throughout the lifespan of the turbines so ensure that a level of screening is maintained.

Significance of Effect

It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a moderate to major level of effect on the views from this viewpoint. This effect is deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 5 – Stroanfreggan Cairn

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the view available in a north westerly direction from Stroanfreggan Cairn towards Stroanfreggan Craig Fort and the Site. Stroanfreggan Cairn is located just east of the Southern Upland Way, the route of which can be seen passing west to east through the centre of the baseline photograph along the access track to Culmark.

The viewpoint is located on lower lying rough pasture near to tributaries that flow into the Water of Ken. The Cairn is a known feature of local heritage importance and can be accessed by members of the public.

The view towards the Site features two drumlins alongside Stroanfreggan Craig Fort which is seen beyond the closest drumlin to the viewpoint. The plantation that covers the Site, in its various stages of growth, forms the middle distance view and horizon with the rounded summit of Marscalloch Hill also clearly visible a landform feature. In the far distance of the view to the north is Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and Benniner, with the Rhinns of Kells seen in the distant view to the south west.

As this viewpoint is representative of views from a local feature of heritage importance just off the Southern Upland Way, receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

From this viewpoint location, open views are available in the direction of the Proposed Development. The ZTV suggests that there would be visibility of up to all of the proposed turbines; however, the northernmost turbine is not seen, as shown in the visualisation, with only the smallest of blade tips seen for a further turbine. The nearest proposed turbine is located approximately c.2 km of this viewpoint and those located in the southern portion of the Site will form prominent features in the landscape. The met mast will also be visible. The turbines located in the northern portion of the Site will be seen with increasing distance and for many of the turbines, the lower parts of the turbine towers will not be visible.

It is acknowledged that a number of the proposed turbines would be seen in the same part of the view as Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and that three of the turbines would break the horizon formed by the hill mass. However, the arrangement of the turbines is such that there will be a high degree of visual permeability beyond the turbines towards the hill formation and its overall distinctive landform can still be appreciated.

Across the Site as a whole the proposed turbines appear set out in rows to allow visual permeability through the wind farm. The distant view towards the Rhinns of Kells will remain as the existing baseline view.

From this viewpoint it is considered that there will be a high magnitude of change in the view due to the perceived scale of the turbines at this distance from the Cairn.

Significance of Effect

It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in a major level of effect on the view to the north west from Stroanfreggan Cairn. This effect is deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 6 – Head of Ken Valley

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the view experienced when travelling south along Lorg Road from the Head of Ken valley picnic site and car park. This location was chosen as the view from the picnic site and car park itself is restricted by landform and vegetation. The view of the Site begins to open when travelling south towards the dwelling Craigythorn, which can be seen as the white rendered property in the near view at Fig 8.42. The photograph was taken from an appropriate passing place on the road.

The viewpoint is located within the low-lying valley. The views to the east and west are constrained by the valley slopes. The eastern slopes are heavily forested whilst the eastern slopes are partly forested with areas that appear recently felled and thus could be replanted in future years.

The primary focus of the view is along the valley to the south towards the distant ridge of the Rhinns of Kells.

As this viewpoint is representative of the views of local residents as they access their properties and walkers/cyclists/tourists using the route for leisure purposes, the viewpoint is considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

From the viewpoint location, the Proposed Development will be clearly visible at a distance of c. 4 km from the nearest turbine. The southernmost turbines and the met mast will form the most visible elements of the Proposed Development with the turbines within the northern part of the Site located beyond the near horizon and thus the lower parts of these turbines would not be seen. It will not be possible to perceive the majority of the ground levels components within the Site due to the distance and presence vegetation within the Site.

From this viewpoint location, the proposed turbines will break the skyline formed by Marscalloch Hill, but they will not be seen in the same part of the view as the distant Rhinns of Kells. The turbines will also appear set down in the valley landscape and would not greatly alter the perceived scale of the immediate river valley.

The proposed turbines will be seen in the context of the working valley landscape that is characterised by commercial forestry. It is acknowledged that there would be a degree of stacking of turbine blades beyond the near horizon. There is already a presence of turbines within the valley as the existing Windy Standard turbines are visible to a limited degree in the view to the north west. They would appear in a completely separate part of the view from the Proposed Development.

Overall, it is considered that the addition of the proposed turbines to the view to the south would result in a medium to high magnitude of change in the view.

Significance of Effect

It is considered that there will be a medium to high magnitude of change, resulting in a moderate to major level of effect that is deemed significant.

Viewpoint 7 – Southern Upland Way at Culmark Hill

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the views from the summit of Culmark Hill, just off the route of the Southern Upland Way. The summit of the hill has been selected as the viewpoint location over the route of the long distance path as the hill summit provides a slightly higher panorama.

The view from Culmark Hill is expansive with long distance views available in all directions, particularly across the lower lying Upper Glenkens Valley to the south west allowing views to the Rhinns of Kells. It is noted that other commercial wind energy is visible in various directions of view; Windy Standard to the north, Wether Hill to the north east and Blackcraig to south east. All of these existing wind farms are located at relative distance from Culmark Hill, located beyond the near horizon.

The view from the summit of the hill comprises the lower lying pasture and low and mid slope rough grazing. The forested mid and upper hill slopes form a visual patchwork due to the various stages of planting, particularly within the Site where there is young tree stock alongside recently felled areas.

The distant horizon in the direction of the Site is formed by the notable hill formations of Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and Beninner, alongside other rounded hills within the Southern Uplands.

As this viewpoint is located on a local hill summit adjacent to the Southern Upland Way, receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

From this viewpoint atop Culmark Hill it will be possible to see all of the proposed turbines, at a distance of c. 3.6 km to the nearest turbine. It may also be possible to see some of ground level components of the Proposed Development where the base of the turbines and access tracks are not screened by plantation trees. It should be noted that the young plantation within the Site will establish and mature to provide further screening to the lower parts of the turbines located on the eastern flank of the Site.

The proposed turbines would be clearly visible in the wider view available from the summit and the rotation of the blades would attract attention to an area which includes existing wind turbine development, although this would not greatly detract from the appreciation of the wider panoramic views available.

It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development will be located in the same part of the view as Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and Beninner, but they will be set down in the landscape and would not break the horizon formed by the hill massif. The Proposed Development would be seen in the same part of the view as the existing Windy Standard turbines, and associated extension, but would form a clearly separate development.

From this viewpoint it is considered that there would be a high magnitude of change in the view.

Significance of Effect

It is considered that the proposed development would result in a major level of effect on the visual amenity experienced by people visiting the hill summit, and those that are passing along the route of the Southern Upland Way. This effect is deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 8 – Minor Road South of B729

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is representative of the visual experience gained from the minor road to Fingland Moss from the B729, east of the Site. The minor road is also a designated cycle route.

The single track road passes over an expansive area of upland grassland grazed by cattle and sheep. Large areas of coniferous plantation also characterise the landscape at this location. The visual experienced is varied due to the intermittent enclosure provided by the interlocking rounded hills in which the route winds its way through.

To viewpoint is taken from a passing place on the road, south of the junction with the B729 as the road begins to pass over higher ground. From the viewpoint the existing Wether Hill turbines and associated met mast are clearly visible in the near view to the north.

The sensitivity to change in the view of receptors using the road for recreational purposes (cycling/walking), and residents using the route to access the various farmsteads located along the road is considered to be high.

Magnitude of Change

From this viewpoint location, the Proposed Development would form a very minor additional element in the landscape at a distance of c. 6.4 km as shown at Fig 8.44.

As illustrated by the ZTVs, there will be intermittent visibility of the proposed turbines along the route as a whole, and the viewpoint illustrates the worst case views from the road with the hubs and blades of two turbines visible and the blade tips of four further turbines visible. None of the ground level components of the Proposed Development will be visible.

The turbines will be seen set down in the valley created by the interlocking hills, below the horizon created by Cairnsmore of Carsphairn. The turbines would not detract from the scale of the notable hill formation.

When considering the existing nature of the view, the screening effect of intervening landform and the distance from the site, the addition of the proposed turbines in the view would result in a worst-case low magnitude of change.

Significance of Effect

It is considered that the Proposed Development would result in no greater than a moderate/minor level of effect on the visual amenity of those travelling on the minor road. This effect is not deemed to be significant.

Viewpoint 9 – High Bridge of Ken (B7000)

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint is taken from the High Bridge of Ken on the B7000 on the northern approach to the Site, south of the junction with the B729.

The viewpoint was chosen to represent views at relatively close proximity to the Site from the B7000, which is a well-used local route. The ZTV to blade tip at Fig 8.12 suggests that there is visibility of all of the 19 proposed turbines, hence its inclusion as a viewpoint.

The view from the road as one approaches the bridge is focussed on the Water of Ken and its associated valley, which is well treed. Beyond the immediate valley, the landform rises to the north and it is characterised by dense coniferous plantation.

As this viewpoint is representative of views from a secondary road, receptors are considered to be of medium sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

From this viewpoint location the Proposed Development would not be visible as shown on the wireframe at Fig. 8.45. The Site is set on the hillside beyond the immediate valley and this coupled, with the presence of the dense plantation in the foreground landscape results in the complete screening of the turbines.

It is recognised that the plantation located between the viewpoint and the Site is likely to be felled during the lifetime of the Proposed Development. However, it is unlikely to be felled all at once and the likelihood of views of the Site becoming available is considered to be minimal.

There would be no change to the view from the High Bridge of Ken.

Significance of Effect

There would be no effect on the viewpoint. This effect is not significant.

Viewpoint 10 – Southern Upland Way, Benbrack (Striding Arch)

Nature and Sensitivity of the Baseline View

This viewpoint has been taken from the Southern Upland Way as it passes the summit of Benbrack in close proximity to the Striding Arch sculpture at a distance of c. 5.4 km to the north east of the nearest proposed turbine.

The view from Benbrack is panoramic and includes long distance views towards the Rhinns of Kells to the south west. There are also longer distance views to the south and south east. Views of the wider Southern Uplands to the north are limited by the nature of the upland landform. Within this angle of view there are a number of existing wind farms visible including Windy Standard and its extension and Wether Hill.

The Site appears in the near view from the summit as one looks directly over the Water of Ken valley. The Site appears as a forested hill shoulder, the various stages of planting and felling are clearly visible as a patchwork of texture and colour. The notable hill formations of Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and Beninner are seen to the north of the Site. The Rhinns of Kells are seen at notable distance beyond the Site.

As this viewpoint is located at a known hill summit on the Southern Upland Way on which there is also a Striding arch sculpture, receptors are considered to be of high sensitivity to change in the view.

Magnitude of Change

As seen in the visualisation shown on Fig. 8.46, the Proposed Development will be seen in the near view within the context of the coniferous plantation that occupies the landscape to the south west and west of Benbrack. The turbine hubs and blades of twelve of the proposed turbines will be visible in the view, with the blade tips of three further turbines also seen. The met mast will also be visible as an additional slender vertical element in the landscape and ground level components associated with the easternmost turbines may also be visible until the recently restocked plantation begins to mature. All other ground level components within the Site will not be perceivable.

The Proposed Development will be seen in the view to the south of Cairnsmore of Carsphairn and Beninner, set down in the landscape below the far horizon of

the Rhinns of Kells. Views towards the Galloway Hills RSA will not be interrupted by the turbines. The Proposed Development would occupy a small part of a much wider view and would be seen in combination with the existing Windy Standard turbines in views to the west.

From this viewpoint there will be a medium to high magnitude of change in the view.

Significance of Effect

From the Southern Upland Way at Benbrack, and from the nearby Striding Arch, the addition of the Proposed Development to the landscape to the south west would give rise to a moderate to major level of effect on the views experienced by receptors at the hill summit. This effect is deemed to be significant.

