

2 Site Description

2.1. Introduction.....	2-2
2.2. Site Status and Context	2-2
2.3. Site Description	2-6
2.4 Cumulative Developments	2-7
2.5. Summary	2-11
References	2-12
Abbreviations.....	2-12

2. Site Description

2.1. Introduction

- 2.1.1. This Chapter provides a description of the Proposed Varied Development site (the 'site'), its geographical context, and information on cumulative developments within the wider vicinity.

2.2. Site Status and Context

- 2.2.1. The site of the Proposed Varied Development remains the same as the Consented Development, located 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 and **Figure 2.2** shows the site boundary in detail.
- 2.2.2. 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 south-eastern 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.
- 2.2.3. To the south-west of the Glenken valley, in the vicinity of the site, the terrain rises markedly to the Rhinns of Kells, a line of Corbetts and Grahams, the highest of which is Corserine, at a distance of approximately 12 km from the site boundary.
- 2.2.4. Approximately 2.5 km to the north-west of the site lies the locally distinctive Cairnsmore of Carsphairn Corbett (797 metres [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.
- 2.2.5. 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. 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.
- 2.2.6. 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 forestry plantation. It then crosses open moorland to the east and south-east of the site, approaching to 730 m at its closest point, at approximately 1.8 km to the nearest turbine.
- 2.2.7. 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 follows¹: Moorbrock (973 m), Game Keepers Cottage (889 m), Strahanna and River Ken Cottage (1,802 m), Craigengillan Cottage (887 m), Craigengillan (970 m), Stroanpatrick (1,959 m), Smittons (1,248 m), Bridgemark (1,874 m), Muirdrochwood 1 (1,080 m), Muirdrochwood 2 (1,068 m), Knowehead Cottage and Kendoon Cabin (1,807 m), Marscalloch Cottage (1,706 m), Nether Loskie (1,761 m), Furmiston (1,258 m), Marbrack Cottage (1,867 m), and Marbrack (1,917 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.

- 2.2.8. There are a number of operational wind farms within the local area. The closest of these include Windy Rig wind farm, located approximately 3.3 km north of the site, and Windy Standard I and II, which lie on higher ground approximately 5.1 – 5.5 km to the north. Further information on these operational wind farms, together with the other operational or proposed wind farms in the wider area, is provided in **Section 2.4** and associated **Table 2.1** towards the end of this Chapter.

Designations

- 2.2.9. **Figure 2.3** shows sites with environmental designations within 10 km of the Proposed Varied Development. A brief summary of the designations within the wider locality is provided below, with full descriptions provided in the relevant technical chapters of this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.
- 2.2.10. 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, Craigengillan, lying approximately 15.4 km to the north-west.
- 2.2.11. 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.
- 2.2.12. 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 hills, as well as the Glenken Valley. Part of the site, at its north-western edge, lies within this Regional Scenic Area. The western most part of the Thornhill Uplands Regional Scenic Area is located approximately 7.4 km to the east.
- 2.2.13. The nearest statutory ecological designation is the Cleugh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which lies approximately 4 km to the south and is designated for its unimproved lowland neutral grassland. Dundough Wood, approximately 300 m to the south of the site, is listed in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. There are a further two

¹ Approximate measurements are taken from nearest turbine tower to the nearest façade of the habitable part of the residential building in each case.

SSSIs located within 10 km of the site; Hannaston Wood, located approximately 8.5 km south-west, and Water of Ken Woods, located approximately 9.5 km south-west.

- 2.2.14. 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 that covers much of Galloway Forest Park, part of which extends along the Polmaddy Burn valley and over Dundough Hill and includes land to the south of Marscalloch Hill.
- 2.2.15. 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;
 - Dundough 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.
- 2.2.16. 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 several locally designed archaeological features, is denoted as an Archaeological Sensitive Area in the adopted Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (2019).
- 2.2.17. There are no Inventoried Battlefields, Inventoried Gardens and Designed Landscapes, or World Heritage Sites within 15 km of the site; however, Loch Doon Castle, a Property in Care, is situated approximately 12.8 km west of the site. 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

- 2.2.18. The NatureScot (2019) character assessment records that the majority of the site and all the proposed turbines are located within Landscape Character Type (LCT 178) 'Southern Uplands with Forest - Dumfries & Galloway'. Its key characteristics are described as:
- Large, smooth dome-shaped hills with large scale dark green forests on slopes and over lower summits.
 - Predominantly simple, gently rolling landform.

- Some areas of more complex and smaller-scale landscapes, with steep slopes enclosing heads of valleys and/or where uplands remain open.
- Changing landscapes with large scale forestry operations and wind farm development.
- Forested areas dominated by Sitka Spruce, interspersed with mixed conifers and broadleaf planting, and undergoing felling and replanting in large coupes.
- Wind farms are a key characteristic in some areas.
- Expansive scale.

2.2.19. The remainder of the site is covered by LCT 160 – ‘Narrow Wooded River Valley - Dumfries & Galloway’ and LCT 165 – ‘Upper Dale - Dumfries & Galloway’. LCT 160 is characterised by narrow, incised valleys with wooded slopes that enclose pasture floors. These valleys feature small pastures and arable fields, which are enclosed by hedges and fences in the lower reaches and by drystone dykes in the upper reaches. The dominant vegetation is broadleaf woodlands, with conifers present on the higher slopes. The valleys are lush and trough-shaped, with pasture and arable floors enclosed by deciduous wooded slopes. Meandering rivers are accompanied by riparian trees and woodlands, particularly in the lower reaches. LCT 165, in contrast, is characterised by a dominant agricultural landscape, with woodlands less extensive. Key characteristics of this LCT include wide valleys, open long views, and wide scale wind farm development characteristic of some adjacent upland fringes and backdrop skylines.

2.2.20. At a local level, the Proposed Varied Development site falls within the landscape covered by the Dumfries and Galloway Council Wind Farm Landscape Sensitivity Study (DGWLSS) (2025), which establishes 25 Assessment Units (AU) for the Dumfries and Galloway area.

2.2.21. Three AUs as defined within DGWLSS cover the site, 22: Southern Uplands with Forest, 4: Narrow Valleys, and 9: Upper Dale (Valley). These are equivalent to the NatureScot (2019) LCTs 178: Southern Uplands with Forest – Dumfries & Galloway, 160: Narrow Wooded River Valley – Dumfries & Galloway and 165: Upper Dale – Dumfries & Galloway.

2.2.22. The turbines of the Proposed Varied Development are entirely located within the Southern Uplands with Forest AU. Some of the ancillary development is located within the Upper Dale AU and some of the access track passing through the Narrow Valleys AU.

2.2.23. For the Southern Uplands with Forest AU, the DGWLSS notes that:

“The Southern Uplands with Forest (22) comprises expansive, gently undulating upland plateaux of smoothly rounded hills. A similar landscape extends into neighbouring Scottish Borders in the Craik Forest area and into East Ayrshire north of the Carsphairn area. Occasional more well-defined hills occur close to the Moffat and Dalwhat Glens on the outer edges of these uplands and these are more prominent in views from surrounding roads and settlement than the more distant and more simple gently undulating interior of these uplands. Extensive productive coniferous forestry masks landform and there is little open ground with this largely confined to areas of grass moorland within valleys and the

higher hill tops and ridges. Operational wind farm development is a key feature within the Carsphairn, Ken and Ewe Hill areas of this Assessment Unit."

2.3. Site Description

2.3.1. 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 381 m at Marscalloch Hill in the south-western part of the site and 401 m at Craigengillan Hill in the northern part of the site.

2.3.2. The site covers an area of approximately 752 hectares (ha) and is centred on approximate national grid reference (eastings) 262319 and (northings) 593591.

Land Use

2.3.3. 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 in their second rotation.

2.3.4. 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. As with the Consented Development, the Proposed Varied Development's design has sought to utilise the existing forestry tracks as far as practical.

Geological Features

2.3.5. 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.

2.3.6. 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. Further details on the geology and peat present on site are provided in **Chapter 12: Geology and Peat**.

Hydrology

2.3.7. There are several 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.

- 2.3.8. The 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.
- 2.3.9. There are many small areas at risk of surface flooding within the site boundary. The north and north-east of the site boundary is in close proximity to the Poldores Burn and Polifferie Burn flood risk areas, respectively. Further details on the hydrological and hydrogeological resources within and surrounding the site are presented in **Chapter 13: Hydrology and Hydrogeology**.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.3.10. There are 26 recorded cultural heritage features within the site as detailed in **Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage**. The Craigengillan burial cairn, which is a Scheduled Monument, lies within the plantation within the north-eastern part of the site, to the north of the Craigengillan Burn on land that slopes to the south. Of the remaining 25 non-designated assets within the site, only 10 have not been destroyed by forestry activity. The remaining 15 assets are within plantation and no evidence is apparent in LiDAR or aerial imagery. These are assumed to have been destroyed by forestry deep ploughing. Most of these are from the post medieval to 19th century period and relate to features such as sheep enclosures.

2.4 Cumulative Developments

Lorg Wind Farm 132 kV Grid Connection

- 2.3.11. In February 2019, ScottishPower Energy Networks (SPEN) issued a Scoping Report for the proposed pole mounted 132 kilovolt (kV) electricity line to connect the Lorg wind farm and Longburn wind farm to a point near Holm Hill approximately 7 km to the north-west of the Proposed Varied Development site. A Scoping Opinion was issued for this scheme in April 2019.
- 2.3.12. The Longburn wind farm scheme was refused at appeal in May 2019, however SPEN has since continued with the planning and assessment work on the same route to provide the connection for the approved Lorg wind farm. SPEN submitted a Section 37 application for the 132 kV grid connection in November 2025, which is currently under determination (Energy Consents Unit Ref: ECU00001789). The proposed route, totalling approximately 17.5 km from Lorg wind farm to the proposed Holm Hill Substation, passes through the narrowest part of the site within the vicinity of Black Burn Bridge and Craigengillan Burn. As with the Consented Development, it is anticipated that the Proposed Varied Development will connect into this line.

Onshore Wind

- 2.3.13. **Figure 8.20** shows the locations of other nearby onshore wind farm developments, including those that are operational, under construction, consented, or in planning within 15 km of the site at the time of assessment (March 2026). Potential cumulative effects

with these developments have been assessed throughout the EIA Report, where there is sufficient information.

- 2.3.14. Information on operational and proposed wind farms within 15 km of the site is provided in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1 – Cumulative Wind Developments within 15 km the Site

Name	Number of Turbines	Tip Height of Turbines (m)	Approximate Distance and Direction from Site*	Status
Quantans Hill	14	200	0.75 km west	In Planning
Windy Rig	12	125	3.3 km north	Operational
Manquhill	8	200	4.1 km east	Consented
Cornharrow	7	200	4.1 km east	Consented
Cornharrow (revised scheme)	7	220	4.1 km east	In Planning
Windy Standard II	30	100 – 119.5	5.1 km north	Operational
Glenshimmeroch (revised scheme)	9	200	5.3 km south-east	Consented
Windy Standard I	36	53.5	5.5 km north	Operational
Windy Standard I Repower	8	200	5.5 km north	Consented
Windy Standard III	20	125.5 - 180	6.1 km north-west	Under Construction
Troston Loch	14	149.9	6.2 km east	Consented
Afton	25	118	6.3 km north	Operational

Name	Number of Turbines	Tip Height of Turbines (m)	Approximate Distance and Direction from Site*	Status
Lorg (revised scheme)	10	200	6.3 km north	Consented
Wether Hill	14	91	6.3 km east	Operational
Margree	9	220	7.4 km south-east	Consented
Euchanhead	19	230	7.5 km north-east	In Planning
Divot Hill	9	200	7.7 km south-east	Consented
South Kyle	50	150	7.8 km north-west	Operational
Sanquhar II	44	149 - 200	8.3 km north-east	Under Construction
Benbrack	15	149.9	9.1 km north-west	Under Construction
Pencloe	19	125	9.3 km north	Under Construction
Torrs Hill	2	100	9.5 km south-west	Operational
Knockman Hill	5	81	9.7 km south-east	Consented
Appin	9	200	10.1 km north-east	In Planning
Enoch Hill 2	2	149.9	10.7 km north-west	Consented
Pencloe Extension	5	149.9	11.5 km north	In Planning

Name	Number of Turbines	Tip Height of Turbines (m)	Approximate Distance and Direction from Site*	Status
Enoch Hill	15	149.9	11.7 km north-west	Under Construction
Hare Hill Repowering and Extension	23	150 - 200	12.1 km north-east	In Planning
Blackcraig Hill	23	110	12.2 km south-east	Operational
Whiteside Hill	10	121	12.2 km north-east	Operational
Hare Hill Extension	35	91	12.6 km north-east	Operational
South Kyle II	11	200	12.7 km north-west	In Planning
Sanquhar	9	130	13.3 km north-east	Operational
Fell	8	220	13.5 km south-east	Consented
Hare Hill	20	63.5	13.6 km north-east	Operational
Cloud Hill	11	180	14 km north-east	Consented
Rowancraig	6	180	15.2 km north-east	In Planning

*Measurements taken from nearest infrastructure elements.

- 2.3.15. Further detailed discussion on the approach to cumulative assessment is presented in each technical chapter as relevant.

2.5. Summary

- 2.3.16. This Chapter has provided a description of the site and the surrounding area, alongside details of cumulative developments within the wider locality.

References

Dumfries and Galloway Council (2020). Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations, Supplementary Guidance.

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<https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-11/dgwllss-smaller-wind-turbines-nov-2025.pdf>

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definition
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AU	Assessment Units
DGWLSS	The Dumfries and Galloway Wind Farm Landscape Sensitivity Study
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ha	Hectares
km	Kilometres
kV	Kilovolt
LLA	Local Landscape Area
m	Metres
SPEN	ScottishPower Energy Networks
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest