

Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan

Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development



SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE FOR WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

CONTENTS

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE FOR WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT	1
CONTENTS.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION	3
CONTEXT	3
PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE	4
DEFINITION OF WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL APPROACH	5
2. COMHAIRLE SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR WIND FARMS.....	8
3. DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR WIND FARMS	10
ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND BENEFITS.....	10
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT.....	11
AVIATION AND DEFENCE	12
NOISE.....	13
COMMUNITY AMENITY	14
NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENTS.....	15
HISTORIC RESOURCES.....	15
NATURAL HERITAGE	17
PEAT AND SOIL RESOURCES.....	18
WATER RESOURCES.....	18
BORROW PITS	19
REPOWERING.....	19
PLANNING OBLIGATIONS	20
DECOMMISSIONING	21
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS.....	21
RADAR IMPACT	22

4. DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR ALL OTHER DEVELOPMENTS.....	23
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT.....	23
AVIATION AND DEFENCE.....	24
NOISE AND COMMUNITY AMENITY.....	25
NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENTS.....	26
HISTORIC RESOURCES.....	27
NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES.....	28
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS.....	28
APPENDICES.....	29
Appendix 1 Maps.....	29
Appendix 2 Scottish Planning Policy – Spatial Framework.....	6
Appendix 3 Additional Sources of Information.....	7

1. INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The impact of climate change on the environment is an increasingly urgent issue with several countries declaring a climate emergency. The Scottish First Minister declared Scotland's climate emergency in April 2019. In its objective to decarbonise the whole energy system, the Scottish Government has committed to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 (compared with 1990) and to a net-zero emissions target of all greenhouse gases by 2045¹ set under the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting the increase of onshore wind in the right places to help meet the target of Net Zero, ending our contribution to Climate Change. These objectives are outlined in the Scottish Government's ['Onshore Wind Policy Statement' 2017](#), the ['Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032'](#) and ['Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement 2021'](#). The decarbonisation of Scotland's electricity sector has been driven by our rich natural resources, a supportive approach to planning, a drive to involve local communities in decisions that affect them, supportive market frameworks, and rapidly declining prices of renewable technology globally - with wind and solar now the lowest cost forms of new generation.

The Outer Hebrides can be at the forefront of the transition to low carbon energy and will play their part in the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan to reduce Scotland's emissions. The first [National Islands Plan *Plana Nàiseanta nan Eilean* \(2019\)](#) contains a number of Strategic Objectives, the ninth Objective includes the following commitments:

- create net zero emission islands and provide global climate change leadership;
- unleash the potential of renewable energy as both a way to mitigate climate change and as a driver of sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The Scottish Government's central purpose is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. Scottish Planning Policy (2014) introduces a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development and states that "the planning system should support economically, environmentally and socially sustainable places by enabling development that balances the costs and benefits of a proposal over the longer term. The aim is to achieve the right development in the right place; it is not to allow development at any cost." The planning system should promote business and industrial development that increases economic activity while safeguarding and enhancing the natural and built environments as national assets. SPP requires that planning authorities through their Development Plans "should seek to ensure an area's full potential for electricity and heat from renewable sources is achieved, in line with national climate change targets, giving due regard to relevant environmental, community and cumulative impact considerations."

¹ Progress towards the targets is measured against 1990 levels of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide and 1995 levels of hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulphur hexafluoride and nitrogen trifluoride.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE

The purpose of this Supplementary Guidance (SG) is to deliver the wind energy aspects of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan Policy EI 8: Energy and Heat Resources, and to provide further detail through policies and additional advice to assist in planning for the provision of all scales of wind energy development in the Outer Hebrides.

This Supplementary Guidance aims to:

- *set out the Comhairle's definition of a 'wind farm';*
- *provide applicants with a guide to the areas where the principle of onshore 'wind farms' (larger turbine developments) may be acceptable;*
- *provide applicants with a guide to the areas where the principle of onshore 'wind farms' (larger turbine developments) will not be acceptable;*
- *set out development policies for the assessment of all scales of wind turbine.*

FORMAT OF THE GUIDANCE

The Supplementary Guidance consists of:

- **a spatial strategy for 'wind farm' development;**
- **development policies for 'wind farm' development;**
- **development policies for all other scales of turbine sizes; and**
- **additional guidance on radar impacts for all scales of turbine.**

Developers must consider all aspects of this Supplementary Guidance including the Spatial Strategy and the relevant Development Policies, along with the accompanying maps and the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan, when preparing a planning application.

Developers are encouraged to refer to this guidance and engage with the Comhairle at an early stage in the development process. The key components of this guidance must be addressed by applicants in preparing planning applications for wind energy developments, at the appropriate scale.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This Supplementary Guidance has been screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and following consultation with the SEA Consultation Authorities, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has determined, using the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, that this Guidance is not likely to have any significant environmental effects and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is therefore not required.

DEFINITION OF WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL APPROACH

The Comhairle defines a 'wind farm' as two or more turbines of $\geq 70\text{m}$ (tip height).

A Spatial Strategy has been developed to direct where wind farm development may be sited in the Outer Hebrides. The Spatial Strategy for this Supplementary Guidance is based on the framework approach (see Appendix 2) set out in Scottish Planning Policy, augmented by constraints (both statutory and non-statutory) which have a bearing on wind turbine developments in the Outer Hebrides including: consented developments; low landscape capacity for turbine development; and the setting of specific historic assets. Further constraints will inform the consideration of planning applications including: meteorological interests; aviation; defence and safeguarding.

The Comhairle reserves the right to apply the Spatial Strategy and the 'wind farm' Development Policies to other proposals where the development is considered to be of a scale akin to a 'wind farm' but not classified as such in terms of the above definition, e.g., a group of 20 turbines at 50m tip height. Spatial advice is also applicable for all scales of development (including individual turbines) in response to potential impacts on radar operations.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Local planning policy is provided in the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted in 2018. The Comhairle has authority to determine wind energy development applications up to 50 megawatts. Applications in excess of 50 megawatts are considered by the Scottish Ministers under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. The Comhairle as principal consultee makes an assessment based on the LDP and other material considerations and then provides a recommendation to the Scottish Government Ministers for their determination.

This revised Supplementary Guidance supersedes the previous Supplementary Guidance (November 2018) and has the same statutory basis as the LDP and will be used in conjunction with LDP Policies when determining planning applications.

All applications for development in the Outer Hebrides will be assessed against the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan, in particular for matters not covered specifically in this guidance: Policy DS1 Development Strategy; Policy PD5 Open Space and Outdoor Sports Facilities; Policy PD6 Compatibility of Neighbouring Uses; Policy EI 4 Waste Management; Policy ED5 Minerals; and Policy NBH3 Trees and Woodlands.

This Supplementary Guidance will be applied to deliver the following Local Development Plan Policy:

POLICY E18: ENERGY AND HEAT RESOURCES

The Comhairle will support proposals that contribute to meeting the targets and objectives of the National Planning Framework 3, the Climate Change Act, and the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan in relation to electricity grid reinforcement, infrastructure and renewable energy generation.

Development proposals for all scales of onshore wind energy development will be assessed against the Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development. The Comhairle supports the principle of wind farm development in Areas with Potential for Wind Farms (Map 1) subject to a satisfactory assessment against other policies in this plan and the Supplementary Guidance. Many of these areas, particularly in the Uists, will however be constrained by MOD radar. The Supplementary Guidance will give further details of the radar constraints. The Comhairle will also consider wind farm development in Areas of Constraint, with potential in certain circumstances (Map 1) subject to a satisfactory assessment against other policies in this plan and the Supplementary Guidance.

The Comhairle will not support wind farm developments in Areas Unacceptable for Wind Farms (Map 1).

Proposals for all other renewable energy projects and oil and gas operations (including land based infrastructure associated with offshore projects) will be required to demonstrate all the following:

- a) appropriate location, siting and design including the technical rationale for the choice of site;*
- b) no significant adverse impact (including cumulative) on: landscape, townscape and visual aspects; natural, built and cultural heritage resources; the water environment; peatlands; aviation, defence and telecommunications transmitting and receiving systems, e.g., broadband; public health and safety, and amenity (including noise); neighbouring land uses, transport management and core paths;*
- c) appropriate decommissioning and site reinstatement arrangements;*
- d) phasing arrangements, where appropriate;*
- e) the contribution towards meeting national energy supply targets and local economic impact.*

Micro generation renewable energy developments, not subject to the Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development, will be required to meet criteria a) to c) above and all the following criteria:*

- f) the proposal does not have a significant adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impact on residential amenity; and*
- g) colour, form, finish and height are appropriate to the setting and are designed to minimise visual impact and distraction; and*
- h) sufficient information is provided to enable a balanced assessment of any other likely effects of the development.*

The type, scale and size of the proposed development will have a significant effect on the way the Comhairle will consider an application and the level of accompanying information that will be required. Conditions and, where necessary, a planning agreement may be used to control the detail of the development. Non-permanent elements of a development will be granted permission consistent with their lifespan and/or projected period of use.

In line with the Zero Waste Plan the Comhairle will support 'energy from waste' developments subject to wider Plan policies.

Opportunities to co-locate or connect with district heating schemes or heat producers should be investigated.

**micro generation is the production of heat (less than 45-kilowatt capacity) and/or electricity (less than 50 kilowatt capacity) from zero or low carbon source technologies.*

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Scottish Government policy on renewable and wind energy development is mainly set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Scottish Planning Policy. The Scottish Government has set targets for the production of energy from renewable sources and the requirement for planning authorities to provide a spatial framework for wind energy developments (See Appendix 2). Online renewables planning advice provides further detailed guidance for development (see Appendix 3 Additional Sources of Information). Developers should refer to these documents when preparing any application (in addition to this Supplementary Guidance) as they are material considerations in determining planning applications.

COMMUNITY GENERATION

Though appropriate development of renewable energy resources from all sectors is welcomed the Comhairle is particularly keen to see communities and community landowning bodies realise the potential of wind energy power generation and the benefits associated. The Scottish Government plans to ensure that community-led renewables continue to grow as part of the transition to net zero, SPP states that plans and decision-making should generally support and sustain fragile and dispersed communities through provision for appropriate development, especially community-owned energy. The Scottish Government supports community involvement in renewable energy and has set targets of 1GW of community and locally owned energy by 2020 and 2GW by 2030. The Comhairle fully endorses this commitment whilst recognising that this is not a planning position and all planning applications must be assessed having regard to valid planning matters only. Who the applicant is, is not a material planning consideration for Planning.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

There are opportunities for communities to benefit significantly from financial arrangements entered into with wind energy developers, however, community benefits packages are not a material planning consideration and therefore are not taken account of in planning decisions.

The Scottish Government encourages the renewables industry and communities to ensure community benefits packages are set up in a way which will support and promote local decision making, accountability and generate a lasting legacy and has produced by SG '[Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments](#)' (2019) to ensure that communities adjacent to renewables projects are enabled to participate fully in and benefit from Scotland's low carbon transition. The Scottish Government's [Onshore Wind Policy Statement](#) (2017) encourages "developers to renegotiate community benefits and/ or shared ownership arrangements or introduce new discussions on these aspects at an early stage of any repowering application or decision, and to do so in line with good practice principles."

2. COMHAIRLE SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR WIND FARMS

In line with Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) the Comhairle has undertaken to develop a Spatial Strategy which aims to identify areas which may be appropriate to accommodate wind farms development and areas which will be unacceptable for wind farms. This Spatial Strategy and other geographical guidance set out in this Supplementary Guidance directs development for wind farms which are defined as any development proposals for two or more turbines with a tip height of 70m or more. The Comhairle reserves the right to consider other proposals where the development is considered to be of a scale akin to a 'wind farm' against the Spatial Strategy.

The Comhairle has prepared a Spatial Strategy to guide wind farms, and this is set out in Map 1 Comhairle Spatial Strategy, which identifies a series of areas with regards to the potential development of wind farms:

1. Areas with Potential for Wind Farms;
2. Areas of Constraint (Wind Farms may be appropriate in certain circumstances);
3. Areas Unacceptable for Wind Farms.

The Spatial Strategy has been determined by combining SPP's spatial framework (see Appendix 2) and a number of other constraints and considerations, which are collated in Map 2, Map 3 and Maps 4a-e, and detailed in Development Policies. Map 1 identifies the remaining areas once all these combined constraints have been plotted. Maps 1, 2 and 3 and 4a-e set out the key designations and safeguarding areas. Developers should use this information to identify the designations relevant to their proposals.

It should be borne in mind that smaller scale developments (not defined as a wind farm) may, subject to assessment against policy, be considered throughout the Outer Hebrides and are not confined to 'Areas with Potential for Wind Farms'. As indicated by the Maps there is likely to be limited capacity for future wind farm development of any significant scale. There are very few areas of any significant size that are considered constraint free which could reasonably accommodate any further large wind farm consents. In these areas visibility to MOD radar will be a further consideration. The Comhairle's Spatial Strategy does not convey viability or feasibility.

COMHAIRLE SPATIAL STRATEGY

Areas with Potential for Wind Farms

The Comhairle supports the principle of wind farm development in *Areas with Potential for Wind Farms* subject to a satisfactory assessment against the Local Development Plan and this Supplementary Guidance. These areas are outlined in Map 1 and are free from identified constraints.

Areas of Constraint

The Comhairle will consider wind farm development in '*Areas of Constraint*', with potential in certain circumstances (as identified in Map 1) subject to a satisfactory assessment against the Local Development Plan and this Supplementary Guidance.

Areas Unacceptable for Wind Farms

The Comhairle will not support wind farm developments in *Areas Unacceptable for Wind Farms* (as identified in Map 1).

Comhairle Spatial Strategy for Wind farms*			
<i>*Any two or more turbines greater than or equal to 70m tip height.</i>			
Reference	Policy	Identified in	Identified Constraints
GROUP 1: Areas Unacceptable for Wind Farms	The Comhairle will not support wind farm development in these areas.	MAP 1	National Scenic Areas - MAP 2
GROUP 2: Areas of Constraint	The Comhairle will consider wind farm development in <i>Areas of Constraint (with potential in certain circumstances)</i> subject to a satisfactory assessment against the Local Development Plan and this Supplementary Guidance	MAP 1	World Heritage Sites; European Protected Sites; National Protected Sites including Sites identified in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes; Wild Land; Carbon Rich Soils; and Community Separation (2km) - MAP 2 Consented Developments Low Landscape Capacity - MAP 3
GROUP 3: Areas with Potential for Wind farms <i>(these are areas outwith groups 1 and 2).</i>	The Comhairle supports the principle of wind farm development in <i>Areas with Potential for Wind Farms</i> subject to a satisfactory assessment against the Local Development Plan, this Supplementary Guidance, and relevant National, European and International Guidance.	MAP 1	No identified constraints.

3. DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR WIND FARMS

In addition to the Spatial Strategy, the following Policies will apply to the consideration of all wind farm applications, i.e., any development proposals for two or more turbines with a tip height of 70m or more.

Links to sources of information or documents cited in these Policies are listed in Appendix 3.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

An assessment of net economic impacts* may be required in line with the Scottish Government's Draft Advice on Net Economic impact and Planning. Pre-application discussion should take place at an early stage/ the outset to establish if this issue will be a material consideration during the determination of the application and the extent of the information on net economic benefits that will be required to accompany the planning application.

In line with SPP, the National Planning Framework, and the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan, the Comhairle will seek to secure positive net economic impact accruing directly within the Outer Hebrides.

A policy principle of SPP is that the planning system should give due weight to net economic benefit of proposed development. The key criterion in assessing the economic impact of a proposed development is to estimate the economic position where the development proceeds, and then compare it with the estimated economic position if the proposal does not go ahead. The difference between these two estimates is the **net economic benefit of the development². Scottish Planning Policy recognises that Planning Authorities, in determining planning applications for energy infrastructure developments, will consider "net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities."*

² It is therefore possible for the net economic impact of a development to be negative (i.e., the development results in a net economic *cost* rather net economic *benefit*), if the economic position when the development proceeds is less favourable than the economic position when the development does not go ahead. The principles which underpin the economic assessment of activities from the viewpoint of the public sector are set out in HM Treasury's ['The Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in central government'](#) (2020), which this advice draws from. Definition from the Scottish Government's ['Draft Advice on Net Economic Benefit and Planning'](#) (2016).

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

In line with the provisions of Policy NBH1 Landscape of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (LDP), developers will be expected to demonstrate that wind farm proposals and associated infrastructure (including access tracks, grid connection, control equipment) will not have an unacceptable significant visual or landscape impact on the character of the Outer Hebrides (including cumulative impact) and that good siting and design has been utilised to ensure impacts are limited. Wind farms should be sited and designed so that adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity are minimised. If wind farms are sited and designed well the capacity of the landscape to incorporate this type of development is maximised. Advice on [‘Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape’ Version 3a \(2017\)](#) is provided by NatureScot.

Wind farms will not be acceptable within National Scenic Areas (NSAs). Any proposals with a potential impact on NSAs will be assessed for any likely impact on the special qualities of the NSA.

Wind farm proposals within areas of wild land, as identified on the 2014 NatureScot Maps of Wild Land Areas³ (and shown on Map 2), are unlikely to be supported unless it can be demonstrated that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design, or other mitigation. An assessment on the impacts on wild land will be required and should be carried out in line with NatureScot guidance [Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas – technical guidance](#). Assessment may also be applicable to development out with mapped wild land areas which could have significant effects on the qualities of Wild Land Areas.

A proposal will also be assessed for its likely impact on:

- areas of Low Landscape Capacity⁴ (Map 3);
- key characteristics of landscape character types⁵;
- views of the wind farm from within and on approaches to settlements, (visual amenity from settlements 2km);
- views from popular public viewpoints, transport routes, the core path network and recognised visitor locations.

Wind farms should be located at a distance of at least 2km from settlements.

³ Wild Land Area descriptions and maps (NatureScot 2014) <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land>

⁴ ‘Landscape Capacity Study for Onshore Wind Energy Developments in the Western Isles’ by Benson, J.F., Scott, K.E., Anderson, C., Macfarlane, R., Dunsford, H. and Turner K. (2004). Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 042 (ROAME No. F02LC04). The basic approach adopted is that both physical and perceptual landscape criteria are used to assess landscape sensitivities, visibility assessments are added to assess overall sensitivities, and values are then added to evaluate landscape capacities. It is noted that technology and scale have changed considerably since this study was originally undertaken. The document is available in digital format on request from the Comhairle Planning Service.

⁵ [Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions \(revised SNH 2019\)](#), [Landscape Character Assessment: Outer Hebrides - Landscape Evolution and Influences | NatureScot](#)
Please note that on 24 August 2020 Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) changed its brand name to NatureScot.

Power lines connecting the individual turbines to the on-site sub-stations are required to be underground and those connecting the wind farm sub-station to the electricity distribution system will require sensitive treatment.

Applicants are advised to contact the Comhairle as early as possible to agree key viewpoints for the assessments required to address landscape and visual impacts, along with the scope of the existing and consented wind turbine developments to be considered in a cumulative visual assessment. Visual information should be presented in a way which communicates as realistically as possible the actual visual impact of the proposal. Account will be taken of the guidance contained in '[Visual representation of wind farms: Guidance](#)' Version 2.2 (NatureScot [formerly SNH] February 2017) and '[Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment](#)' (GLVIA3) Landscape Institute & IEMA 2013.

For wind farms that require aviation lighting, visualisations should include dusk photomontages which include representations of these lights.

AVIATION AND DEFENCE

For all applications pre-application discussion with the Comhairle Planning Service is advised to identify any potential aviation and /or defence constraint arising in relation to radar.

The impacts of developments on aviation and defence operations must be satisfactorily addressed and developers must demonstrate that aviation, defence and emergency services operations will not be compromised. This includes flight activity, navigation and surveillance systems and other air safety navigation, test or surveillance assets or systems. Consultation with: Highlands & Islands Airports Limited; the Ministry of Defence; National Air Traffic Services; Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the Comhairle should take place at the relevant stages.

When designing and siting proposals Developers should pay particular regard to:

- MOD Safeguarding Areas;
- Health & Safety Executive Safeguarding Zones;
- NATS (En Route) Plc (NERL) Safeguarding Maps;⁶;
- Department of Trade and Industry "Wind Energy and Aviation Interest – Interim Guidance";
- CAP 764 - Policy and Guidelines on Wind Turbines; Civil Aviation Authority February 2016;
- CAP 393 - The Air Navigation Order 2016 and Regulations, Civil Aviation Authority March 2021;
- CAP 670 - Air Traffic Services Safety Requirements, Civil Aviation Authority August 2019;
- Visibility to NATS, HIAL, and MOD radar and installations.⁷

The Ministry of Defence has provided the Comhairle with bespoke maps for wind turbine visibility to MOD radar in the Outer Hebrides (Maps 4a – e).

⁶ NATS safeguarding maps are available at www.nats.co.uk/windfarms

⁷ Further information available on DECC website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/renewable-energy-planning-data>

All potential applicants for Wind Turbine development across the Outer Hebrides, must submit a pre-application enquiry to the MOD via the form at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wind-farms-application-forms-for-developers>. Where the MOD has concerns about a development they have undertaken to work with the developer to look for ways to mitigate these concerns. Developers are urged to consult the MOD Safeguarding wind energy team at the earliest possible stage and maintain dialogue with them throughout the development process.

NOISE

The construction and operational phases of wind turbine developments have the potential to raise issues of noise pollution.

For all proposals the following information must be provided to allow the Comhairle to consider likely noise impacts:

- A 6 figure eastings and northings grid reference for the exact turbine(s) location and the distance between this point and the nearest noise sensitive location;
- The make, model, mast tower height and rotor diameter of the turbine.

Construction:

The Comhairle will require details on the extent of construction works, taking account of the length of construction period, proposed times, details of any borrow pit blasting and proximity to existing noise receptors. Proposals should take account of [BS5228 2009: Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites - Vibration](#); and [Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites - Noise](#), where it is believed that construction noise will be significant, a site specific noise impact assessment will be required.

Operation:

There are two noise sources associated with a turbine, the mechanical noise produced by the gearbox and that produced from the blades turning through the air. Improving technology has significantly reduced the mechanical noise generated.

Given the low levels of background noise in the Outer Hebrides the Comhairle has adopted the following limits based on the lower limits of ETSU-R-97⁸:

- a) during Day-time hours (0700-2300), 35dB LA90, 10min⁹ or the Day-time Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater;
- b) during night hours (between 23:00-07:00), 38dB LA90, 10min, or the Night Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater.

⁸ Energy Technology Support Unit incorporated within Future Energy Solutions (DEFRA)

[Energy Technology Support Unit | The National Archives](#)

⁹ LA90, 10min is calculated by measuring the A-weighted sound level over a ten minute period, disregarding the noisiest 90% of the time and taking the maximum sound level in the remaining (quietest) 10% of the time. See: [ETSU_Full_copy_Searchable_.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

These limits are the maximum allowed for a specific development and would be measured from any noise sensitive premises, assuming there are no other consented wind turbines in the areas.

If there are other consented wind turbines within the vicinity then in addition to the limits above, the developer would have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the planning authority, that the proposed development would meet the adopted cumulative limits:

- a) during Day-time hours (0700-2300), 38dB LA90, 10min or the Day-time Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater;
- b) during night hours (between 23:00-07:00), 40dB LA90, 10min, or the Night Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater.

Developers will be required to submit evidence that the noise generated from a proposed wind farm can ensure compliance with the stated noise limits in this Policy, assessed in accordance with the Department of Trade and Industry publication “The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms” (1996) and the Department of Energy and Climate Change publication “An Analysis of How Noise Impacts are considered in the Determination of Wind Farm Planning Applications” (2011) to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

COMMUNITY AMENITY

With the exception of Harris, the Outer Hebrides has a predominantly low lying landform with little tree coverage and large zones of visibility, due to the generally open vistas/terrain and lack of ground coverage. This results in wind farms being visible from settlements for a considerable distance. Wind farms should be located at a distance of at least 2km from settlements. A settlement buffer of 2km has been identified on Map 2.

Planning applications for wind farms must be accompanied by evidence that the proposals have been assessed and found to have no unacceptable significant adverse impact on community amenity including no unacceptable impact on living conditions in relation to the following:

- shadow flicker and shadow throw;
- noise (see separate policy);
- electromagnetic interference¹⁰;
- commissioning and decommissioning;
- phasing;
- ancillary developments and infrastructure;
- public access;
- Residential visual impact¹¹.

¹⁰ Wind energy developments have the potential to impact upon existing broadcasting installations. Applicants should consult with appropriate network operators to confirm the existence of any infrastructure and to assess whether the proposal would be likely to result in any interference to broadcasting. Where any such interference is likely, the applicant should put forward a technical solution to resolve the issue.

¹¹ A technical Guidance [Note 2/19 on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment \(RVAA\)](#) has been produced by the Landscape Institute - this is an essential document required for assessing whether a proposal has an unacceptable impact on living conditions.

Developers will be expected to demonstrate that wind farm proposals will have no unacceptable significant adverse impact as a result of shadow flicker and shadow throw. The effects of shadow flicker on properties and shadow throw on public roads, the Hebridean Way and paths identified in the Outer Hebrides Core Paths Plan should be calculated by the developer and may be subject to assessment by the Comhairle.

With regards to shadow flicker as per Scottish Government advice, turbines should be located at least a minimum distance equivalent to 10 times the blade diameter from any regularly occupied buildings not associated with the development and at least a minimum distance equivalent to the height of the turbine to blade tip plus 10% from public roads, or paths identified in the Outer Hebrides Core Paths Plan. Where appropriate, developers will identify properties, public roads and paths that will be affected and provide mitigation measures.

In the consideration of wind farm proposals, the Comhairle will seek to maintain and improve public access and enjoyment, in line with Local Development Plan Policies EI 7 and PD 5 in relation to countryside access and open space provision.

Planning conditions or obligations may be set regarding: noise levels; traffic management plans; commissioning and decommissioning arrangements and correction of any electro-magnetic interference.

NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENTS

All provisions of the Policy DS1 Development Strategy and Policy PD6 Compatibility of Neighbouring Uses apply in assessing the potential impact of wind farms on neighbouring developments. In addition to assessing Cumulative Impact and Community Amenity, the Comhairle will assess the impact of any wind farm development application on neighbouring land and sensitive uses, including identified LDP Proposal Sites and extant consents in the area.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

All provisions of the Policy NBH4 Built Heritage, Policy NBH5 Archaeology, and NBH6 Historic Areas of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan apply in assessing the potential impact of wind farms on the historic environment, including those not mapped or expanded upon in this guidance. In addition, the following policy provisions apply to wind farm proposals.

The implications for archaeological and built remains, historic landscapes, the historic character and associations of the wider landscape will be factors in the consideration of proposals for wind farms. Developers will be expected to demonstrate wind farm proposals and associated infrastructure

will have no unacceptable significant adverse impact on the site, context and setting¹² of historic environment assets¹³ including designated and significant undesignated assets and areas.

St Kilda World Heritage Site and Lews Castle and Lady Lever Park Inventory Garden & Designed Landscape are shown on Map 2. Wind farm proposals in these areas will not be acceptable under any circumstances.

Pre-application discussions with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Historic Environment Scotland¹⁴ are essential in order to identify any potential impact on Historic Environment assets and their settings early in the design process and what level of assessment will be appropriate. Any assessment should adequately consider: direct and indirect physical impacts; potential for cumulative effects (including the impacts of any secondary developments such as power lines, met masts, borrow pits, access tracks or transmission stations); and opportunities for responsive siting and design.

Assessments should be supported by appropriate visualisations as noted in the [Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Setting document by Historic Scotland 2016](#) and in line with the recommendations in the [Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment](#) (GLVIA3) Landscape Institute & IEMA 2013.

A proposal will also be assessed for its likely impacts on the site and setting of: Scheduled Monuments; Listed Buildings; Conservation Areas; Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes; and other historic sites as agreed with the Comhairle.

If a wind energy proposal breaks the skyline at sensitive ridgelines when viewed from the component parts of the Calanais complex or is to be sited in another location where it has the potential to impact on the setting of the complex, it will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not have a significant negative impact on the setting of the Calanais complex. The assessment requirements will be judged on a case by case basis. More prominent developments will be subject to more detailed assessment in terms of impact on the setting of Calanais.¹⁵

¹² 'Beyond the physical and visual aspects, the setting includes interaction with the natural environment; past or present social or spiritual practices, customs, traditional knowledge, use or activities and other forms of intangible cultural heritage aspects that created and form the space as well as the current and dynamic cultural, social and economic context' definition from International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Xian Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas (2005).

¹³ Historic environment assets are defined as: those identified in the Development Plan and / or national listings, schedules or registers held by Historic Environment Scotland or other competent authorities, including: conservation areas; listed buildings; historic gardens and designed landscapes; thatched buildings; sites and setting of Scheduled Monuments; and other undesignated or unscheduled assets and areas of archaeological or commemorative significance.

¹⁴ Historic Environment Policy for Scotland 2019 (HEP3) states that "...policies and strategies, and the allocation of resources, should be approached in a way that protects and promotes the historic environment."

¹⁵ ['Calanais Standing Stones: Setting Document'](#) published by HES in 2017.

NATURAL HERITAGE

All provisions of Policy NBH2 Natural Heritage and Policy NBH3 Trees and Woodland of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan apply in assessing the potential impact of wind energy developments on natural heritage, including those not mapped or expanded upon in this guidance. In addition, the following policy provisions apply to wind farm proposals.

International, European and National sites are identified as areas of constraint and set out in Map 2. In these areas wind farms may be appropriate in certain circumstances but further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation. The exception to this are National Scenic Areas, where wind farms will not be acceptable under any circumstances.

It is important to assess whether there are processes or pathways by which a proposal lying out with a designated site may still influence the sites 'qualifying interests'¹⁶. For proposals within such 'supporting habitat', further assessment may be required to establish impacts on the integrity of sites. Applicants should refer to [Assessing connectivity with special protection areas | NatureScot](#) (NatureScot, [formerly SNH], Version 3 - June 2016) which sets out guidance to assess whether there is connectivity between the proposal and the qualifying interests of the site.

A Habitats Regulations Appraisal may be required for certain developments, and additional information on this can be found in Appendix 3.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal incorporating a Phase 1 Habitat Survey is typically required as a baseline to further survey work and will map habitats and species, including birds likely to be present in and around the site.

In relation to other nationally important mapped environmental interests, the policy principles relating to 'carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peat-land' are outlined in Policy 'Soil Resources' and for 'areas of wild land' as shown on the NatureScot Map of Wild Land Areas 2014 in Development Policy 'Landscape and Visual Impact'.

Good practice should be followed to ensure that non-native invasive species¹⁷ are not introduced, moved, or spread on and off the proposal site.

Additional guidance on natural heritage considerations is included in Appendix 3.

¹⁶ Further information on the qualifying interests and the conservation objectives of each site are available on NatureScot's website using the [Sitelink](#) facility.

¹⁷ Guidance available on <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/biodiversity/invasive-non-native-species/>

PEAT AND SOIL RESOURCES

Proposals will be required to adhere to Local Development Plan Policy EI 5 relating to soil resources. For wind farms, developers will also be expected to provide geotechnical and hydrological, ecological and peat management information in support of applications, identifying the presence of peat at each site and how the development is designed to avoid the disturbance of peat, including the risk of landslide connected to any development work. (Further guidance is provided in the Scottish Government's ['Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments'](#) (April 2017).

As set out in the SPP Spatial Framework, areas of carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitats as identified in the [National soil map of Scotland](#) will be subject to significant protection. Wind farm proposals within areas of carbon rich soils, deep peat, and priority peatland habitat (as identified in the Spatial Strategy and set out in the NatureScot [Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map](#) may be supported if it can be demonstrated that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.

Where there is evidence of peat or other carbon rich soils at a proposed development site, applicants will be required to utilise the Scottish Government's [Carbon Calculator](#) to determine the net impacts or benefits of the proposed development.

Developers will be required to undertake peat (depth) surveys for their development proposals, which should inform the siting and design of wind turbines and all associated infrastructure to demonstrate how impacts to peat and carbon have been first avoided and then minimised through mitigation and micrositing (Further guidance is available in the Scottish Government's [Guidance on Developments on Peatland, Peatland Survey \(2017\)](#)).

Developers should investigate the scope to utilise piled foundations and floating tracks on areas of deep peat or carbon rich soil in order to minimise disturbance. Mitigation may also take the form of habitat restoration or habitat improvements, which may be achieved in areas of the site not being developed, and possibly on other peatland sites.

The carrying out of mitigating work may be the subject of a planning condition or agreement.

WATER RESOURCES

Proposals for wind farms (and associated infrastructure) will be required to accord with Local Development Plan Policies EI 1, EI 2 and EI 3 relating to flooding; water and wastewater; and water environment; including water quality for ground water, surface water (including water supplies), groundwater dependant terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE) and aquatic ecosystems. Developments should be designed to avoid impacts on the water environment wherever possible. Where impacts on the water environment cannot be avoided then developers will be expected to demonstrate how these impacts will be mitigated. There should remain a minimum buffer of 50m between any works and the water environment.

To ensure that any impact on GWDTE are assessed a Phase 1 habitat survey should accompany a planning application. This should identify wetland type and relevant habitats within the following minimum distances of development:

- Within 100m radius of all excavations less than 1m in depth;
- Within 250m of all excavations deeper than 1m.

Electromagnetic fields have been shown to have the potential to affect the behaviour of migratory fish such as salmon, sea trout and European eels. To minimise this risk and avoid disturbance to water courses that may host migratory fish species, consideration should be given to locating turbine bases and power cabling away from water courses.

The carrying out of mitigating work may be the subject of a planning condition or agreement.

BORROW PITS

Any requirement for (temporary) borrow pits will require to accord with LDP Policy ED5 Minerals.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states (Paragraph 243) that “Borrow pits should only be permitted if there are significant environmental or economic benefits compared to obtaining material from local quarries; they are time-limited; tied to a particular project and appropriate reclamation measures are in place.” Applicants will be required to provide sufficient information to address this Policy statement and the requirements of LDP Policy ED5 Minerals. Additionally, a map of all proposed borrow pits must be submitted along with a site specific plan of each borrow pit detailing the:

- Location, size, depths and dimensions of each borrow pit;
- Existing water table and volumes of all dewatering;
- Proposed drainage and settlement traps, turf and overburden removal and storage areas;
- Restoration profile, nature and volume of infill materials, and, if wetland features form part of the restoration, 25 year management proposals.

The impact of such facilities (including dust, blasting and impact on water) must be assessed in accordance with [Planning Advice Note PAN 50 Controlling the Environmental Effects of Surface Mineral Workings](#) (Paragraph 53 of PAN 50). In relation to groundwater (Paragraph 52 of PAN 50) information only needs to be provided where there is an existing water abstraction or ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE) within 250 m of the borrow pit.

REPOWERING

‘Repowering’ means renewing existing power plants that produce renewable energy including the full or partial replacement of installations or operation systems and equipment for the purposes of replacing capacity or increasing the efficiency or capacity of the installation¹⁸.

¹⁸ Relevant guidance on life extension and decommissioning can be found at: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/219689/sepa-guidance-regarding-life-extension-and-decommissioning-of-onshore-windfarms.pdf>

Possible modifications on wind turbines are limited, thus repowering affects essentially the entire wind farm. In short, repowering is using the existing renewable energy resources on site more efficiently in a technically adapted or improved manner. Repowering generally involves the replacement of existing wind turbines with fewer, larger turbines, and taking advantage of opportunities to combine wind generation with energy storage. Proposals to repower existing wind farms which are already in suitable sites where impacts have been shown to be capable of mitigation will maintain or enhance installed capacity, underpinning renewable energy generation targets.

Scottish Government in principle supports repowering at existing wind farms. The Comhairle supports the principle of repowering in appropriate circumstances. Applications for the repowering of a wind farm will be considered against this Supplementary Guidance. Areas identified for wind farms shall, subject to a satisfactory policy assessment, be suitable for use in perpetuity, although consents will continue to be time limited. The operating period of an individual wind farm is a matter which developers can consider and discuss prior to the submission of an application. It should be noted that this does not remove the need for decommissioning provisions, where considered appropriate¹⁹.

Repowering schemes will be treated as new planning applications and will be assessed on a case by case basis. The current use of a site as an operating wind farm will be a significant material consideration in deciding an application. When considering new proposals, the Comhairle will take into account the extent to which the proposals make use of existing infrastructure and limit the need for additional footprint; and will balance this with all of the policy considerations set out in the OHLDP and this Supplementary Guidance. This will include consideration of the current situation with regards to the natural and historic environment, including designations and features designated since the original permission was granted. In determining applications for repowering the reasons for any change to the existing infrastructure and/or footprint will require to be justified by the developer. Applicants for repowering projects should refer to NatureScot's [Guidance Decommissioning and Restoration Plans for on-shore wind farms](#) which encompasses advice on landscape and visual effects, visualisations, and wider ecological assessments. Depending on the nature of repowering, further bird surveys may be required. Early discussions must be held with NatureScot to determine bird survey requirements. NatureScot have published guidance on this issue: [SNH Guidance: Repowering onshore wind farms: bird survey requirements November 2014](#). Where a repowering application is supported by an EIA the existing wind farm will be used as the baseline.

PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

Wind farm developments will be subject to a requirement for the completion of an agreement under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 to include:

- Land restoration during and after completion of the development phase and at any time when any part of the development is modified or becomes redundant and the taking out of a reinstatement bond sufficient to ensure acceptable restoration;
- Off-site works to roads or other services that reasonably require improvements to accommodate the proposed development;
- Any safeguarding or remediation works to any off site feature or receptor that may be affected by the proposal.

¹⁹ Para 41 '[Onshore Wind Policy Statement](#)' (Scottish Government 2017)

DECOMMISSIONING

A decommissioning statement will be required to be submitted in support of a planning application for a wind farm, which should be updated at least one year before the cessation of generation at the site. This statement should minimise any disturbance to the environment, be written in accordance with best practice, and in consultation with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The statement should provide a detailed account of the necessary works and the method of reinstatement of the site, with the removal of all wind turbines, tracks (where appropriate), equipment and any ancillary plant associated with the development. It should seek to minimise waste and comply with any legislative waste requirements. Applicants will have to demonstrate to the Comhairle that appropriate funding (detailing whether the estimated cost is current or future) is in place to undertake this future work. Details of the mechanisms for the restoration of the site should be made in the case of a planning agreement.²⁰

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Developers will be expected to demonstrate that proposals will not result in unacceptable cumulative impacts. As cumulative issues only arise when the siting of a particular development is known, cumulative impact will be fully evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Assessment of impacts will take into account a wide range of factors covering the natural and built environment, landscape, the visual amenity of residents and the wider socio-economic impacts. Applicants may refer to NatureScot's ['Guidance - Assessing the cumulative impact of onshore wind energy developments'](#).

²⁰ Guidance available at <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/219689/sepa-guidance-regarding-life-extension-and-decommissioning-of-onshore-windfarms.pdf>

RADAR IMPACT

For all applications pre-application with the Planning Service is advised to identify any potential aviation and/or defence constraint arising in relation to radar.

This advice applies to all applications. It is intended to provide background to Ministry of Defence (MOD) concerns over wind turbine interference to radar operations. It provides additional guidance on the issue prior to applicants submitting a wind turbine planning application. The MOD requires to ensure that any planned developments do not adversely impact upon its operational defence capability. Not all wind turbine planning applications are subject to MOD objection.

WIND FARM PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

The MOD request that they be consulted if a proposed turbine is 11 meters to blade tip or taller, and/or has a rotor diameter of 2 meters or more. Developers are urged to consult the MOD's wind energy team at the earliest possible stage and maintain contact throughout the planning process so that any MOD concerns may be addressed. To initiate a consultation, please complete the pre-application proforma at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wind-farms-application-forms-for-developers>

Developers are also encouraged to contact the Planning Service.

VISIBILITY TO RADAR

The MOD has prepared bespoke mapping of visibility to radar in the Outer Hebrides for the following turbines heights: 15m; 22.5m; 25m; 27m; and 67m (tip height). These maps should be consulted before progressing with any turbine application. The maps are available to view at Maps 4a–e at Appendix 1, and more detailed maps are available at the Comhairle Planning Service offices. While visibility of a wind turbine to radar increases the likelihood of a MOD objection to a Planning Application, it is only following a detailed operational assessment carried out by the MOD, and an operational decision taken by the MOD as to whether the level of interference at the affected operational assets can 'be managed' that a decision will be taken on whether the MOD object or do not object to a proposal.

MITIGATION

Wherever impacts on defence interests are identified by the MOD, it will seek mitigation measures to overcome these impacts so that the development can proceed. Mitigation options can be either technical or operational at the radar head, or technical at the turbine. Where re-siting options are available to the developer and intervening topography can provide screening, there is an option to consider either lowering the height of the turbine (to take it out of radar line of site (RLOS)) or re-site it (to take it out of RLOS). If having looked at ways to mitigate its concerns, it transpires that no acceptable mitigation is available, to ensure that the MOD's defence capabilities are not compromised, the MOD is likely to maintain its objection.

4. DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR ALL OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The following Policies will apply to consideration of all turbine proposals below the threshold of a wind farm.

Links to sources of information or documents cited in Policies are listed in Appendix 3.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

In line with the provisions of Policy PD1 Placemaking and Design and Policy NBH1 Landscape of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan, wind turbine developments (including access tracks, grid connection, control equipment) will be assessed to ensure they will not have an unacceptable significant visual or landscape impact on the character of the Outer Hebrides (including cumulative impact). Sensitive siting and design should be utilised to ensure impacts are limited in the surrounding landscape. Considerations will include: scale and design of turbines and their scale in relation to other natural and built elements in the landscape; turbine number and layout; turbine colour, and; cumulative impact with existing and/or consented turbines.

Applicants are advised to contact the Comhairle pre-application to agree what assessments will be required to address landscape and visual impacts.

Wind turbines will be assessed for their likely impact on:

- the special qualities of National Scenic Areas (Map 2);
- Wild Land²¹ (Map 2);
- Low Landscape Capacity (Map 3)²²
- key landscape characteristics;
- residential properties and settlements;
- views from popular public viewpoints, transport routes, the core path network and recognised visitor locations;
- the site, context and setting of historic environment assets²³.

²¹ <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/wild-land/wild-land-area-descriptions-and-assessment-guidance>

²² 'Landscape Capacity Study for Onshore Wind Energy Developments in the Western Isles' by Benson, J.F., Scott, K.E., Anderson, C., Macfarlane, R., Dunsford, H. and Turner K. (2004). Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 042 (ROAME No. F02LC04). The basic approach adopted is that both physical and perceptual landscape criteria are used to assess landscape sensitivities, visibility assessments are added to assess overall sensitivities, and values are then added to evaluate landscape capacities. It is noted that technology and scale have changed considerably since this study was originally undertaken. The document is available in digital format on request from the Comhairle Planning Service.

²³ Historic environment assets are defined as: those identified in the Development Plan and / or national listings, schedules or registers held by Historic Environment Scotland or other competent authorities, including: conservation areas; listed buildings; historic gardens and designed landscapes; thatched buildings; sites and setting of Scheduled Monuments; and other unscheduled assets and areas of archaeological significance.

Power lines linking turbines to their export destination should ideally be buried. For larger turbines, power lines connecting the individual turbines to the on-site sub-station are required to be underground to avoid clutter.

AVIATION AND DEFENCE

For all applications pre-application discussion with the Comhairle Planning Service and the Ministry of Defence is advised, to identify any potential aviation and/or defence constraint arising in relation to radar.

The impacts of developments on aviation and defence operations must be satisfactorily addressed and demonstrate that aviation, defence and emergency services operations will not be compromised. This includes flight activity, navigation and surveillance systems and other air safety navigation, test or surveillance assets or systems.

When designing and siting proposals developers should pay particular regard to:

- MOD Safeguarding Areas;
- Health & Safety Executive Safeguarding Zones;
- NATS (En Route) plc (NERL) Safeguarding Maps²⁴;
- Department of Trade and Industry “Wind Energy and Aviation Interest – Interim Guidance”;
- CAP 764 - Policy and Guidelines on Wind Turbines; Civil Aviation Authority February 2016;
- CAP 393 - The Air Navigation Order 2016 and Regulations, Civil Aviation Authority March 2021;
- CAP 670 - Air Traffic Services Safety Requirements Part B, Section 4, Gen 01 Wind Turbines, Civil Aviation Authority May 2019.

The Ministry of Defence has provided the Comhairle with bespoke maps for wind turbine visibility to MOD radar in the Outer Hebrides (Maps 4a – e).

The Planning Service strongly advises all potential applicants for Wind Turbine development to submit a pre-application enquiry to the MOD at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wind-farms-application-forms-for-developers>. Where the MOD has particular concerns about a development, it will undertake to work with the developer to seek ways to mitigate these. Developers are urged to consult the MOD Safeguarding wind energy team at the earliest possible stage and maintain dialogue with them throughout the development process.

²⁴ NATS safeguarding maps are available at www.nats.co.uk/windfarms

NOISE AND COMMUNITY AMENITY

For all proposals the following information must be provided to allow the Comhairle to consider likely noise impacts:

- A 6 figure eastings and northings grid reference for the exact turbine(s) location and the distance between this point and the nearest noise sensitive location;
- The make, model, mast tower height and rotor diameter of the turbine.

Construction

The Comhairle will require details on the extent of construction works, taking account of the length of construction period, proposed times, details of any borrow pit blasting and proximity to existing noise receptors. Proposals should take account of BS5228 2009 Parts 1 and 2. Where it is believed that construction noise will be significant then a site specific noise impact assessment will be required.

Operation

There are two distinct noise sources associated with a turbine, the mechanical noise produced by the gearbox and the noise produced from the blades turning through the air. Modern designs and improving technology have significantly reduced the mechanical noise generated.

Given the low levels of background noise in the Outer Hebrides the Comhairle has adopted the following limits based on the lower limits of ETSU-R-97²⁵:

- c) during Day-time hours (0700-2300), 35dB LA90, 10min²⁶ or the Day-time Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater;
- d) during night hours (between 23:00-07:00), 38dB LA90, 10min, or the Night Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater.

These limits are the maximum allowed for a specific development and would be measured from any noise sensitive premises, assuming there are no other consented wind turbines in the areas.

If there are other consented wind turbines within the vicinity then in addition to the limits above the developer would have to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the planning authority, that the proposed development would meet the adopted cumulative limits:

- c) during Day-time hours (0700-2300), 38dB LA90, 10min or the Day-time Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater;
- d) during night hours (between 23:00-07:00), 40dB LA90, 10min, or the Night Hours LA90, 10min Background Noise Level plus 5dB(A), whichever is the greater.

²⁵ Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU) incorporated within Future Energy Solutions (DEFRA)

[The Energy Technology Support Unit \(ETSU\): Registered Files | The National Archives](#)

²⁶ LA90, 10min is calculated by measuring the A-weighted sound level over a ten minute period, disregarding the noisiest 90% of the time and taking the maximum sound level in the remaining (quietest) 10% of the time. For further detail see:

[Sound, Noise and Vibration \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Developers/applicants will be required to submit evidence that the noise generated from a proposed wind energy development can ensure compliance with the stated noise limits, assessed in accordance with the Department of Trade and Industry publication [‘The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms’ \(ETSU-R-97\)](#), September 1996 and the Department of Energy and Climate Change publication [‘Analysis of how noise impacts are considered in the determination of wind farm planning applications’](#), April 2011 to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

A desktop site specific noise impact assessment may be acceptable in circumstances where it is expected that the fixed limit of 35dB LA90, 10min for all wind speeds up to 10 m/s can be met by the proposed turbine(s), including any cumulative impacts. Where this fixed limit cannot be met, a background noise survey is likely to be required to be undertaken and a detailed site-specific noise impact assessment submitted.

A wind turbine should not be sited so close to a property that it unreasonably affects the amenity of that property. While noise impacts are a factor, the precise distance will vary depending on the turbine’s scale and location.

The effects of shadow flicker on properties and shadow throw on public roads, the Hebridean Way and paths identified in the Outer Hebrides Core Paths Plan should be investigated. Where this could be a problem, developers should provide calculations to quantify the effect. There should be a separation distance of 10 rotor diameters to reduce the effects of shadow flicker provided between wind turbines, dwellings, roads and footpaths. Developers will be expected to demonstrate that proposals will have no unacceptable significant adverse impact as a result of shadow flicker and shadow throw. Where appropriate, developers will identify properties, public roads and paths that will be affected and provide mitigation measures.

Planning applications will be assessed to ensure no unacceptable significant adverse impact on community amenity in relation to: electromagnetic interference ²⁷; cumulative impacts, including noise, cumulative development assessment; and neighbouring development (see separate Policies).

Planning conditions may be required to manage impacts such as: noise levels; commissioning and decommissioning arrangements and planning obligations matters such as transportation impacts and management.

NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENTS

All provisions of the Policy DS1 Development Strategy and Policy PD6 Compatibility of Neighbouring Uses apply in assessing the potential impact of wind energy developments on neighbouring developments.

Wind turbine developments will be assessed for potential for adverse impact on neighbouring land, including identified LDP Proposal Sites as well as undeveloped areas within main and rural settlements

²⁷ Wind energy developments have the potential to impact upon existing broadcasting installations. Applicants should consult with appropriate network operators to confirm the existence of any infrastructure and to assess whether the proposal would be likely to result in any interference to broadcasting. Where any such interference is likely, the applicant should put forward a technical solution to resolve the issue.

which by virtue of the existing settlement pattern offer a realistic prospect for future development for housing or other sensitive uses.

In the assessment extant consents for such uses will be given significant weight. The potential for sterilisation of land with development potential will be a material consideration in the assessment of wind turbine development.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

All provisions of the Policy NBH4 Built Heritage, Policy NBH5 Archaeology, and NBH6 Historic Areas of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan apply in assessing the potential impact of wind energy developments on the historic environment.

The implications for archaeological and built remains, historic landscapes, the historic character and associations of the wider landscape are important factors in the consideration of proposals for wind energy developments. Wind energy proposals (including any associated infrastructure) will be assessed to ensure that they will have no unacceptable significant adverse impact on the sites, context and setting of historic environment assets²⁸.

Pre-application discussion with the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is encouraged in order to assist in the identification of any historic environment resources (and their settings) which may need to be assessed. Any assessment should adequately consider: direct and indirect physical impacts; potential for cumulative effects (including the impacts of any secondary developments such as power lines, access tracks or transmission stations); and opportunities for responsive siting and design. Historic Environment Scotland produce a number of resources which can assist in identifying historic assets and their settings and provide further guidance for assessment, sources of information may be found in Appendix 3.

If a wind energy proposal breaks the skyline at sensitive ridgelines when viewed from the component parts of the Calanais complex²⁹ or is to be sited in another location where it has the potential to impact on the setting of the complex, it will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not have a significant negative impact on the setting of the Calanais complex. The assessment requirements will be judged on a case by case basis. More prominent developments will be subject to more detailed assessment in terms of impact on the setting of Calanais.

²⁸ Historic environment assets are defined as: those identified in the Development Plan and / or national listings, schedules or registers held by Historic Environment Scotland or other competent authorities, including: conservation areas; listed buildings; historic gardens and designed landscapes; thatched buildings; sites and setting of Scheduled Monuments; and other unscheduled assets and areas of archaeological significance.

²⁹ Twelve sites comprising a variety of stone settings which are generally considered to make up the 'complex', as identified in Historic Environment Scotland's '[Calanais Setting Document](#)' published 2017.

NATURAL HERITAGE AND RESOURCES

All provisions of the Policy EI 3 Water Environment, Policy EI 5 Soils, Policy NBH2 Natural Heritage and Policy NBH3 Trees and Woodland policies of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan apply in assessing the potential impact of wind energy developments on natural heritage and resources, including those not mapped or expanded upon in this guidance.

Applicants should investigate the presence and importance of species and habitats in and around their proposed development site at pre-application stage for discussion with the Planning Authority. This includes assessing whether there may be impacts on qualifying species out with the boundary of designated sites see [Assessing connectivity with special protection areas | NatureScot](#), Version 3, 2016 for further guidance.

If potential impacts are identified, this allows scope for proposing mitigating action or seeking alternative sites nearby early in the process. Applicants should refer to '[Assessing the Impacts of Small-scale Wind Energy Proposals on the Natural Heritage](#)' (NatureScot, 2014) for further guidance on how to consider the natural heritage impacts of their proposal.

Good practice should be followed to ensure that non-native invasive species³⁰ are not introduced, moved or spread on and off the site.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Applications will be assessed for their cumulative impacts, taking into account turbines already consented and erected in the context of the natural and built environment, in particular with regard to noise, landscape, and visual amenity.

³⁰ Guidance available on <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/biodiversity/invasive-non-native-species/>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 MAPS

Map 1 Comhairle Spatial Strategy

[Planning Policy and Guidance | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar \(cne-siar.gov.uk\)](#). Reduced resolution A4 map below.

Map 2 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Spatial Framework

[Planning Policy and Guidance | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar \(cne-siar.gov.uk\)](#). Reduced resolution A4 map below.

Map 3 Other Considerations

[Planning Policy and Guidance | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar \(cne-siar.gov.uk\)](#). Reduced resolution A4 map below.

Maps 4a to 4e MOD Radar Coverage

(See appendix below)

Map 4a Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage 15m (tip height)

Map 4b Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage 22.5m (tip height)

Map 4c Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage 25m (tip height)

Map 4d Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage 27m (tip height)

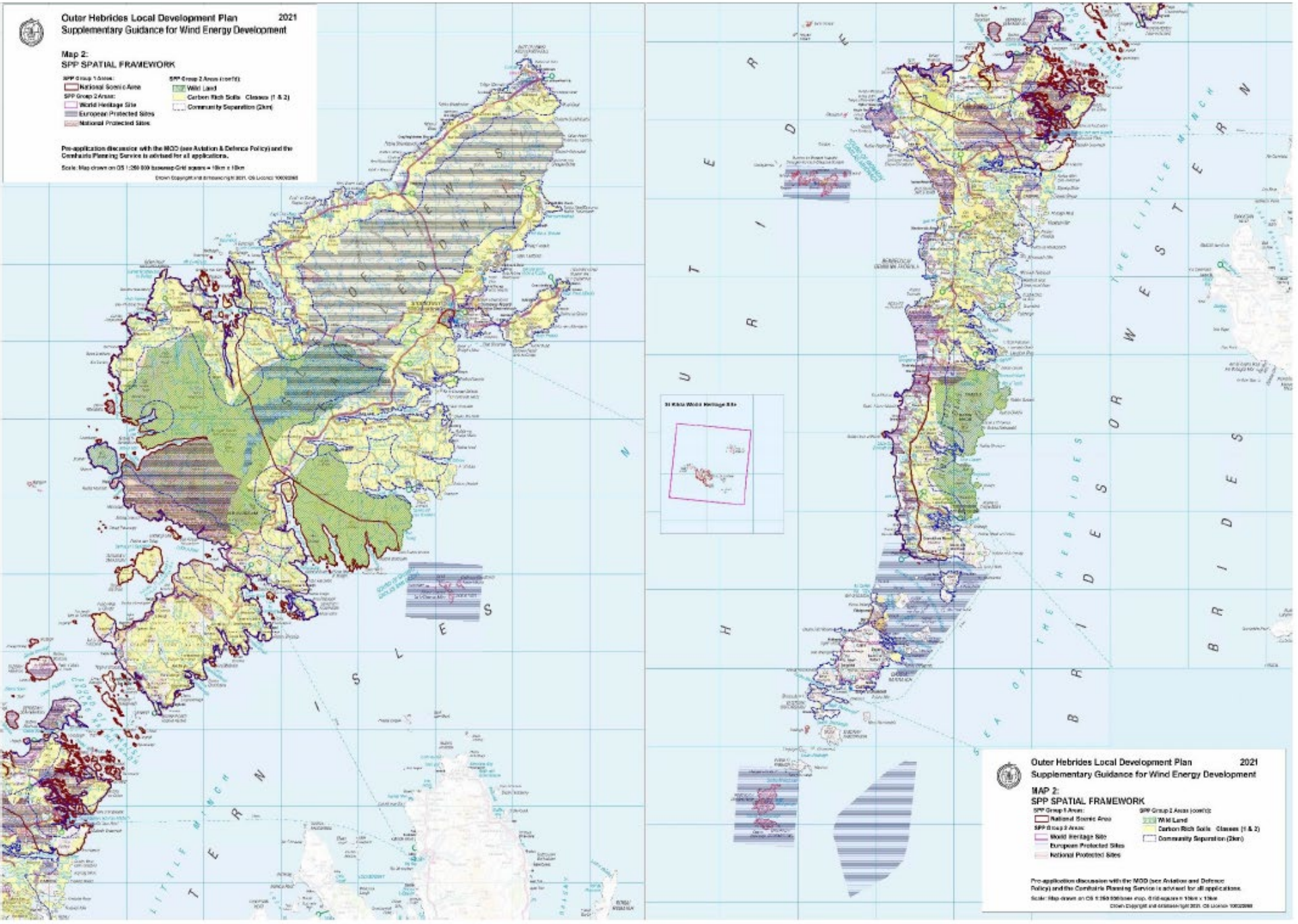
Map 4e Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage 67m (tip height)

**Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan
Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development 2021
Map 1: COMHAIRLE SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR WIND FARMS***

- * Any 2 or more turbines greater than or equal to 70m tip height.
- Areas with Potential for Wind Farms
- Areas of Constraint (with potential in some certain circumstances)
- Areas Unacceptable for Wind Farms



Crown copyright and database right 2021. Licence No. 100022905



Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan 2021
Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development

Map 2:
SPP SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| National Score Area | Wild Land |
| World Heritage Site | Carbon Rich Soils - Classes 1 & 2 |
| European Protected Sites | Community Separation (2km) |
| National Protected Sites | |

Pre-application discussion with the MOD (see Aviation & Defence Policy) and the Civil Aviation Authority is advised for all applications.
 Scale: Map drawn on OS 1:250 000 base map. Grid squares = 10km x 10km
© Crown Copyright and Ordnance Survey 2021. OS Licence 10002881

Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan 2021
Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development

MAP 2:
SPP SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| National Score Area | Wild Land |
| World Heritage Site | Carbon Rich Soils - Classes 1 & 2 |
| European Protected Sites | Community Separation (2km) |
| National Protected Sites | |

Pre-application discussion with the MOD (see Aviation & Defence Policy) and the Civil Aviation Authority is advised for all applications.
 Scale: Map drawn on OS 1:250 000 base map. Grid squares = 10km x 10km
© Crown Copyright and Ordnance Survey 2021. OS Licence 10002881



MAP 3:
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

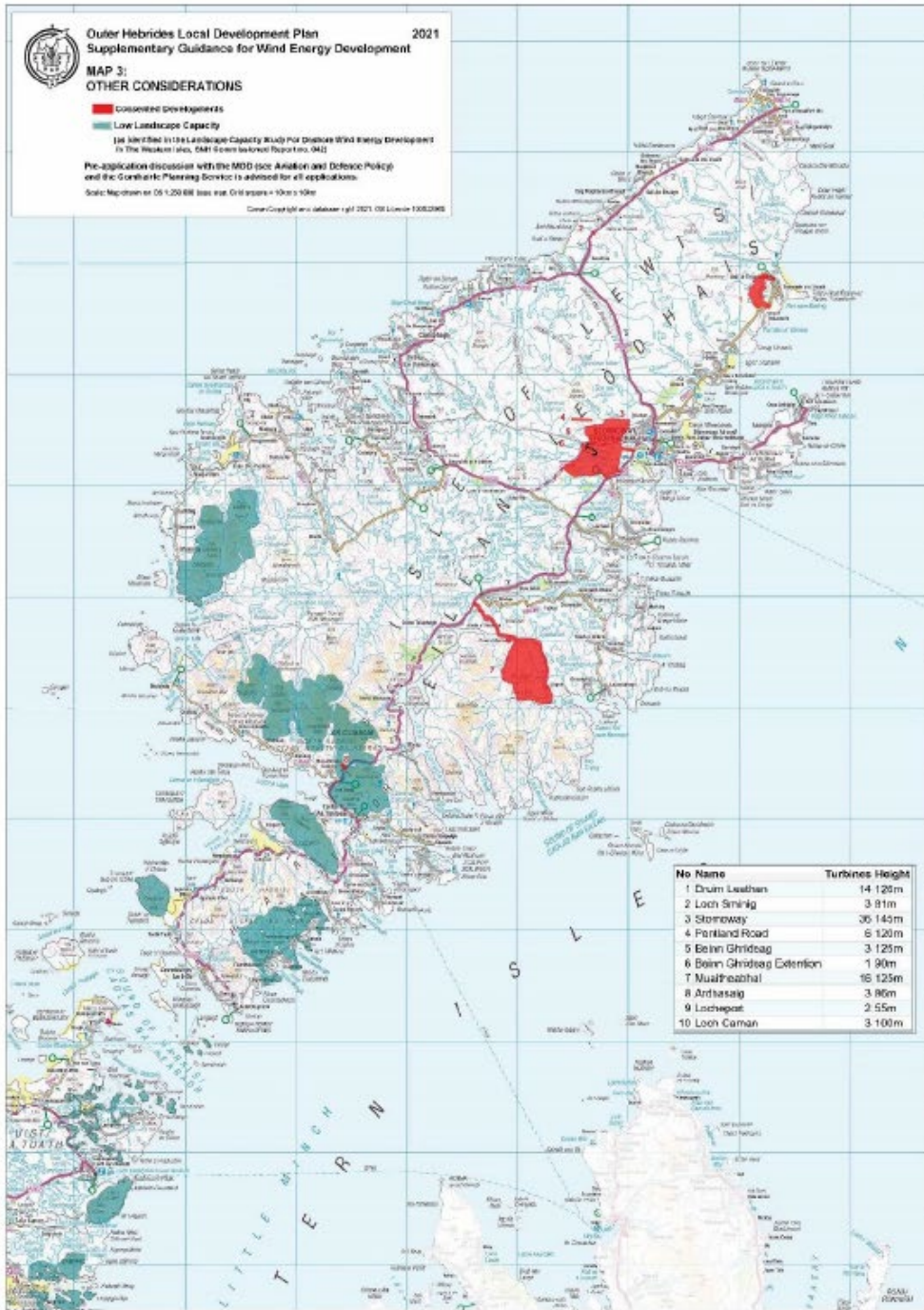
- Consented Developments
- Low Landscape Capacity

(As identified in the Landscape Capacity Study for Onshore Wind Energy Development in The Hebrides (see SMI Commission Report no. 842)

Pre-application discussion with the MDD (see Aviation and Defence Policy) and the Corrib Planning Service is advised for all applications.

Scale: Map shown at OS 1:250 000 (see also OS 1:50 000 and 1:10 000)

© Crown Copyright and database right 2021 OS Licence 10002965



MAP 3:
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Consented Developments
- Low Landscape Capacity

(As identified in the Landscape Capacity Study for Onshore Wind Energy Development in The Hebrides (see SMI Commission Report no. 842)

Pre-application discussion with the MDD (see Aviation and Defence Policy) and the Corrib Planning Service is advised for all applications.

Scale: Map shown at OS 1:250 000 (see also OS 1:50 000 and 1:10 000)

© Crown Copyright and database right 2021 OS Licence 10002965


Map 4a
Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage
Micro Turbines 15m tip height

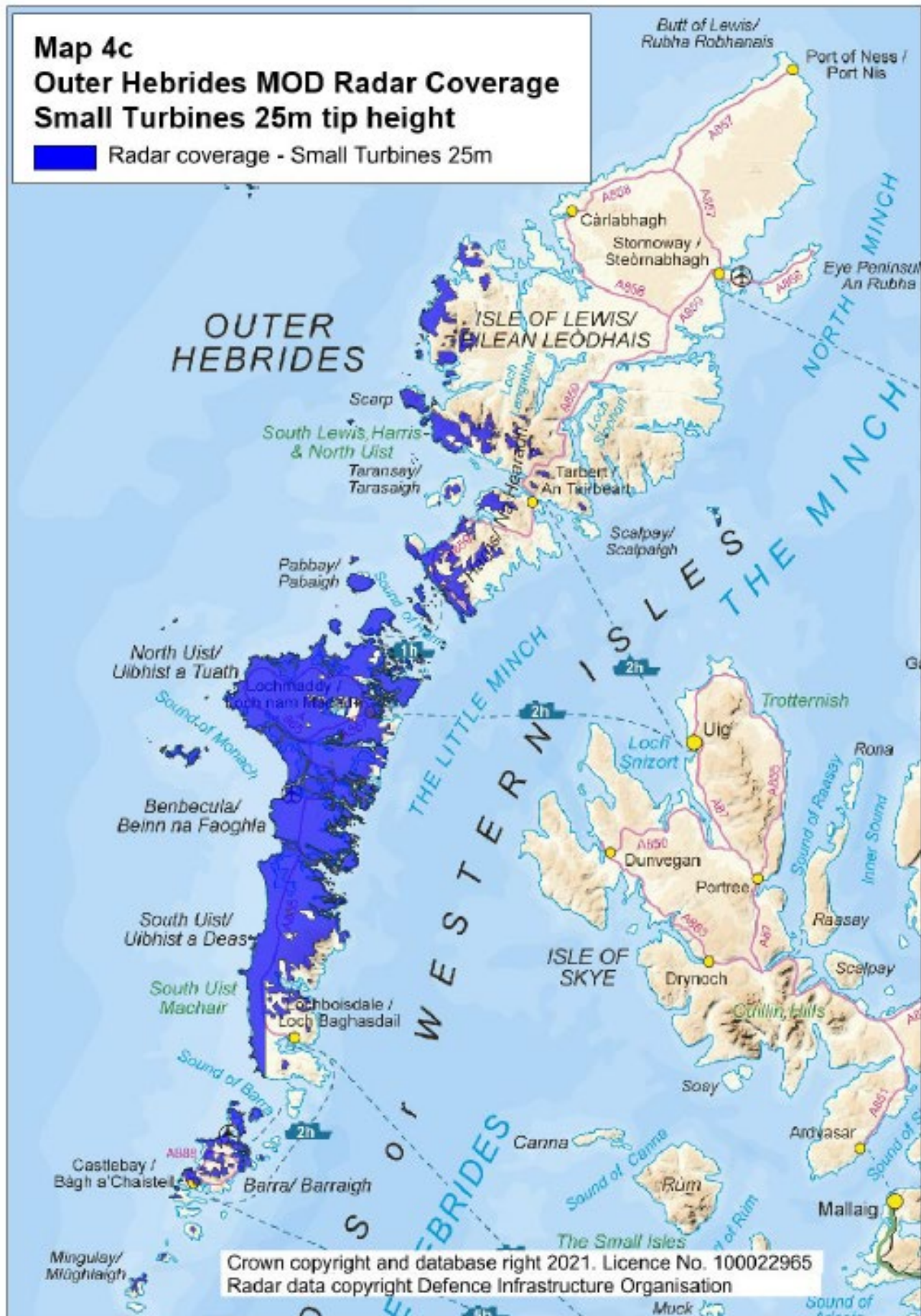
■ Radar coverage - Micro Turbines 15m



Crown copyright and database right 2021. Licence No. 100022965
 Radar data copyright Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Map 4c
Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage
Small Turbines 25m tip height

 Radar coverage - Small Turbines 25m




Map 4d
Outer Hebrides MOD Radar
Coverage Medium Turbines 27m tip
height Radar coverage - Medium

Turbines 27m



Crown copyright and database right 2021. Licence No. 100022965
 Radar data copyright Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Map 4e
Outer Hebrides MOD Radar Coverage
Large Turbines 67m tip height

 Radar coverage - Large Turbines 67m



Crown copyright and database right 2021. Licence No. 100022965
 Radar data copyright Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Spatial Framework for Onshore Wind Farms as set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

<p>Group 1: Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable:</p> <p>National Parks and National Scenic Areas.</p>		
<p>Group 2: Areas of significant protection:</p> <p>Recognising the need for significant protection, in these areas, wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.</p>		
<p>National and international designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Heritage Sites; • Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites; • Sites of Special Scientific Interest; • National Nature Reserves; • Sites identified in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes; • Sites identified in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields. 	<p>Other nationally important mapped environmental interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas of wild land as shown on the 2014 SNH map of wild land areas; • carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. 	<p>Community separation for consideration of visual impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an area not exceeding 2km around cities, towns and villages identified on the local development plan with an identified settlement envelope or edge. The extent of the area will be determined by the planning authority based on landform and other features which restrict views out from the settlement.
<p>Group 3: Areas with potential for wind farm development:</p> <p>Beyond groups 1 and 2, wind farms are likely to be acceptable, subject to detailed consideration against identified policy criteria.</p>		

APPENDIX 3 ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan:

[Planning Policy and Guidance | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar \(cne-siar.gov.uk\)](#)

Scottish Planning Policy:

[Scottish Planning Policy - finalised amendments: December 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

National Planning Framework:

[National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Scottish Government Online Renewables Planning Advice:

[Renewables planning advice: index - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Scottish Government Onshore Wind Turbines Planning Advice:

[Onshore wind turbines: planning advice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) website:

[Renewable Energy Planning Data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Ministry of Defence Pre-application Consultation Form per DECC website:

[Renewable Energy Planning Data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

NatureScot, Wild Land Area Descriptions (NatureScot, 2017)

[Wild Land Area descriptions and assessment guidance | NatureScot](#)

Further information on Wild Land including mapping of Scotland's wild land areas can be found here: [Landscape policy: wild land | NatureScot](#)

Landscape Capacity Study for Onshore Wind Energy Developments in the Western Isles (NatureScot [formerly SNH] et al 2004). It is noted that technology and scale have changed considerably since this study was originally undertaken. The document is available in digital format on request from the Comhairle Planning Service.

NatureScot Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions:

[Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions | NatureScot](#)

NatureScot, Visual Representation of Wind Farms Good Practice Guidance (2017):

[Visual representation of wind farms: Guidance | NatureScot](#)

Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals, September 2019:

[TGN-06-19-Visual Representation \(windows.net\)](#)

Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment March 2019:

[Residential Visual Amenity Assessment - Landscape Institute](#)

NATS safeguarding maps are available at: [Wind farm services - NATS](#)

CAP 764 - CAA Policy and Guidelines on Wind Turbines (Civil Aviation Authority 2016):

[UK Wind Turbines and Aviation - CAA CAP 764 v4 - Pager Power](#)

CAP 393 Regulations made under powers in the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and the Air Navigation Order 2016 (Civil Aviation Authority 2021):

[CAP 393: Regulations made under powers in the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and the Air Navigation Order 2016 | Civil Aviation Authority](#)

CAP 670 – Air Traffic Services Safety Requirements Part B Gen 01 Wind Farms Civil Aviation Authority 2019:

[CAP 670: Air Traffic Services Safety Requirements | Civil Aviation Authority](#)

ETSU – Energy Technology Support Unit:

[Energy Technology Support Unit | The National Archives](#)

ETSU Noise Guidance: The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms:

[Discussion Document](#)

Department of Energy and Climate Change publication ‘Analysis of How Noise Impacts are Considered in the Determination of Wind Farm Planning Applications’ April 2011:

[Analysis of how noise impacts are considered in the determination of wind farm planning applications - GOV.UK](#)

The Scottish Government’s Technical Advice Note on the technical evaluation of noise assessments:

[Contents - Assessment of noise: technical advice note - gov.scot](#)

A review of the visual, shadow flicker and noise impacts of onshore wind farms Final Report (2015) by Hoare LEA:

[SLR Report Template \(Arial 11pt\)](#)

Scottish Government’s [Draft+Advice+on+Net+Economic+Benefit+and+Planning.pdf](#)

Pastmap: [Welcome to Pastmap | Pastmap](#)

Historic Environment Scotland’s Data Services:

[Designations Map Search](#)

Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Micro-Renewables:

[Managing Change in the Historic Environment | HistEnvScot](#)

Managing Change in the Historic Environment: setting:

[Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting | HES | History](#)

Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook (published jointly by NatureScot, [formerly SNH] and HES):

[Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook | Hist Env Scotland](#)

Habitats Regulations Appraisal:

[Habitats Regulations Appraisal \(HRA\) | NatureScot](#)

Spatial Planning for Onshore Wind Turbines – natural heritage considerations Guidance published by NatureScot [formerly SNH]:

[Onshore wind energy | NatureScot](#)

‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual impact Assessment’ (3rd edition-Landscape Institute 2013):

[Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment \(GLVIA3\) - Landscape Institute](#)

‘Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs)’ NatureScot, [formerly SNH]:

[Assessing connectivity with special protection areas | NatureScot](#)

NatureScot Sitelink: [SiteLink - Home](#)

NatureScot ornithology impacts:

[Wind farm impacts on birds | NatureScot](#)

Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms:

[Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore windfarms | NatureScot](#)

Naturescot (formerly SNH) Repowering onshore wind farms: bird survey requirements November 2014

[Guidance](#)

NatureScot Bats and onshore wind turbines: survey, assessment and mitigation:

[Bats and onshore wind turbines - survey, assessment and mitigation | NatureScot](#)

Good Practice during Wind Farm Construction 4th Edition 2019:

[Good practice during wind farm construction | NatureScot](#)

Scottish Government, Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (2017)

[Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments](#)

Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map:

[Carbon and peatland 2016 map | Scotland's soils](#)

Scottish Government, Peatland Survey: Guidance:

[Peatland survey: guidance - gov.scot](#)

Scottish Government, Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments:

[Community benefits from onshore renewable energy developments - gov.scot](#)

The following additional sources of information have been suggested by SEPA:

Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems:

[lups-gu31-guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-development-proposals-on-groundwater-abstractions.pdf](#)

Regulatory Position Statement – Developments on Peat:

[Microsoft Word - Peat Position Statement - update 290310.doc](#)

Construction of River Crossings Good Practice Guide 2010:

[River crossings - good practice guide](#)

Pollution prevention guidelines:

[Guidance | Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#)

Planning Advice Note PAN 50 Controlling the Environmental Effects of Surface Mineral Workings:

[Planning Advice Note PAN 50 ANNEX A CONTROLLING THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF SURFACE MINERAL WORKINGS - Planning Advice Note 50: controlling the environmental effects of surface mineral workings \(Annex A\) - gov.scot](#)

SEPA Guidance Note 4 Planning guidance on on-shore windfarm developments:

[planning-guidance-on-on-shore-windfarms-developments.pdf](#)

SEPA Guidance, Life Extension and Decommissioning of onshore windfarms:

[sepa-guidance-regarding-life-extension-and-decommissioning-of-onshore-windfarms.pdf](#)



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR



Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy Development

November 2021

THE PLANNING SERVICE

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Council Offices
Sandwick Road
Stornoway
HS1 2BW

Front cover: Beinn Ghrideag Wind Farm, SandiePhotos.

Back cover: Tolsta Turbine, Kenny Maciver and turbine detail, Tolsta Community Development Ltd

Tel: 01851 822 690 Fax: 01851 705349

Email: localdevplan@cne-siar.gov.uk

[Planning Policy and Guidance | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar](#)