

# **Annex 3 Landscape and Visual Appraisal**



## **MEY BESS, CAITHNESS**

### **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL**

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# 1 Introduction

The proposed Mey Battery Energy Storage Site (the 'Proposed Development') is located near Mey, Caithness. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by independent landscape consultants TGP Landscape Architects Ltd. The LVA report has been prepared with the aim of identifying the predicted landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, comprising BESS Substation, Communications Building and Welfare Facilities, Battery Containers and PCUs, Low Voltage Board and Transformer, and ancillary works including fencing, security columns, access, parking and landscaping. A transformer compound within the Site is proposed via a separate planning application and does not form part of this proposal.

The LVA is augmented by supporting text and graphics within the appendices. This includes the following figures within **Appendix C**:

- Figure 1 – Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoints;
- Figure 2 – Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 3 – Landscape Designations, Ancient Woodland and Recreational Routes;
- Figure 4 – Residential Receptors; and
- Figure 5 – Landscape Mitigation Plan.

## 1.1 Scope of the LVA

The LVA seeks to identify the potential landscape and visual effects that would occur as a result of the Proposed Development and is organised in the following sections:

- Guidance and Methodology – outlines the general methodology, with reference to established guidance (full version in **Appendix A**);
- Planning Policy Context;
- Baseline Description – including the fabric, character and quality of the local landscape. This includes the special characteristics of landscape planning designations, and a description of the main visual receptors within the Study Area;
- Proposed Development and Mitigation – describes the aspects of the Proposed Development which have the potential to result in landscape or visual effects, and the measures incorporated into the project design to mitigate these potential effects;
- ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis – analysis of the geographic extents of visibility and the potential magnitude of change at a selection of viewpoints;
- Construction Stage Effects – assesses the effects of the Proposed Development during the temporary construction stage;
- Landscape Effects – assesses the effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape fabric, landscape character and quality of the landscape designations within the Study Area;
- Visual Effects – assesses the effects arising from the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of the receptors within the Study Area;
- Cumulative Effects – considers the combined effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other notable elements of infrastructure; and
- Conclusions – a summary of the LVA results.

## 1.2 Study Area

A 3km radius Study Area has been adopted from the Proposed Development for the assessment of landscape and visual effects. This has been informed by analysis of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps and an early appraisal of potential effects for a Proposed Development of this scale. Any notable landscape or visual effects would be confined within this geographical area.

## 2 Guidance and Methodology

### 2.1 Guidance

The methodology presented here is based on the following best practice guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)*; Institute of Environmental Management and Appraisal and the Landscape Institute, 2013;
- *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*; Prepared on behalf of the Countryside Agency and NatureScot, Land Use Consultants, 2002;
- *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment - Guidance for Scotland (Consultation Draft)*; NatureScot, 2020; and
- *Visual Representation of Development Proposals*; Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/2019 (2019).

In addition, reference has been made to other published guidance and the LVA has drawn on the following relevant baseline information:

- National Landscape Character Assessment (web-based interactive map), NatureScot, 2019;
- Ordnance Survey Landranger (1:50 000) and Explorer (1:25 000) maps;
- Field surveys; and
- Aerial photography.

### 2.2 Methodology

The LVA aims to identify and evaluate the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development. Wherever possible, identified effects are quantified, albeit the nature of landscape and visual appraisal requires interpretation by professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the prediction of magnitude and appraisal of the residual landscape and visual effects have been based on pre-defined criteria.

GLVIA3 states that: “Professional judgement is a very important part of the LVIA.” (para 2.23) “In all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others” (para 2.24).

Landscape and Visual Appraisals are distinct, though linked procedures. The appraisal of the landscape effects takes cognisance of the potential changes in the physical components of the landscape and associated changes in its character and how it is experienced, which may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.

Visual effects relate to changes in the composition of existing views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

**Level of Effect**

The level of any identified landscape or visual effect is assessed in terms of being Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible. Intermediate correlations are also possible and depend upon professional judgement, e.g. Major/Moderate. These categories are based on the juxtaposition of landscape or visual sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of change, as set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Landscape & Visual Effects Matrix**

Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor	
Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible	
Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible	

This juxtaposition is not used as a prescriptive tool, rather it allows for the exercise of professional judgement. Thus, in some instances a particular parameter may be considered as having a determining effect on the analysis.

Where the landscape or visual effect has been classified as Major or Major/Moderate this is considered to be notable. Where Moderate effects are predicted, professional judgement is applied to ensure that the potential for notable effects arising has been thoroughly considered.

The complete appraisal methodology is set out in **Appendix A**.

**3 Assumptions**

The following assumptions have been made in respect to the LVA:

- The Site – refers to the land located within the red line boundary (as shown in Figures 1-5). All distances listed within this LVA are in measured in relation to this area.
- The Proposed Development – comprises the BESS Substation, Comms Building and Welfare Facilities, Battery Containers and PCUs, LV Board and ancillary works. The main components to contribute to landscape and visual impacts are described in greater detail in Section 6.
- For the purposes of the LVA, the Proposed Development is regarded as being permanent. The construction stage would be temporary, approximately 9 months in duration.
- The landscape proposals (comprising new planting and SuDS elements) form an integral component of the Proposed Development.
- Viewpoint locations included in the assessment are from publicly accessible locations.

- Visual effects are assessed on the basis of good visibility. Visual effects can be expected to vary e.g. poor visibility at times of low cloud, rainfall and dusk. At these times a reduction in visual clarity, colour and contrast would be experienced. Reduced visibility would limit the extent of view, particularly from mid to long distance views. Consequently, the assessment of effects is based on the worst-case scenario, where the Proposed Development would be most visible.

## 4 Consultation

Consultation in relation to the Proposed Development has been undertaken with The Highland Council and the Scottish Government’s Energy Consents Unit. The Screening process confirmed that the Proposed Development did not constitute EIA development. Further consultation was undertaken to confirm the scope of the LVA and viewpoint locations.

Viewpoint locations agreed through consultation are listed in Table 2 below. This includes description of the rationale for their selection.

**Table 2: Viewpoint Locations**

Viewpoint	Rationale
1. Minor Road near Phillips Mains	Representative of close proximity views from residential receptor to the south of the Site.
2. NCR 1, near East lodge	Representative of close proximity views from promoted cycle route and residential receptor to the northeast.
3. A836 (North Coast 500) near Mey	View from key transport route (popular with tourists) to the north, near a residential settlement.  There are no clear views from the settlement of Mey itself, hence this viewpoint is located on the nearby road network.
4. Castle of Mey GDL	View from southern edge of key landscape / heritage asset and tourist attraction to the north.
5. A836 (North Coast 500) at East Mey	View from key transport route (popular with tourists) and residential settlement to the northeast.

## 5 Planning Policy Context

The following section identifies the planning policy and other planning guidance material specifically relevant to the LVA. This includes consideration of the following:

- *National Planning Framework 4*, Scottish Government, 2023;
- *Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)*, The Highland Council, 2012; and
- *Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan)*, The Highland Council, 2018.

## **5.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**

NPF4 recognises the distinctive landscapes across the regions of Scotland and respective areas of high landscape quality. Its overarching policies seek to protect the integrity of key landscapes and landscape features from significant adverse effects. There is also general support for proposals to enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover.

Policy 11 focuses specifically on Energy, and sets out high-level support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies. This includes both energy generation and energy storage developments, such as battery storage. NPF4 acknowledges that significant landscape and visual impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where these impacts are localised and/or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable.

## **5.2 Highland-wide LDP 2012**

The HwLDP presents the overarching spatial strategy for the Highland region. This vision underpins the more detailed policy and guidance set out within the Local Development Plans for each of the committee areas. Key policies of relevance to this LVA include:

- Policy 36: Development in the Wider Countryside states that development proposals are required to be acceptable in terms of siting and design, sympathetic to existing patterns of development and compatible with landscape character.
- Policy 51: Trees and Development promotes protection of existing trees and hedgerows, and replacement planting to compensate for any felling.
- Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage seeks to protect key features from unacceptable impacts due to development of inappropriate form or scale.
- Policy 61: Landscape states that new development should be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics identified in the Landscape Character Assessment, including consideration of scale, form and materials.
- Policy 74: Green Networks seeks to protect and enhance the network of green spaces and corridors that link built up areas into the countryside.
- Policy 78 - Long Distance Routes seeks to enhance long distance routes (including parts of the national cycle network) and their settings.

## **5.3 Caithness and Sutherland LDP 2018**

The CaSPlan was adopted in August 2018 and augments the broad vision for the area set out in the HwLDP. Landscape-related strategies of relevance to the Proposed Development are summarised below, with extracts in italics.

### Vision: Environment and Heritage

The vision outcome is to ensure ‘High quality places where the outstanding environment and natural, built and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued assets are safeguarded.’

This will be achieved via the following approach:

- *‘Protecting and enhancing the unique natural environment... focusing development mainly within existing settlements, taking account of key natural features in choosing sites to allocate for development and in setting developer requirements..., including consideration of Green Network Connections.*
- *Safeguarding and promoting appreciation of valued historic environment assets... and promoting tourism with a historic environment focus.*
- *Recognising the value of the peatland resource as a vital carbon store’.*

#### Green Networks and Green Space

The CaSPlan recognises the importance of existing green networks, in terms of providing access to the countryside and reinforcing links between settlements. Green Networks *‘do not prevent development but their integrity must be maintained and opportunities for enhancement considered’.*

#### Special Landscape Areas

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are recognised within the CaSPlan as being of regional value, and therefore identified as areas of landscape to be protected and enhanced to safeguard landscape qualities and promote their enjoyment. There are no SLAs within the Study Area.

#### Settlements

The CaSPlan identifies several key settlements and sets out placemaking priorities on an individual basis. Gills Harbour is identified as an Economic Development Area. The placemaking priorities for this settlement focus on improvement of the harbor facilities and protecting the surrounding landscape from *‘inappropriate development including unsuitable land uses and poor layout and design.’* None of the other key settlements are located within the Study Area.

### **5.4 Supporting Documents**

The *Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas* (Horner and MacLennan, on behalf of The Highland Council, 2011) supports the interpretation of policy within the HwLDP. This includes a review of local landscape designations within The Highland Council area, with reference to their boundaries and key qualities. This document confirms that there are no Special Landscape Areas within the Study Area.

The *Green Networks Supplementary Guidance* (The Highland Council 2013) supports HwLDP Policy 74: Green Networks, and recognises the role of Green Networks in connecting people to nature and the landscape. The guidance acknowledges the role of active travel routes, woodlands, grasslands and informal greenspace in contributing to the green network.

*Trees, Woodlands and Development* (The Highland Council, Jan 2013) augments HwLDP Policy 51: Trees and Development, and highlights the importance of trees to rural and urban environments. The guidance seeks to ensure new development proposals take cognisance of existing trees and woodlands, while also considering opportunities new trees and woodlands, and subsequent management.

## 6 Baseline Description

### 6.1 Local Landscape Context

**Figure 1** illustrates the geographic location of the Proposed Development, which is located on land 700m to the southeast of Mey. The landscape within the Study Area comprises relatively open, rolling farmland, with localised parcels of woodland and forestry. Fields are of moderate-to-large size, regularly shaped, and bound by a mix of low stone walls, hedgerows and post-and-wire fencing.

Given the geographical expanse of farmland within the Study Area, the landscape is predominantly agricultural in character, with limited settlement. The A836 represents the primary transport route within the Study Area, which is aligned east-west, broadly parallel to the coast. This links with the network of minor roads that extend across the wider landscape and serve as a means of access to the scattered hamlets and isolated dwellings dispersed throughout the area.

At a local level, the landscape is delineated by parcels of forestry (including an extensive plantation centred on Hollandmey Moss), occasional shelterbelts, and various watercourses that meander through the undulating landform. These watercourses include the Burn of Rattar to the west of the Site, as well as the West Burn of Gills and East Burn of Gills to the east, which meander towards the coast to the north.

The Site itself is open, with no distinct features or elements of landscape value. Landscape elements are limited to the low-level field boundaries extending around the northern and eastern perimeter on the Site (comprising stone wall, and post-and-wire fence respectively). The terrain within the Site is relatively level and ranges from approximately 41-45m AOD. The surrounding landform rises to the east towards the summit of the Hill of Rigifa (80m AOD), and to the south, where it reaches 77m AOD. In combination with the expansive areas of forestry to the west, south and southeast, this results in the visual containment of the Site on most sides.

Whilst the Study Area is predominantly rural in character, the local environment is also influenced by existing infrastructure. This includes the small-scale community wind turbine at Mey (330m to the northwest), as well as the commercial scale wind turbines at Lochend Wind Farm (outside the Study Area, 3.3km to the southwest of the Site). Whilst Lochend Wind Farm is located outside the Study Area, it forms a recognisable visual feature across the wider landscape due to its height.

### 6.2 Landscape Character

**Figure 2** illustrates the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area, as defined within NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment (2019), which represents the most up-to-date assessment of landscape character across the Study Area. The Site is located within the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT. The key characteristics and sensitivities are as follows:

#### Key Characteristics of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT

- *'A generally open, low-lying plain, gently undulating to form shallow broad valleys, which are often filled with lochs and mosses, and subtle low ridges.'*

- *Occasional smooth hills rise above the more low-lying plain forming local landmarks.*
- *The broad and shallow valley of the River Wick forming the largest of a series of valleys generally aligned south-east/north-west across the plain.*
- *Agriculture the predominant land cover.*
- *More intensively managed farmland near the coast around Thurso and Wick, and close to Loch Watten.*
- *Distinctive Caithness flagstone fences in some parts, creating low, sharp edges to fields.*
- *Sparse woodland, mainly comprising small angular coniferous plantations planted for shelter on farms.*
- *Larger conifer woodlands located at the transition with the Sweeping Moorland and Flows standing out where they are planted on poorer wetter ground on low ridges.*
- *Farm buildings and houses forming focal points within the landscape.*
- *Occasional loose clusters of croft houses located on more marginal upper slopes and near the coast.*
- *A number of historic environment features, including conspicuous castles, Baronial mansions and tall 'Lairds' houses, usually with broadleaf shelter woods planted around them.*
- *Roads reinforce the settlement pattern, often following the field and property boundaries, running straight and then swinging around sharp corners.*
- *A number of large settlements, including the towns of Thurso and Wick, situated on the coast, as well as several smaller settlements.*
- *Many historic features, including brochs and cairns, dotted across farmland and situated on hills within, or adjacent to, this area.*
- *Small groups of large wind turbines sited on some of the low ridges and hills and prominent visibility of larger wind farms in adjacent Landscape Character Types.*
- *Extensive views due to the openness of the landscape, and the clarity of northern air and light.*
- *Dramatic views from the northern part of this landscape to Dunnet Head and the distant Orkney islands, and views from the A9 on the western edge of this landscape of the Lone Mountains of Movern and Scaraben seen across the low-lying Sweeping Moorland and Flows.'*

With reference to the sensitivity analysis in **Appendix B** of this LVA, the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

#### Relationship to Adjacent Character Types

The Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT adjoins the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT to the south, 520m to the southwest of the Site at the closest point. The Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT encompasses eastern parts of the Study Area, 1.4km to the east of the Site. The key characteristics of these LCTs are listed below.

#### Key Characteristics of the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

- *'Gently sloping or undulating landform which lies generally below 350 metres.*
- *Occasional isolated hills of limited height form local landmark features.*
- *Lochs and mature, meandering rivers.*

- *Very distinct flora, dominated by sphagnum mosses, produced by the wetness and infertility of the flows.*
- *Areas of peat cuttings and haggings.*
- *Pockets of improved grazing, mainly within the outer fringes of sweeping moorland.*
- *Coniferous forest forming a dominant characteristic within some parts of this landscape character type.*
- *Ribbons of broadleaf woodland occasionally run along the water courses and loch edges.*
- *Very sparsely settled with dispersed crofts, farms and estate buildings largely found on the outer edges of this landscape or near a strath.*
- *Vehicular tracks within parts of the landscape.*
- *Wind farms, transmission lines, the A9 and a network of minor roads are key features within the more modified outer fringes within Caithness.*
- *Long, low and largely uninterrupted skylines offering extensive views across this landscape and result in a feeling of huge space.*
- *Consistent views to the distant Lone Mountains and Rugged Mountain Massif – Caithness & Sutherland.*
- *Great sense of exposure on areas of flat peatland on upland plateau.*
- *A strong sense of remoteness is associated within the largely uninhabited, inaccessible core flows and moorlands of this landscape.'*

#### Key Characteristics of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT

- *'Narrow, settled and farmed coastal fringe with subtle variations in topography, from long stretches of strongly contained coastal shelves and raised beaches, to smaller pockets at river mouths and squeezed between dunes and areas of Cnocan – Caithness & Sutherland.*
- *Pastures and occasional arable fields, most often divided by post and wire fences, with the division of fields marked by crop colour and texture rather than boundaries.*
- *Low stone walls enclosing fields on the shelf above the High Cliffs and Sheltered Bays between Dunbeath and Wick.*
- *Little woodland within the more exposed east and north Caithness coasts.*
- *Small woodlands and clumps of trees present at the outlet of more sheltered straths or along the eastern shores of Kyle of Tongue and Loch Eriboll.*
- *Settlement most concentrated where this Landscape Character Type broadens at the mouths of major rivers along the east coast, where larger farms and crofts are concentrated.*
- *Small, hunkered-down croft houses and outbuildings loosely clustered or sometimes aligned in a linear fashion on the top of terraces or ridges above the coast or a river floodplain.*
- *More dispersed settlement pattern on the east coast to the north of Brora.*
- *Newer housing most evident to the south of Brora with larger modern houses often infilling spaces between older croft houses and contrasting with the size and form of these original buildings.*
- *A number of settlements, often located at bridging points and at the junction with the straths, many with harbours particularly on the east coast of Sutherland and Caithness.*
- *Major communications routes on the east coast including the A9, the railway and transmission line aligned along the edge of this landscape.*
- *A number of historic sites including churches, castles, mills and cemeteries.*

- *Highly visible landscape, seen from major roads and, on the east Sutherland coast, the railway.*
- *Complex visual composition of views tending to focus on the detail of houses, field patterns and crops, yet with the wider context of backdrop hills and sea adding diversity.'*

### 6.3 Landscape Designations

Landscape planning designations and policies are considered in the determination of the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as they provide an indication of value ascribed to the landscape or visual resource. With reference to **Figure 3**, the Site is not located within a landscape designation.

The Castle of Mey Gardens and Designed Landscape (GDL) is located 1.2km to the north of the Site and represents the only landscape-related designation within the Study Area. The Castle of Mey GDL comprises parkland, woodland, and formal / walled gardens around the castle.

### 6.4 Visual Baseline and Receptors

The following section describes the visual receptors within the Study Area.

#### Local Residents

Key settlement within the Study Area is limited to Gills Harbour. With reference to **Figure 4**, there would be no views from this settlement, hence it is not considered further in this assessment.

There are a number of small hamlets spread throughout the area, which are primarily arranged as low density clusters of dispersed dwellings. These include:

- Mey, 700m to the northwest;
- East Mey, 1.2km to the northeast;
- Gills / Upper Gills, 1.9km to the east;
- Scarfskerry, 3.0km to the northwest; and
- Barrock, 3.0km to the west.

In addition, the local landscape incorporates several isolated dwellings and farmsteads outside of the settlements and hamlets. Those within 1km of the Site comprise:

- Phillips Mains (nos. 1-3), 280m to the south;
- East Lodge, 400m to the northeast;
- West Lodge, Woodlands, Bruach House and The Beaches, 520m to the west;
- Rigifa, 610m to the east;
- Kittiwake, 1.0km to the west; and
- Hillhead, 1.0km to the northeast.

#### Recreational Receptors

With reference to **Figure 3**, recreational routes and outdoor destinations / attractions within the Study Area are listed below:

- National Cycle Route 1 (NCR 1), extending along the minor road between Barrock and Gills, along the northern boundary of the Site at the closest point;

- North Coast 500, extending along the A836, 500m to the north of the Site at the closest point;
- Core Path network, extending 520m to the northwest of the Site at the closest point; and
- Castle of Mey, 1.2km to the north.

### Road Users

The A836 represents the only A-road within the Study Area. This extends east-west, 500m to the north of the Site at the closest point. There are no B-roads or train lines within the surrounding area.

## **6.5 Future Baseline**

The baseline conditions within the locality are subject to change in the near future based on the introduction of the consented Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. This development will be located 150m to the west of the Site (to the south of the existing forestry). It will comprise a main building measuring 27.55 x 38.62m footprint, x 16.25m height, which will be located within a fenced compound. Its close geographic relationship to the Site is a reflection of the Proposed Development being contingent on the development of the Switching Station (whilst forming separate applications, the end-uses of the two developments are closely related).

## **7 Proposed Development and Mitigation**

This section describes the aspects of the Proposed Development with the potential to cause landscape and visual effects within in the Study Area.

### **7.1 Proposed Development Description**

The location of the Proposed Development is illustrated on **Figure 1**. The Proposed Development would involve localised areas of ground clearance to facilitate construction within the Site, and the introduction of the following key elements:

- BESS Substation, 2.6 x 8.1m footprint, 2.8m height;
- Communications Building, 2.4 x 6.1m footprint, 2.9m height;
- Welfare Facilities, 2.4 x 6.1m footprint, 2.9m height;
- 352no. Battery Containers, 2.4 x 12.1m footprint, 2.9m height;
- 88no. PCUs, 2.5 x 6.3m footprint, 3.0m height;
- Low Voltage Board and Transformer, 6.0 x 9.0m footprint, 2.5m height;
- Site fencing, 2.4m height;
- CCTV security columns 4.5m height;
- Site access and parking area;
- Landscape planting and mitigation features.

The LVA takes cognisance of each of these elements and makes reference to them within the appraisal where relevant. A transformer compound within the Site is proposed via a separate planning application, and does not form part of this proposal.

## 7.2 Landscape Design and Mitigation

The location of the Proposed Development has been chosen to avoid any notable ridgelines or visually prominent sections of skyline. Instead, the Site is located in a relatively low-lying elevation and benefits from screening via surrounding tree cover and landform. This provides a high degree of visual containment to the west, south and east, meaning that potential views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to localised areas. In addition, the Site is located in close proximity to the consented Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station (located 150m to the west, and forming part of the future baseline as described in Section 6.5). This close proximity negates the spread of infrastructure across wider parts of the landscape, thus minimizes potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity. The Site location is also spatially remote from any landscape designation, hence there would be no direct effects, and no discernible indirect effects on any landscape designation.

In terms of design, the submitted proposals incorporate a comprehensive mitigation strategy that seeks to integrate the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape. This involves consideration of the scale and spread of the Proposed Development, and the most appropriate methods of lessening their potential influence on landscape and visual amenity. To this end, the Proposed Development has been designed to achieve the following landscape objectives:

- Land clearance and occupation would be limited to necessary areas only to minimise the geographic spread of the infrastructure and limit the potential impact on the local landscape fabric.
- With the exception of isolated security columns, the tallest element of proposed built form would be 3.0m in height, which would be set back behind the 2.4m high perimeter fence. Surrounding tree cover and landform would limit potential visibility from wider areas.
- In terms of colour and materials, the perimeter fencing would be painted with a recessive colour (RAL6003: Olive Green, or similar approved) to soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and screen potential views of infrastructure within central parts of the Site. The BESS Substation, Comms Building, and Welfare Facilities would be finished in the same recessive colour.
- Proposed landscape works would incorporate the creation of native hedgerow and woodland edge tree planting around peripheral parts of the Site. With reference to **Figure 5**, the hedgerow would extend along the full length of the Site perimeter. This would be augmented by woodland edge planting within the northern and eastern parts of the Site, which are currently most open / visible from surrounding areas. The planting approach would be based on mixed native species to provide visual containment and screening of the proposed built form (including the perimeter fencing) and create a soft, green frontage to the development. The hedgerow would be grown to a height of 3.0m (taller than the perimeter fence), and thereafter maintained at that height;
- In addition, species-rich wildflower meadow would be introduced around peripheral parts of the Site to further soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and provide enhancement to local biodiversity. This includes dedicated areas of wet meadow mix in the locality of the proposed SuDS feature in the northern part of the Site, providing a range of habitat types. The wildflower areas would be sown at the first available season and would establish rapidly thereafter.

Existing trees in the surrounding area would be protected via temporary tree protection fencing in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Clause 6.2. The fencing would be erected prior to commencement of construction works and there would be no works, vehicular over-run, or storage of materials within the extents of the tree protection fencing area.

### **7.3 Issues Scoped Out of Assessment**

The proposed security columns within the Site would incorporate motion-detection lighting. On the basis that the Site would be unmanned during night-time hours, there would be no night-time illumination of the Site, or light spillage into adjoining areas under normal operating conditions. Accordingly, the potential effects of lighting during hours of darkness are excluded from further consideration.

## **8 ZTV and Viewpoint Analysis**

The potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development have been analysed in two ways:

- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map analysis, to provide a general overview of the geographical extent of visibility of the Proposed Development within the Study Area; and
- Analysis of the potential effects at key viewpoints.

### **8.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility Analysis**

Theoretical visibility mapping of the Proposed Development is illustrated in **Figure 1**. The ZTV illustrates the maximum overall visibility of the proposed buildings. The ZTV has been prepared on the basis of 'bare ground' and does not take into account the potential screening effects of surrounding buildings or vegetation.

With reference to the ZTV, the geographical extent of potential visibility would be continuous within 500m – 1km of the Site, extending outwards towards the north and west in a fragmented manner. Potential long-distance views would be experienced from areas of higher ground at East Mey (to the northeast) and Barrock (to the west), as well as lower-lying coastal areas at Scarfskerry (to the northwest).

### **8.2 Viewpoint Analysis**

Viewpoint analysis has been carried out on a selection of key viewpoint locations to assess the likely level of effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development. Following consultation with The Highland Council, and with reference to the geographical extent of visibility illustrated within the ZTV, a total of five viewpoints have been selected as being representative of the main views from publically accessible locations within the Study Area (see **Figure 1**).

Viewpoints 1 and 2 are illustrated as photomontages, illustrating the form and appearance of the Proposed Development at completion ('Year 1'). These viewpoints are also illustrated to show the appearance of the Proposed Development once the proposed planting measures have had time to

establish, after ten years ('Year 10').

Viewpoints 3 – 5 are illustrated as photo-wirelines, showing the geographic extents and massing of the Proposed Development within reference to the existing view.

#### Viewpoint 1: Minor Road near Phillips Mains

This viewpoint is located at the localised cluster of properties at Phillips Mains, 280m to the south of the Proposed Development. The viewpoint is located within the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT and is representative of views experienced by local residents from the outer curtilage of the properties. The existing view is characterised by the open fields of rough pasture in the foreground. To the northwest, these fields are crossed by an overhead line and are backed by established plantation forestry. There will also be views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station (forming part of the future baseline). To the northeast the landscape remains more open, enabling long distance views across farmland and tree cover, towards the headlands along the island of Hoy beyond.

#### *Predicted View*

The Proposed Development would be experienced at relatively close proximity, beyond a retained area of open pasture in the foreground. It would form a new, low-lying element below the skyline, and would be back-clothed by the forestry and more distant tree cover that combines to form a continuous band across the landscape to the north. The existing long-distance views towards Hoy would be retained.

The clearest views would be of the proposed perimeter fence extending along the southern edge of the Site, which would partially screen the elements of infrastructure located within the compound. The muted colours of the fence would blend with the background landscape, softening the appearance of the Proposed Development. As the proposed planting along the perimeter of the Site establishes over time, the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened from view.

#### *Effects on Visual Amenity*

The sensitivity of residents at this location is assessed as being High. The Proposed Development would represent a relatively close, albeit low-lying, element within northerly views. Based on the proximity of view and horizontal spread, the magnitude of change would initially be Substantial. The resultant level of effect would be Major, notable.

By Year 10, the established hedgerow along the Site's southern boundary would screen the fence and infrastructure beyond, thereby reducing the influence of the Proposed Development on the view. The magnitude of change would reduce to Slight/Negligible, and the residual level of effect would reduce to Moderate/Minor, not notable.

#### *Landscape Effects*

The Proposed Development would represent the introduction of new built form to the local landscape, which is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity. With the exception of the existing overhead line to the northwest, and distant isolated dwellings to the northeast, there are limited elements of built form within the landscape. At this proximity the Proposed Development would

form a recognisable new element that would contrast with the agricultural characteristics of the surrounding locality. The magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. By Year 10, the magnitude of change would reduce to Slight/Negligible, and the residual level of effect would reduce to Minor, not notable.

#### Viewpoint 2: NCR 1, near East Lodge

This viewpoint is located on the side of the minor road / NCR 1 at East Lodge, 450m to the east of the Site, within the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT. It is representative of views experienced by local residents and recreational cyclists. The existing views to the west are characterised by gently sloping farmland demarcated by stone walls and post-and-wire fencing. Forestry at Hollandmoy Moss forms an extensive band across the horizon; its presence is emphasised by its contrasting dark green colour. Built form within the view comprises telegraph poles and isolated dwellings in the distance. The rotating blades of Lochend Wind Farm are also visible, breaking the skyline behind the existing forestry. There will also be views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station.

#### *Predicted View*

The Proposed Development would be located in a comparatively low-lying elevation, beyond a stone wall that extends along the roadside, and an intervening field. The infrastructure would be nestled against the existing forestry, which would back-cloth all elements of proposed infrastructure. The perimeter fence surrounding the compound would be recessive in colour and provide a degree of visual containment to the proposed infrastructure within the Site, albeit given the sloping nature of the landform, there would be views of the tops of the battery stores and associated buildings. The proposed landscape planting measures (in particular the new woodland edge tree planting extending along the northern and eastern edges of the Site) would provide additional screening of the proposed infrastructure, which would soften views of the Proposed Development over time.

#### *Effects on Visual Amenity*

The sensitivity of residents and recreational cyclists at this location is assessed as being High. The Proposed Development would represent a new element of built form within the landscape to the west (within the same field of view as the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station). The low height of the infrastructure, and the back-clothing by forestry would reduce its influence on the view. On balance, the magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable.

By Year 10, the established hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would predominantly screen the Proposed Development from view and merge with the existing tree cover in the surrounding area. The resultant magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible and the residual level of effect would reduce to Minor, not notable.

#### *Landscape Effects*

The Proposed Development would represent the introduction of new built form to the local landscape, which is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity. The proposed infrastructure would contrast with the predominantly agricultural characteristics of the landscape, albeit the influence of

the Proposed Development would be reduced by the muted colours of the perimeter fencing, which would blend with the surrounding context. The magnitude of change would be Moderate, resulting in a Moderate level of effect. This is considered to be notable in this instance based on the horizontal spread of the proposed infrastructure.

By Year 10, the established hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would almost fully screen the Proposed Development from view and represent the introduction of beneficial landscape elements that would merge with the existing forestry beyond the Site. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible and the level of effect would reduce to Minor/Negligible, not notable.

#### Viewpoint 3: A836 (North Coast 500) near Mey

Field survey identified no clear views towards the Site from the settlement of Mey. As such, this viewpoint is located on the road network to the east of Mey at a gap in the roadside hedge, 520m to the north of the Site. The viewpoint is located within the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT, and is representative of glimpsed views experienced by road users, including tourists travelling the promoted North Coast 500 route. The view experienced by these receptors at this viewpoint would be of very short duration, and does not reflect views from wider sections of the route.

The existing views to the south are characterised by relatively flat, open farmland in the foreground, with a field pattern demarcated by a mix of fencing, walls, and hedgerows / scrub. At greater distance, the landform steadily rises towards Hill of Rigifa and Hollandmey Moss. The landscape is influenced by expansive areas of forestry, which extend along the skyline to the southwest. The dark green colour of the forestry contrasts with the surrounding farmland. Built form within the view comprises isolated dwellings at Phillips Mains to the south. In addition, the dwellings of East Lodge and Rigifa are visible to the southeast, and the operational Mey Community Wind Turbine is visible to the southwest.

#### *Predicted View*

The Proposed Development would be experienced in the middle distance, beyond open farmland and intervening scrubby field boundaries. The proposed infrastructure would represent new elements of built form within the view, adjacent to an existing block of forestry. These elements would be located on the low-lying landform beneath the more distant hills, and accordingly would be fully back-clothed by the landscape beyond. There would be views of the perimeter fence surrounding the compound, albeit this would visually contain the proposed infrastructure within the Site. The recessive colour of the fence would blend into the surrounding context, reducing the influence of the Proposed Development on the view. The proposed landscape planting measures (in particular the new hedgerow and woodland edge tree planting extending along the northern edge of the Site) would provide additional screening of the proposed infrastructure, which would steadily soften views of the Proposed Development over time.

#### *Effects on Visual Amenity*

The sensitivity of road users at this location is assessed as being High/Medium based on the

promoted nature of the route, and its popularity with tourists (who are assessed as having a vested interest in the landscape experience). The Proposed Development would introduce new infrastructure to the view, in the context of nearby forestry and the farmstead at Phillips Mains. Its influence would be restricted by the muted colour of the perimeter fence and back-clothing by the distant landscape. On balance the magnitude of change would be Moderate at most, and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is considered notable in this instance based on the horizontal field of view occupied by the proposed infrastructure.

By Year 10, the established hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would almost fully screen the Proposed Development from view. The resultant magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible and the level of effect would reduce to Minor/Negligible, not notable.

#### *Landscape Effects*

The Proposed Development would represent the introduction of new built form in the lower-lying part of the agricultural landscape to the south. The landscape is already partly influenced by plantation forestry, which introduces contrasting colour and texture to the surrounding farmland. The Proposed Development would be located adjacent to forestry, where the muted colours of the proposed perimeter fence would blend into the surrounding context. There would be no change to the skyline or sense of enclosure. On balance, the agricultural landscape (with forestry) would remain the overarching characteristic. The magnitude of change would be Moderate at most, and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is considered not notable in this instance based on the low-lying nature of the Proposed Development, well below the skyline formed by the distant hills.

By Year 10, the established hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would almost fully screen the Proposed Development from view and represent the introduction of beneficial landscape elements that would merge with the existing forestry adjacent to the Site. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible and the level of effect would reduce to Negligible, not notable.

#### Viewpoint 4: Castle of Mey GDL

This viewpoint is located at the southern edge of the GDL (to the east of the access track), 1.3km to the north of the Proposed Development, within the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT. It is representative of views experienced by recreational visitors to the GDL, experienced from the outer edge of the grounds, in closest proximity to the Site.

The existing views to the south are characterised by relatively flat, pastoral farmland in the foreground, which is demarcated by established hedgerows and dry-stone walls. These fields are backed by a band of woodland in the middle distance (which aligns with the route of the A836). The landscape beyond gradually rises, forming an undulating horizon with extensive bands of dark green plantation forestry on the skyline. Built form within the view incorporates the top of the Mey Community Wind Turbine, as well as the blades of the distant turbines at Lochend Wind Farm (the lower parts of these wind turbines are fully screened by intervening woodland / hedgerow).

### *Predicted View*

The Proposed Development would be located beyond the intervening band of woodland in the middle distance. Accordingly, views of the Proposed Development would be restricted to filtered views through the trees during winter months only. Within these heavily filtered views, the proposed infrastructure would be located well-below the skyline, back-clothed by the rising farmland in the distance. The muted colours of the proposed perimeter fence would blend with the background landscape, further reducing the influence on the view. As the proposed planting along the perimeter of the Site establishes over time, views of the Proposed Development would be fully screened.

### *Effects on Visual Amenity*

The sensitivity of recreational visitors at this location is assessed as being High. The Proposed Development would be fully screened by intervening woodland when 'in leaf'. Based on potential views during winter months, the magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, the established planting along the Site boundary would fully screen the Proposed Development, hence there would be no residual visual effects.

### *Landscape Effects*

The Proposed Development would result in no discernible change to the existing landscape characteristics at this location. The landscape would continue to be defined by the mixed farmland and scattered woodland. The magnitude of change would be Negligible at most, and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, there would be no residual effects.

### Viewpoint 5: A836 (North Coast 500) at East Mey

This viewpoint is located at the side of the A836 within the dispersed hamlet of East May, 1.5km to the northeast of the Proposed Development. The viewpoint is located within the Farmed Lowland Plain LCT. It is representative of views experienced by local residents, as well as transient views experienced by road users, including tourists travelling the promoted North Coast 500 route.

The existing view is characterised by a mosaic of mixed farmland with localised clusters of scrub / tree cover, and larger areas of commercial plantation. The field pattern is demarcated by a mix of post-and-wire fencing, stone walls and hedgerows. Whilst rural in character, the local landscape incorporates several dispersed built features in the form of isolated dwellings and telecoms lines, as well as larger infrastructure elements comprising the Mey Community Wind Turbine and the more distant Lochend Wind Farm in the distance.

### *Predicted View*

The Proposed Development would be located in the distance, beyond intervening farmland, and nestled tightly against the backdrop of plantation forestry. It would be experienced well-below the skyline, in the same field of view as the operational Lochend Wind Farm. The muted colours of the perimeter fence would blend with the surrounding context and restrict views of the infrastructure within the Site. As such, the Proposed Development would represent a relatively discreet, low-lying

element within the view and would not result in the spread of infrastructure across wider parts of the surrounding landscape. As the proposed landscape planting measures establish within the Site, including the new hedgerow and woodland edge tree planting along the northern and eastern edges, views of the Proposed Development would steadily soften.

#### *Effects on Visual Amenity*

The sensitivity of local residents is assessed as High. The sensitivity of road users on the A836 at this location is assessed as being High/Medium based on the route's promoted status as part of the North Coast 500 and the corresponding popularity with recreational road users. Based on the distance of view, muted colours, and back-clothing by forestry, the Proposed Development would represent a minor addition to the view. The operational wind turbines at Lochend Wind Farm would continue to represent the most notable elements of built form within this sector of the view. Accordingly, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect experienced by residents would be Moderate/Minor, not notable. The effect experienced by road users would be Minor, not notable.

By Year 10, the established planting along the Site boundary would further soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and predominantly screen the infrastructure from view. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible in each case.

#### *Landscape Effects*

The Proposed Development would represent the introduction of new built form in the low-lying landscape to the southwest. The proposed infrastructure would be located in the context of surrounding forestry and existing infrastructure at Lochend Wind Farm. The muted colours of the perimeter fence would be in accordance with the surrounding landscape context. On balance, the Proposed Development would exert limited influence on existing landscape character, which would continue to be defined by mixed agriculture with scattered built elements. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable.

By Year 10, the established native planting along the Site boundary would soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and assist its assimilation within the background landscape. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible.

## **9 Construction Stage Effects**

Whilst it is the operational stage of the Proposed Development that would give rise to prolonged landscape and visual effects, temporary effects at the construction stage would also occur based on the following operations:

- Erection of temporary perimeter fencing;
- Installation of temporary construction compound (including office and welfare facilities);
- Creation of temporary laydown areas;
- Site clearance and excavation works for foundations;

- Increased vehicular movement within the Site;
- Gradual introduction of proposed buildings; and
- Reinstatement works, including the removal of the temporary accommodation.

The works detailed above would give rise to some landscape and visual effects. The detailed construction programme is not known at this stage, albeit is anticipated to be of 9 months duration. The associated effects would be temporary and would mainly arise through the gradual introduction of proposed buildings/infrastructure within the Site. The effects arising from other operations, including the vehicle movement, construction of the fencing and excavation works would be localised, and whilst potentially visible, would not appear prominently in views from the surrounding areas. As such, the construction phase effects would be limited in extent and duration.

### **9.1 Construction Stage Landscape Effects**

During the construction stage, there would be localised areas of excavation required for the parking and access, foundations of the buildings and cable routes, resulting in a change to the current landscape fabric within the Site. There would also be a short term, temporary increase in vehicle movements to and from the Site. However, given the actively-farmed nature of the land within the Site, there is no permanent ground cover or notable features of landscape value. As a result, ground clearance operations would be very limited; there would be no loss of trees or other distinct features. The existing stone wall field boundary that extends along the northern edge of the Site would be retained, with the exception of a very short section to facilitate the site access onto the adjacent minor road. The existing post-and-wire fence that extends along the eastern boundary would remain in situ.

In terms of landscape fabric, the existing farmland within the Site is considered to be of Low sensitivity to the Proposed Development. This is due to its commonality in the surrounding area, the absence of features of landscape value, and the inherent seasonal change in colour and texture that is common to this landuse. The construction operations would introduce temporary new elements within the Site, such as laydown areas and the temporary compound / site office. However, there would be no discernible loss of landscape features. On balance, the magnitude of change would be Moderate, resulting in a Moderate/minor effect.

In terms of landscape character, the construction stage effects would be focused within a very localised part of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT. The construction operations would result in the disturbance of the existing ground cover, introduction of temporary fencing / laydown areas, and an increase in the intensity of human activity and vehicular movements within the Site. This would contrast with the more rural characteristics of the landscape, albeit in close proximity to an area of established forestry and the (future baseline) Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. The ground cover and forestry surrounding the Site would restrict the influence of the construction activities across wider parts of the LCT, and as a result, the effects (including indirect effects) would be very localised. In summary, the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The magnitude of change on local landscape character during the

construction stage would be Moderate and the level of effect would be Moderate. With reference to the localised nature of effects and temporary nature of the construction phase, this is assessed as being not notable in this instance.

## **9.2 Construction Phase Effects on Visual Amenity**

The visual effects of the activities during the construction phase would be temporary, intermittent and limited to localised areas in the vicinity of the Site due to the containing effect of surrounding landform and forestry in combination with the low-lying nature of activities associated with Site clearance / excavation.

The most open views would be experienced by local residents at Phillips Mains and East Lodge, and cyclists / road users on the minor road extending past the northern edge of the Site (which forms part of NCR 1). These receptors would experience close proximity views of the construction activities in the context of surrounding farmland and forestry, as well as the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station (future baseline). The views experienced by residents would be static, whilst those from the minor road would be transient and of relatively short duration.

There would also be views of the construction activities from wider parts of the surrounding area, including intermittent sections of the A836, and the settlement of East Mey. However, for these receptors the construction activities would be experienced at greater distance, representing a discreet, low-lying addition to wider vistas incorporating intervening tree cover and scattered buildings.

In all cases, the construction activities would be experienced below the skyline, and would be back-clothed by tree cover and / or the distant landscape.

Along with the site clearance / excavation activities, material storage and an increase in traffic movement at the Site, the visual effects would occur primarily from the gradual appearance of the proposed infrastructure (considered below under 'Operational Effects'). The influence of construction activities on existing views would be reduced through good site management.

On balance, the visual magnitude of change experienced by receptors closest to the Site would be Substantial/Moderate during the construction phase. The level of effect on residents at Phillips Mains and East Lodge would be Major/Moderate, notable (temporary). The effects experienced by cyclists on NCR 1 and other users of the minor road to the north of the Site would be Moderate, not notable based on the limited duration of such views. For all other receptors, there would be no notable effects.

## **10 Operational Landscape Effects**

This section examines the effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development with reference to landscape fabric within the Site, landscape character and landscape designations.

## 10.1 Effects on Landscape Fabric

The landscape within the Site comprises actively-managed farmland (currently rough pasture), which is void of any notable features of landscape value, and accordingly is assessed as being of Low sensitivity to the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of a localised area of this farmland (approximately 11.1ha), within the context of surrounding agriculture and forestry. There would also be a very short section of existing wall removed on the northern Site boundary to facilitate the Site entrance and internal access track. The Proposed Development would introduce several elements of infrastructure (as listed in Section 7.1), which would be enclosed within a fenced compound. The Proposed Development would also incorporate new areas of native hedgerow and woodland edge planting, associated species-rich wildflower meadow and SuDS elements (as described in Section 7.2). These elements would represent the addition of beneficial landscape features to the locality that would exert increasing influence over time as they become more established.

On balance, the magnitude of change upon the fabric within the Site would be Moderate, giving rise to a Moderate/minor level of effect.

## 10.2 Effects on Landscape Character

The effect of the Proposed Development on landscape character largely depends on the key characteristics of the receiving environment; the degree to which the development may be considered to be consistent with or at odds with it; and how the proposal would be perceived within its setting.

### Farmed Lowland Plains LCT

The Proposed Development would be located within the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT. With reference to sensitivity analysis within **Appendix B**, the local landscape character at the Site is assessed as being of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. The effects on landscape character would be direct (predominantly affecting the Site itself) and indirect (affecting the visual and perceptual characteristics of the surrounding area).

In terms of direct effects, existing ground cover in the locality of the Site comprises farmland, typical of this LCT. There would be no notable loss of valued natural features to facilitate introduction of the proposed buildings or associated infrastructure. The proposed Site access would be from the existing minor road to the immediate north of the Site, negating the need for lengthy new links to the road network. The Proposed Development would incorporate native woodland edge planting and native hedgerow along the Site boundary, which would represent beneficial elements within the local landscape, whose influence upon landscape character would steadily increase over time in accordance with their establishment.

In terms of indirect effects, ZTV coverage is relatively widespread across local areas within approximately 500m-1km of the Site. However, in reality, established forestry to the west would curtail potential views from that direction. Potential views from wider parts of the LCT would be

fragmented and limited to localised areas. This includes slightly elevated ground in the vicinity of Barrock and East Mey, reflecting the *'occasional smooth hills [that] rise above the more low-lying plain'*.

From areas of the LCT around Barrock, the Proposed Development would be fully screened by intervening blocks of characteristic *'conifer woodlands located at the transition with the Sweeping Moorland and Flows'*. From areas around East Mey, the Proposed Development would represent a relatively distant, low-lying component, nestled against existing forestry (see Viewpoint 5). Within these views the proposed infrastructure would be experienced beyond isolated elements of existing built form (dwellings / farmsteads and overhead lines), and in the context of more distant *'small groups of large wind turbines'* at Lochend Wind Farm.

In addition, there is further ZTV coverage across lower lying parts of the LCT to the north, in the vicinity of Scarferry. Potential views of the Proposed Development from this area would be restricted by intervening tree cover (see Viewpoint 4).

On the whole, indirect effects resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development would be limited to localised geographic areas surrounding the Site, where the future baseline will incorporate the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. The Proposed Development would contrast with the more rural characteristics of the LCT, albeit agriculture would remain a defining characteristic and the *'predominant land cover'*. Based on the Site location and the low-lying nature of the infrastructure, there would be no effect on the *'dramatic views from the northern part of this landscape to Dunnet Head and the distant Orkney islands'*. There would be no loss of trees / woodland, or any of the characteristic *'historic features, including brochs and cairns, dotted across farmland'*. The muted colours of the proposed infrastructure and back-clothing by surrounding tree cover and / or the distant landscape would further reduce the influence of the Proposed Development.

In summary, the main effects would be focused within approximately 400-500m of the Site. Within this localised area the initial magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate at most, and the level of effect would be Major/moderate, notable. These effects would diminish steadily at greater distances. Across wider parts of the LCT, the magnitude of change would be Slight at most, and the resultant effect would be Moderate/minor at most, not notable. Extensive parts of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT would be unaffected.

By Year 10, the establishment of mitigation planting around the perimeter of the Site would largely contain potential views of the Proposed Development from surrounding areas. Accordingly, the magnitude of change would reduce to Slight/Negligible at most, and the residual level of effect would be Minor at most, not notable.

#### Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT

The Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT is located 520m to the southwest of the Site at the closest point and is considered to be of Medium sensitivity to the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage is primarily focused across localised areas of higher ground at Hollandmoy Moss (to the southwest and

southeast of the Site), where outward views are restricted by forestry. As such, there would be no discernible change to the existing landscape characteristics across the LCT. The magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the effect on landscape character would be Minor, not notable. The vast majority of the LCT would be completely unaffected.

#### Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT

The Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT is located 1.4km to the east of the Site. ZTV coverage is restricted to a very localised area on the edge of East Mey, where there is a gentle rise in the landform towards Mey Hill. From this localised area, the Proposed Development would represent a minor background element in the distant landscape to the southwest, beyond intervening buildings, overhead lines, and parcels of tree cover. There would be no discernible change to the existing landscape characteristics of the Coastal Crofts and Small Farms LCT. The magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the effect on landscape character would be Minor, not notable. The vast majority of the LCT would be completely unaffected.

### **10.3 Effects on Landscape Designations**

The effects of the Proposed Development on landscape designations are described below. Sensitivity to the Proposed Development is assessed as being High.

#### Castle of Mey GDL

The Castle of Mey GDL is located 1.2km to the north of the Proposed Development. With reference to the ZTV, there would be no views from central parts of the GDL, including the grounds and gardens in the vicinity of the castle. Instead, ZTV coverage is restricted to the southwestern edge of the GDL, from which potential views of the Proposed Development would be screened by intervening woodland extending along the A836 (see Viewpoint 4). The Proposed Development would be fully screened by this intervening woodland when 'in leaf'. Based on potential views during winter months, the magnitude of change would be Negligible, and the level of effect would be Negligible, not notable. By Year 10, the established planting along the Site boundary would fully screen the Proposed Development, hence there would be no residual visual effects.

## **11 Operational Visual Effects**

This section examines the visual effects based on changes to the existing view as experienced by people within the surrounding landscape (as described in Section 6.4). This process draws on the results of the ZTV and viewpoint analysis.

### **11.1 Visual effects experienced by Local Residents**

The appraisal below considers the effects experienced by local residents in the dispersed hamlets within the Study Area, as well as those in isolated residential dwellings / steadings in closest proximity to the Site. In all cases, sensitivity is deemed to be High.

### Mey

The hamlet of Mey is located 700m to the northwest of the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage is fragmented across the hamlet, and potential views would be further restricted by intervening buildings and vegetation. This includes tall continuous hedgerows extending north-south along the track to the southeast of the settlement, tree cover on the A836, and intervening forestry. Potential views from Mey Community Hall at the eastern edge of the settlement would be limited by a localised rise in the intervening landform to the south. As such, potential views of the Proposed Development would be limited to upper floor windows, and would remain partly screened by the forestry located adjacent to the Site. Within these views, the Proposed Development would represent a low-lying element, well below the skyline, accounting for a narrow angle of view. The muted colour of the perimeter fence would blend with the surrounding context. As the proposed hedgerow and woodland edge planting within the Site established, the Proposed Development would be increasingly screened from view.

Based on potential views from upper storey windows, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable. These effects would reduce further over time, and there would be no discernible effects by Year 10. The vast majority of residents would experience no view and no effect.

### East Mey

East Mey is located 1.2km to the northeast of the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage is predominantly focused across the dispersed properties in the southwestern part of the hamlet. With reference to Viewpoint 5, within the most open views from this area, the Proposed Development would be experienced as a relatively distant element beyond intervening farmland, nestled tightly against the backdrop of plantation forestry, well-below the skyline. The muted colours of the perimeter fence would blend with the surrounding context and restrict views of the infrastructure within the Site. As a result, the Proposed Development would represent a minor addition to the view. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect experienced by residents would be Moderate/Minor, not notable.

By Year 10, the established planting along the Site boundary would further soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and predominantly screen the infrastructure from view. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible.

### Gills / Upper Gills

Gills / Upper Gills is located 1.9km to the east of the Proposed Development. It is completely outside the ZTV, hence residents would experience no views and no effect.

### Scarfskerry

Scarfskerry is located 3.0km to the northwest of the Proposed Development at the closest point. ZTV coverage is continuous across this dispersed hamlet, albeit potential views would be fully screened by a combination of intervening forestry, tree belt along the A836, and built form at Mey. There would be no views and no effect.

## Barrock

Barrock is located 3.0km to the west of the Proposed Development at the closest point. The ZTV encompasses much of this dispersed hamlet, albeit potential views would be fully screened by intervening forestry at Hollandmey Moss. There would be no views and no effect.

## Isolated Residential Dwellings / Steadings

Phillips Mains (nos. 1-3) comprises a small cluster of properties located 280m to the south of the Proposed Development. No. 1 Phillips Mains comprises a south-facing farmhouse. Potential views of the Proposed Development from this property would be fully screened by intervening agricultural barns. Nos. 2 and 3 Phillips Mains comprise a two-storey, north-south facing terrace. Views of the Proposed Development from the north-facing frontage of these properties would be partially restricted by intervening garden vegetation, comprising mature trees and scrub along the northern edge of the curtilage. The clearest views would be experienced from upper-floor windows, during winter months. In more open views through this vegetation, the Proposed Development would form a new, low-lying element below the skyline, back-clothed by forestry and more distant tree cover (see Viewpoint 1). The perimeter fence would partially screen the elements of infrastructure located within the compound. The muted colours of the fence would soften its appearance and blend with the background landscape. Based on the most open views from these properties (from upper floor windows and the outer edge of the curtilage), the magnitude of change would be Substantial and the level of effect would be Major, notable. However, the views would be mitigated by intervening vegetation from ground-floor windows in particular. By Year 10, the established hedgerow along the Site's southern boundary would screen the fence and infrastructure beyond, thereby reducing magnitude of change to Slight/Negligible. The residual level of effect would reduce to Moderate/Minor, not notable.

East Lodge is a single-storey property located 400m to the northeast of the Proposed Development. It has windows on its southern and western facades and a garden area to the west of the dwelling, from which there would be views of the Proposed Development. With reference to Viewpoint 2 (located at the side of the nearby minor road), the Proposed Development would be experienced beyond a stone wall and intervening field, nestled tightly against existing forestry. Based on the future baseline, the Proposed Development would be located within the same field of view as the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. Given the limited height of the proposed infrastructure and the back-clothing by forestry, the Proposed Development would represent a new, albeit low-lying element within the view. The perimeter fence surrounding the compound would be recessive in colour and provide a degree of visual containment to the proposed infrastructure within the Site. On balance, the magnitude of change would be Moderate, and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. By Year 10, the established hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would predominantly screen the Proposed Development from view. As a result, the magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible and the residual level of effect would reduce to Minor, not notable.

West Lodge, Woodlands, Bruach House and The Beaches are located 520m to the west of the Proposed Development. West Lodge is a single-storey, north-south facing property. Potential views of the Proposed Development from this property would be fully screened by intervening garden vegetation comprising established coniferous trees. Woodlands is a two-storey, north-south facing property. Potential views of the Proposed Development from this property would be screened by intervening forestry to the east. Bruach House (two-storeys, east-west facing) and The Beaches (single-storey, north-south facing) are located slightly further north. From these properties, there would be partial views of the Proposed Development in the landscape to the east, beyond intervening forestry. Views would be limited to the northern edge of the Site, and would account for a narrow angle of view. The clearest views would be of the perimeter fence, which would represent a relatively discreet, low-lying element. The muted colours would blend with the surrounding context. On balance, the magnitude of change experienced by residents at Bruach House and The Beaches would be Slight/Negligible. The level of effect would be Minor, not notable. By Year 10, the Proposed Development would be fully screened by established perimeter hedgerow and woodland edge planting, hence there would be no views and no residual effect.

Rigifa is located 610m to the east of the Proposed Development. It is completely outside the ZTV, hence residents would experience no views and no effect.

Kittiwake is located 1.0km to the west of the Proposed Development. It is completely outside the ZTV, hence residents would experience no views and no effect.

Hillhead is located 1.0km to the northeast of the Proposed Development. It is on the edge of the ZTV, indicating that potential views of the Proposed Development would be partially screened by the intervening landform at Hill of Rigifa. As a result, visibility would be restricted to the northern part of the Site. The Proposed Development would represent a minor, low-lying element in the background landscape, accounting for a limited angle of view. The perimeter fence surrounding the compound would be recessive in colour and partly screen the proposed infrastructure within the Site. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable. By Year 10, the Proposed Development would be fully screened.

## **11.2 Visual effects experienced by Recreational Receptors**

The appraisal of effects experienced by recreational receptors is described below, listed in order of increasing distance from the Proposed Development. Recreational receptors are considered to be of High sensitivity unless stated otherwise.

### NCR 1

NCR 1 extends east to west through the Study Area, between Barrock and Gills. It extends along the northern boundary of the Site at the closest point. ZTV coverage is fragmented along the route and comprises a 1.7km section between Barrock and Moss of West Mey, and a 1.6km section between West Lodge and Hill of Rigifa.

For cyclist travelling east from Barrock, potential views of the Proposed Development would be fully

screened by intervening forestry. The first views would be experienced upon passing the forestry at Hollandmey Moss, where the route extends along the Site's northern boundary. From a 300m section, there would be close proximity views of the Proposed Development. These views would be predominantly limited to the perimeter fence (behind an existing stone wall that extends along the road), which would restrict views of the infrastructure within the Site. As the cyclists travels further east, the Proposed Development would be located behind the direction of travel.

For cyclists travelling west, the first views of the Proposed Development would be experienced as the route extends past the Hill of Rigifa, towards the Site. From this 850m section, there would be clear views of the Proposed Development, which would form a low-lying element, nestled tightly against existing forestry (see Viewpoint 2). Based on the future baseline, the Proposed Development would be located within the same field of view as the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. The clearest views would be of the perimeter fence, which would screen the infrastructure beyond. The muted colour of the fence would blend with the surrounding context. As the cyclist travels further west, the Proposed Development would be fully screened by forestry and thereafter would be located behind the direction of travel.

In summary, views of the Proposed Development from NCR 1 would be limited to a very localised section of the route, up to 850m in length dependent on direction of travel. From this localised section of the route, the magnitude of change would range from Substantial to Moderate, and the level of effect would be Major to Major/Moderate, notable. This accounts for a very short section of the overall route, and accordingly represents a very short duration of the cyclists' overall visual experience. Views from all other parts of the route would be fully screened. Accordingly, the magnitude of change across the route as a whole would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor, not notable.

By Year 10, the establishment of hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would predominantly screen the Proposed Development from view. As a result, the magnitude of change from the localised 850m section passing the edge of the Site would reduce to Negligible, and the residual level of effect along this section would reduce to Minor, not notable. Residual effects across the route as a whole would be Negligible.

#### North Coast 500

The North Coast 500 tourist route extends along the A836, 500m to the north of the Site at the closest point. ZTV coverage is fragmented along the route and comprises a 2.5km section between Mey and East Mey.

For road users travelling east, potential views of the Proposed Development would initially be screened by intervening buildings within Mey, and woodland belt on the edges of the hamlet. As the road user travels east of Mey, there would be a very short, glimpsed view towards the Site through a break in the roadside hedgerow. Within this view, the Proposed Development would be partially visible in the landscape to the south, representing a low-lying element adjacent to existing forestry. Given the transient, fast-moving nature of traffic on this route, the duration of this view would be

extremely short. As the road user travels further, these views would be fully screened by roadside vegetation, and thereafter the Proposed Development would be located behind the direction of travel.

For road users travelling west, the first views of the Proposed Development would be experienced whilst travelling through East Mey. The Proposed development would represent a distant element, beyond intervening farmland with scattered built form. The proposed infrastructure would be back-clothed by forestry, well-below the skyline, in the same field of view as the operational Lochend Wind Farm. The muted colours of the perimeter fence would blend with the surrounding context and restrict views of the infrastructure within the Site (see Viewpoint 5). As the road user travels further west, past the minor road junction to East lodge, views of the Proposed Development would be screened by roadside hedgerows. There would be a final glimpsed view of the Proposed Development through a break in the roadside hedge on approach to Mey. The duration of this view would be extremely short. Thereafter, views would be fully screened.

In summary, views of the Proposed Development would be primarily experienced by road users travelling in a westerly direction only. This would account for a limited section of the route in the vicinity of East Mey, approximately 1.8km in length (glimpsed views from the break in the roadside hedgerow to the east of Mey would be of such short duration that they would be barely discernible). Based on the distance of view and low-lying nature of the Proposed Development, it would represent a relatively discreet element within the wider view. The magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible, and the level of effect experienced by road users would be Minor, not notable.

By Year 10, the established planting along the Site boundary would further soften the appearance of the Proposed Development and predominantly screen the infrastructure from view. The magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible, and the level of effect would be Minor/Negligible.

#### Core Path network

##### *Core Path CA05.16*

With reference to **Figure 3**, Core Path CA05.16 forms a short link (540m in length) between Mey and West Lodge. At its closest point the route is located 520m to the northwest of the Proposed Development. ZTV coverage is continuous across the short route. However, potential views of the Proposed Development would be fully screened by a tall hedgerow that extends along the sides of the track. There would be no discernible view of the Proposed Development and no effect.

##### *Core Path CA05.17*

Core Path CA05.17 is located 1.7km to the north of the Proposed Development at the closest point. ZTV coverage is restricted to the western end of the route, near Harrow. Potential views of the Proposed Development from this localised section of the route would be fully screened by intervening woodland belt along the A836. There would be no view of the Proposed Development and no effect.

### *Other Core Paths*

All other Core Paths within the Study area are located at greater distance from the Proposed Development and are outside the ZTV. There would be no views and no effect.

### Castle of Mey

The Castle of Mey is located 1.2km to the north. As described above in Section 10.3; potential views of the Proposed Development from this heritage attraction would be screened by woodland belt along the sides of the A836 (see Viewpoint 4). Views would be restricted to extremely filtered views during winter months at most; there would be no views during summer months. Overall, the magnitude of change would be Negligible at most, and the level of effect would be Negligible. By Year 10 there would be no views and no effect.

## **11.3 Visual effects experienced by Road Users**

Views from the road network would typically be experienced transiently, and at speed.

### A836

The A836 extends east to west through the Study Area, 500m to the north of the Proposed Development at the closest point. Within the Study Area, this road follows the same route as the North Coast 500 (assessed above in Section 11.2) and as such the effects would be consistent. In summary, views of the Proposed Development would be localised and the effects would be Minor, not notable. By Year 10, the level of effect would reduce to Minor/Negligible.

## **12 Cumulative Effects**

This section examines the potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other large-scale development / elements of electricity infrastructure within the Study Area.

As described in Section 6.5, the consented Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station will be located 150m to the west of the Site, and is considered to form part of the future baseline. In addition, following a review of The Highland Council planning portal, the following operational, consented, and proposed (application and scoping stage) developments may also contribute towards cumulative effects:

- Operational Mey Community Wind Turbine, 330m to the northwest of the Site; and
- Proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development (S36 Application), comprising solar array, battery store and 10no wind turbines, up to 149.9m to tip. The closest wind turbine would be located 1.9km to the south of the Site.

In addition to the above, the operational Lochend Wind Farm (comprising 4no turbines, 99.5m to blade tip) is located 3.3km to the southwest of the Site. Whilst outside the Study Area, Lochend Wind Farm forms a recognisable visual feature across the wider landscape due to its height, and is therefore included in the following cumulative assessment. All other developments are located at greater distance and accordingly exert reduced influence across the Study Area.

With reference to the above list of cumulative developments; the cumulative effects in association with existing developments are considered certain, and those with consented developments are

considered very likely. The potential cumulative effect in combination with other planning proposals are inherently less certain, based on the final outcomes of such applications. As such, the cumulative assessment that follows is subdivided into (i) those with existing and consented development, and (ii) those with existing, consented and proposed schemes.

The cumulative assessment draws from the main assessment of landscape and visual effects as described in Sections 10 and 11 above. Receptors assessed as experiencing a Negligible or Slight/Negligible magnitude of change within the main assessment have been excluded from further consideration within the cumulative assessment on the basis that the Proposed Development would exert a very minor cumulative influence on such receptors, hence would not meaningfully contribute to potential cumulative effects. As such, the Proposed Development would not tip the balance from a minor cumulative effect to a notable cumulative effect. Any notable cumulative effects on such receptors would therefore occur as a result of other cumulative developments, rather than the Proposed Development.

## **12.1 Cumulative Landscape Effects**

### Cumulative Effects on the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT

#### *Existing and Consented Developments*

In addition to the Proposed Development; the existing Mey Community Wind Turbine and the consented Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station are / will be located within the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT, and exert direct effects upon local landscape character in their own right. The operational Lochend Wind Farm is located in the adjoining Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT, albeit exerts indirect cumulative effects on the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT based on its height.

With reference to the preceding assessment of effects on landscape character, the primary effects of the Proposed Development on the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT would be focused within approximately 400-500m of the Site, in the same context as the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. Within this localised geographic area the magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate. There would be some coalescence of these effects with the characterising influence exerted by the operational Mey Community Wind Turbine, albeit partly restricted by intervening forestry. The potential cumulative effects in combination with Lochend Wind Farm would be restricted by intervening forestry and its geographic separation from the Site.

In summary, the Proposed Development would contribute to cumulative effects on the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT in combination with the existing Mey Community Wind Turbine and the consented Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station. The cumulative influence of the Proposed Development would be very localised. Across wider parts of the surrounding landscape, the existing characteristics of the LCT would fully re-exert themselves. The cumulative level of effect across the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT would be Moderate/Minor, not notable.

The cumulative influence of the Proposed Development would reduce steadily over time in

accordance with the establishment of hedgerow and woodland edge planting around the Site perimeter, which would visually contain the infrastructure and represent beneficial landscape elements.

#### *Existing, Consented and Proposed Developments*

The proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development would exert (indirect) cumulative effects on this LCT. Based on the substantial height and spread of the proposed infrastructure, this would form a recognisable element across wide parts of the LCT.

Assuming a scenario in which all existing, consented and proposed developments are introduced, the cumulative level of effect across the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT would be Moderate. In this case, the effects are considered to be notable across localised parts of the LCT within the Study Area based primarily on the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development, albeit would diminish at greater distance and would not be notable across more distant coastal areas. Within this scenario, the Proposed Development would exert very limited influence on the overall cumulative effect.

## **12.2 Cumulate Visual Effects**

### Cumulative Effects Experienced by Local Residents at Phillips Mains (nos. 2-3)

#### *Existing and Consented Developments*

In addition to the Proposed Development, residents at Nos. 2-3 Phillips Mains will experience views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station as part of the future baseline. The building will be experienced through gaps in intervening garden vegetation, oblique to the main direction of view from the dwellings. Views of other cumulative developments are screened by intervening tree cover and buildings.

The cumulative magnitude of change would be Substantial, based on the proximity of view and the horizontal spread of development. The level of cumulative effect would be Major, notable. The cumulative influence of the Proposed Development would reduce steadily over time as the mitigation planting establishes along the southern edge of the Site. By Year 10, the Proposed Development would exert very limited cumulative influence on views from these properties.

#### *Existing, Consented and Proposed Developments*

Potential views of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development would be screened by intervening agricultural barns to the south of these properties. There would be no change to the cumulative level of effect.

### Cumulative Effects Experienced by Local Residents at East Lodge

#### *Existing and Consented Developments*

In addition to the Proposed Development, residents at East Lodge experience views of the operational Mey Community Wind Turbine to the west, and long-distance views of Lochend Wind Farm to the southwest. Residents will also experience views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station

as part of the future baseline from westerly-facing windows. In all cases the views are partly filtered by intervening garden vegetation. The Proposed Development would be experienced in the same field of view as the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station, hence limiting the potential incremental spread of infrastructure. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, and the level of effect would be Major/Moderate, notable. By Year 10, the establishment of hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would reduce its cumulative influence on the view. The established planting would also partially screen views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station.

*Existing, Consented and Proposed Developments*

Potential views of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development would be partly screened by the intervening landform. However, the upper parts of the proposed turbines would form new features in the landscape to the south through gaps in intervening garden vegetation. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Substantial, based primarily on views of the Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development. The cumulative level of effect would be Major, notable.

Cumulative Effects Experienced by Recreational Receptors: NCR 1

*Existing and Consented Developments*

Cyclists on NCR 1 currently experience clear, close proximity views of the existing Mey Community Wind Turbine, which accounts for a narrow angle of view in the landscape to the north. Cyclists also experience long-distance views of the operational Lochend Wind Farm from parts of the route, representing a distant feature to the south.

With reference to the main assessment, key views of the Proposed Development would be limited to an 850m section between Hill of Rigifa and the Site, and primarily would be experienced by cyclists travelling in a westerly direction. Cyclists travelling west will also experience views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station from the same section of the route as part of the future baseline. From this section of the route, the Proposed Development and Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station would be experienced in the same field of view, hence there would be no increase in the spread of infrastructure across wider parts of the surrounding landscape. These views would account for a very short section of the overall route, and would be of short duration. Both developments would be fully screened along the vast majority of the route.

As a whole, the cumulative magnitude of change experienced by cyclists on NCR 1 would be Slight, and the level of effect would be Moderate. This is assessed as not notable in this instance based on the short duration of views and the limited influence of certain developments based on the direction of travel. By Year 10, the establishment of hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would reduce the cumulative influence of the Proposed Development on the view. It would also partially screen views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station.

*Existing, Consented and Proposed Developments*

Cyclists on NCR 1 would experience views of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development in the landscape to the south, within the context of intervening forestry. The upper

parts of the turbines would form new features on the southern skyline. Within the Study Area, the cumulative magnitude of change would be Substantial/Moderate, based primarily on views of the Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development. The cumulative level of effect would be Major/moderate, notable. Within this scenario, the Proposed Development would exert very limited influence on the overall cumulative effect.

## **13 Conclusions**

The Proposed Development would be located in the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT, adjacent to an area of existing forestry. The Proposed Development would result in the loss of grass farmland within the Site, and the introduction of new infrastructure and perimeter fencing. This accounts for a relatively small parcel of land within a much wider area of agriculture, which is interspersed with pockets of tree cover / forestry and isolated elements of built form.

### Summary of Construction Effects

The potential influence of construction activities on the local landscape would be limited by the lack of distinct landscape features within the Site, in combination with the containing influence of the surrounding ground cover and forestry. Accordingly, the construction effects on landscape fabric and landscape character would not be notable.

The visual effects would also be localised, based on the low-lying nature of the construction activities in combination with the screening influence of the surrounding landform and forestry. Notable effects would be experienced by receptors in closest proximity to the Site, comprising residents at Phillips Mains and East Lodge. The se effects would be temporary.

### Summary of Operational Landscape Effects

The limited height of the Proposed Development, combined with the visually containing influence of surrounding forestry and landform, means that landscape effects would be localised. The key effects would be focused within approximately 400-500m of the Site. This would result in notable effects across localised parts of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT in closest proximity to the Proposed Development. This would account for a small part of the LCT. The effects on the LCT as a whole would be very limited. The effects on landscape character would diminish further over time in accordance with the steady establishment of mitigation planting around the perimeter of the Site, which would largely contain potential views of the Proposed Development from surrounding areas.

There would be no notable effects on any other LCTs or any landscape designations.

### Summary of Operational Effects on Visual Amenity

The visual effects of the Proposed Development would also be limited based on its vertical scale and location adjacent to forestry, which would screen views of the proposed infrastructure across the wider area. In more open views, the muted colours of the proposed infrastructure would typically blend with the surrounding landscape.

There would be no notable effects on views from any settlements. Notable effects on views would

be experienced by residents within isolated dwellings at Nos. 2-3 Phillips Mains (to the south of the Site) and at East Lodge (to the northeast). In each case the level of effect would steadily reduce in accordance with the establishment of proposed hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary. As such, by Year 10, the effects would not be notable. Potential views from all other dwellings would be restricted by intervening landform and / or vegetation.

Notable effects would also be experienced by recreational cyclists on localised parts of NCR 1, which extends past the northern Site boundary. This would account for a short section of the route, 200m – 850m in length, dependent on the direction of travel. The Proposed Development would be fully screened from all other parts of the route, hence the effects on the route as a whole would not be notable. By Year 10, the establishment of hedgerow and woodland edge planting along the Site boundary would predominantly screen the Proposed Development from view.

There would be no notable effects on views from any other recreational route / attraction, or road.

#### Summary of Cumulative Effects

In terms of cumulative landscape effects; the Proposed Development would augment the presence of the existing Mey Community Wind Turbine and the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station within the local landscape. The net effect would be to slightly extend the influence of this infrastructure in an easterly direction, in the context of existing forestry. In addition, should the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development be introduced, this would further increase the combined effects on the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT (resulting in notable effects in its own right).

The Proposed Development would not meaningfully contribute to notable cumulative effects on other LCTs or landscape designations within the Study Area.

In terms of cumulative visual effects; residents within isolated dwellings at No. 2-3 Phillips Mains and at East Lodge would experience notable cumulative effects. For residents at No. 2-3 Phillips Mains, the effects would be based primarily on combined views of the Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station and the Proposed Development. For residents at East Lodge the effects would be based primarily on views of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development. In both cases, views of the Proposed Development would reduce over time in accordance with the establishment of planting along the Site perimeter. As such, by Year 10, the Proposed Development would exert limited cumulative influence.

In addition, cyclists on NCR 1 would experience notable cumulative effects. Again, these would be primarily based on views of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development.

The Proposed Development would not meaningfully contribute to notable cumulative effects on views from any other residential property, recreational footpath / attraction, or road.

In conclusion, it is assessed that the Proposed Development could be accommodated at the Site with limited and localised effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

## References

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*National Planning Framework 4*, Scottish Government, 2023.

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*Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2)*, The Highland Council, 2023.

*The Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas*, Horner and MacLennan, on behalf of The Highland Council, 2011.

*Green Networks Supplementary Guidance*, The Highland Council, 2013.

*Trees, Woodlands and Development*, The Highland Council, Jan 2013.

## Appendix A: LVA methodology

### Landscape Effects

The starting point for the assessment of landscape effects was a desk-based review of published landscape assessments.

The sensitivity of the landscape to change resulting from a Proposed Development is not absolute and varies according to the existing landscape, the nature of the Proposed Development and the type of change being proposed. Good practice guidance differentiates between baseline sensitivity of the landscape and the sensitivity of a landscape to a specific development proposal. Accordingly, the concept of 'sensitivity to change' to new development, as described within the baseline published landscape character assessments, is distinct from the consideration of landscape sensitivity to the specific development proposal.

The baseline for consideration of landscape effects is the established landscape character. The landscape effects of a Proposed Development are considered against the key characteristics of the receiving landscape. The degree to which the Proposed Development may change 'the distinct and recognisable pattern that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse' (Countryside Agency and NatureScot, 2002), enables a judgement to be made as to the significance of the effect in landscape character terms. This involves consideration of where the Proposed Development may give rise to a different landscape character type or sub-type.

In general terms, a distinctive landscape of acknowledged value (e.g. covered by a designation) and in good condition is likely to be more sensitive to change than a landscape in poor condition and with no designations or acknowledged value. General guidance on the evaluation of sensitivity is provided below; however, the actual sensitivity would depend on the attributes of the landscape receiving the proposals and the nature of those proposals.

In order to reach an understanding of the effects of development upon the landscape it is necessary to consider different aspects of the landscape as follows:

- **Landscape Fabric / Elements:** The individual features of the landscape, such as hills, valleys, woods, hedges, tree cover, vegetation, buildings and roads for example which can usually be described and quantified;
- **Landscape Quality:** The state of repair or condition of elements of a particular landscape, its integrity and intactness and the extent to which its distinctive character is apparent;
- **Landscape Value:** The importance attached to a landscape, often used as a basis for designation or recognition which expresses national or regional consensus, because of its special qualities/attributes including aesthetic or perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or nature conservation interest; and
- **Landscape Key Characteristics:** The particularly notable elements or combinations of elements which makes a particular contribution to defining or describing the character of an area, which may include experiential characteristics such as wildness and tranquillity.

The sensitivity of the landscape to a particular development considers the susceptibility of the landscape and its value. The overall sensitivity is described as High, Medium or Low. This is assessed by taking into account the existing landscape quality, landscape value, and landscape capacity or susceptibility to change, which often vary depending on the type of development proposed and the particular site location, such that sensitivity needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. This should not be confused with ‘inherent sensitivity’ where areas of the landscape may be referred to as inherently of ‘high’ or ‘low sensitivity’.

For example, a National Park may be described as inherently of high sensitivity on account of its designation, but it may prove to be less sensitive to particular development and/or the design of that development.

Alternatively, an undesignated landscape may be of high sensitivity to a particular development and/or the design of that development regardless of the lack of local or national designation. The main factors to consider are discussed as follows:

Landscape susceptibility according to GLVIA3 means “the ability of the landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies”. Judgements on landscape susceptibility include references to both the physical and aesthetic characteristics and the potential scope for mitigation that would be in character with the landscape.

The judgements regarding susceptibility and value of the landscape character are identified within the sensitivity table included within **Appendix B**. These relationships can be complex and value alone does not automatically or by definition have high susceptibility to all types of change. Examples and on the evaluation of landscape sensitivity are provided below:

**Table A.1: Landscape sensitivity criteria**

High Sensitivity	Landscape character, characteristics and elements which would generally be of lower landscape capacity or scope for landscape change, and of notable landscape value and quality. These are landscapes that may be considered to be of particular importance to conserve and which may be particularly sensitive to change if inappropriately dealt with.
Medium Sensitivity	Landscape character, characteristics and elements where there would be a moderate landscape capacity or some scope for landscape change. Often include landscapes of moderate landscape value and quality which may be locally designated.
Low Sensitivity	Landscape Character, characteristics and elements where there would be higher landscape capacity or scope for landscape change to accommodate the proposed type of development. Usually applies to landscapes with of lesser landscape susceptibility or higher landscape capacity for the Proposed Development.

The level of landscape effects is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location. It is for each assessment to determine the assessment criteria and thresholds using well informed and reasoned judgements.

The magnitude of landscape change arising from the Proposed Development at any particular location is described as Substantial, Moderate, Slight or Negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

- degree of loss or alteration to key landscape features/elements or characteristics;
- distance from the development;
- duration of effect;
- landscape backdrop to the development; and
- landscape context of other built development, particularly vertical elements.

In order to differentiate between different levels of magnitude the following definitions are provided:

**Table A.2: Landscape magnitude of change definitions**

Substantial	Total loss or extensive alteration to key landscape elements/features/characteristics of the baseline, or introduction of uncharacteristic elements which would give rise to a fresh characterising effect.
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent, but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape (which could co-characterise parts of the landscape).
Slight	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape or may not lead to a characterising or co-characterising effect.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape elements/features/characteristics of the baseline and/or the introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. Change would be barely distinguishable approximating to no change.

Having established where the observation of varying levels of change to the landscape baseline may occur, the geographical extent of the change can be identified and a judgement made as to the level of effect in landscape character terms at varying scales.

The importance of the effect on the landscape resource may be determined by correlating the magnitude of the landscape change (Substantial, Moderate, Slight or Negligible) with the sensitivity of the landscape resource (High, Medium or Low). The following table sets out the main correlations between magnitude and sensitivity.

**Table A.3: Landscape effects matrix**

Landscape sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible

**Visual Effects**

The sensitivity of potential visual receptors will vary depending on the location and context of the viewpoint, the activity of the receptor and importance of the view. Visual receptor sensitivity is defined as High, Medium, or Low in accordance with the criteria in Table A.4.

**Table A.4: Visual sensitivity criteria**

High Sensitivity	Residents within the curtilage of their homes; users of outdoor recreational facilities including footpaths, cycle ways and recreational road users; people experiencing views from important landscape features of physical, cultural or historic interest, beauty spots and picnic areas.
Medium Sensitivity	Road users and travelers on trains experiencing views from transport routes. People engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape, e.g. nature conservation, golf and water-based recreation.
Low Sensitivity	Workers, users of facilities and commercial buildings (indoors) experiencing views from buildings.

The magnitude of visual change arising from the Proposed Development at any particular location is described as Substantial, Moderate, Slight or Negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:

- distance of the viewpoint/receptor from the development;
- duration of effect;
- extent of the development in the view;
- angle of view in relation to main receptor activity;
- proportion of the field of view occupied by the development;
- background to the development; and
- extent of other built development visible, particularly vertical elements.

It is assumed that the change would be seen in clear visibility and the assessment is carried out on that basis. Where appropriate, comment may be made on lighting and weather conditions. In order to differentiate between levels of magnitude the following definitions are provided in Table A.5:

**Table A.5: Visual magnitude of change definitions**

Substantial	Where the proposals would have a defining influence on the view. Change very prominent leading to substantial obstruction or complete change in character and composition of the baseline existing view.
Moderate	Where the proposals would be clearly noticeable and an important new element in the view. It may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of the baseline existing view
Slight	The proposals would be partially visible or visible at sufficient distance to be perceptible and result in limited or minor changes to the view. The character and composition, although altered will be similar to the baseline existing situation
Negligible	Change would be barely perceptible. The composition and character of the view would be substantially unaltered, approximating to little or no change.

The threshold for different levels of visual effects relies to a great extent on professional judgement. Criteria and local circumstances require close study and careful judgement.

Beneficial effects upon receptors may result from a change to a view by the removal of eyesores or through the addition of well-designed elements which add to the sense of place in a beneficial manner.

The following Table A.6 sets out the main correlations between magnitude and sensitivity.

**Table A.6: Visual effects matrix**

Visual sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor	
Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible	
Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Negligible	

**Level of Effect**

As per the matrices in Table A.3 and Table A.6; the level of any identified landscape or visual effect has been assessed in terms of Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible. Intermediate correlations are also possible and depend upon professional judgement, e.g. Major/moderate. These categories are based on the juxtaposition of viewer or landscape sensitivity with the predicted magnitude of change. This matrix should not be used as a prescriptive tool but must allow for the exercise of professional judgement. Effects which are judged to be Major/moderate or Major are considered to be notable. Where Moderate effects are predicted, professional judgement is applied to ensure that the potential for notable effects arising has been thoroughly considered.

## **Type of Effect**

Landscape and visual effects are described with reference to type (direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative), timeframe (short, medium, long term, permanent, and temporary) and whether they are beneficial or adverse (beneficial or adverse). The various types of effect are described as follows:

### Temporary / Residual Effects

If a proposal would result in an alteration to an environment whose attributes can be quickly recovered, then judgements concerning the significance of effects should be tempered in that light. Commercial development applications typically include permanent, long-term elements as well as minor alternations to landform resulting in residual landscape and visual effects.

### Direct/Indirect

Direct and indirect landscape and visual effects are defined in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). Direct effects may be defined “*result directly from the development itself*” (para 3.22). An indirect (or secondary) effect is one that results “*from consequential change resulting from the development*” (para 3.22) and is often produced away from the site of the Proposed Development or as a result of a complex pathway or secondary association. The direct or physical landscape effects of the Proposed Development would generally be limited to an area around the development itself. Any indirect landscape effects are concerned with the view of the changes from outside the local landscape.

### Beneficial/Adverse

Landscape and visual effects can be beneficial or adverse, and in some instances may be considered neutral. Beneficial effects upon landscape receptors may result from changes to the landscape involving beneficial enhancement measures or through the addition of well-designed elements, which add to the landscape experience or sense of place in a complementary manner.

The landscape impacts of the Proposed Development have been considered against the landscape baseline, taking account of the landscape characteristics. Taking a precautionary approach, changes to rural landscapes involving construction of man-made objects of a large scale are generally considered to be adverse, as they are not usually actively promoted as part of a district wide landscape strategy and therefore in the assessment of landscape effects they are assumed to be adverse, unless specified otherwise in the text.

It is important to recognise that for the same development, some may consider the visual effects for a development of this nature as adverse or beneficial. This depends to some extent on the viewer’s predisposition towards landscape change but also the principle of commercial building features in the landscape. Taking a precautionary approach in making an assessment of the ‘worst case scenario’, the assessment considers that all effects on views which would result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development to be adverse, unless specified otherwise in the text. It is noted, however, that not all people would consider the effects to be adverse.

## Visualisation Methodology

### Zone of Theoretical Visibility Maps

Computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Maps have been prepared to assist in viewpoint selection and to indicate the potential influence of the Proposed Development in the wider landscape.

The Visibility Map has been prepared at 1:30,000 scale to indicate the extent of potential visibility on the basis of bare ground, and does not include the screening effects of intervening established tree cover or buildings. The Visibility Map indicates areas from which it might be possible to secure views of part, or parts, of the Proposed Development (based on its maximum height / elevation). However, use of the Visibility Maps needs to be qualified on the following basis:

- There are a number of areas within the Visibility Maps from which there is potential to view parts of the proposal, but which comprise open moorland, farmland, or other land where the general public do not appear to exercise regular access;
- The ZTV does not account for the screening effects and filtering of views as a result of intervening features, such as buildings, trees and forestry;
- The Visibility Maps do not account for the likely orientation of a viewer – for example when travelling in a vehicle.

In addition, the accuracy of the Visibility Maps has to be considered. The ZTV is generated from Ordnance Survey (OS) Landform Panorama digital data based on a gridded terrain model with 5m cell sizes. The resolution of this model cannot accurately represent small-scale terrain features, which can therefore give rise to inaccuracy in the predicted visibility. This can lead to underestimation of visibility (e.g. a raised area of ground permitting views over an intervening obstruction), or can lead to overestimation of visibility (such as where a roadside embankment obscures a view).

### Viewpoint Assessment and Visualisations

The assessment of landscape and visual effects was carried out from a representative selection of viewpoints as agreed with The Highland Council. The viewpoint analysis is illustrated with reference to illustrative material, comprising photographs and photo-sheets. The photography was undertaken in accordance with accepted good practice and the Landscape Institute's Guidance. All photographs included in the assessment were taken with a digital SLR camera with full size sensor, using a 50 mm focal length lens, mounted on a level panoramic head tripod.

The visualisations presented in **Appendix D** are illustrated in accordance with the angles of view specified within The Highland Council's Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (2016). In addition, Viewpoint 1 is re-illustrated at a wider 90° field of view within **Appendix E** in order to show the full extents of the Site and the surrounding context.

## **Appendix B: Landscape Character Sensitivity**

The sensitivity of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT is assessed in detail below. Landscape sensitivity is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location taking account of susceptibility as described in the methodology. To understand the sensitivity of a particular landscape and its location it is good practice to consider a range of criteria as set out in the table below.

The table below highlights the inherent sensitivities of this landscape to the development proposed, with reference to characteristics as described within NatureScot's 2019 National Landscape Character Assessment where relevant Extracts from this document are included in italics.

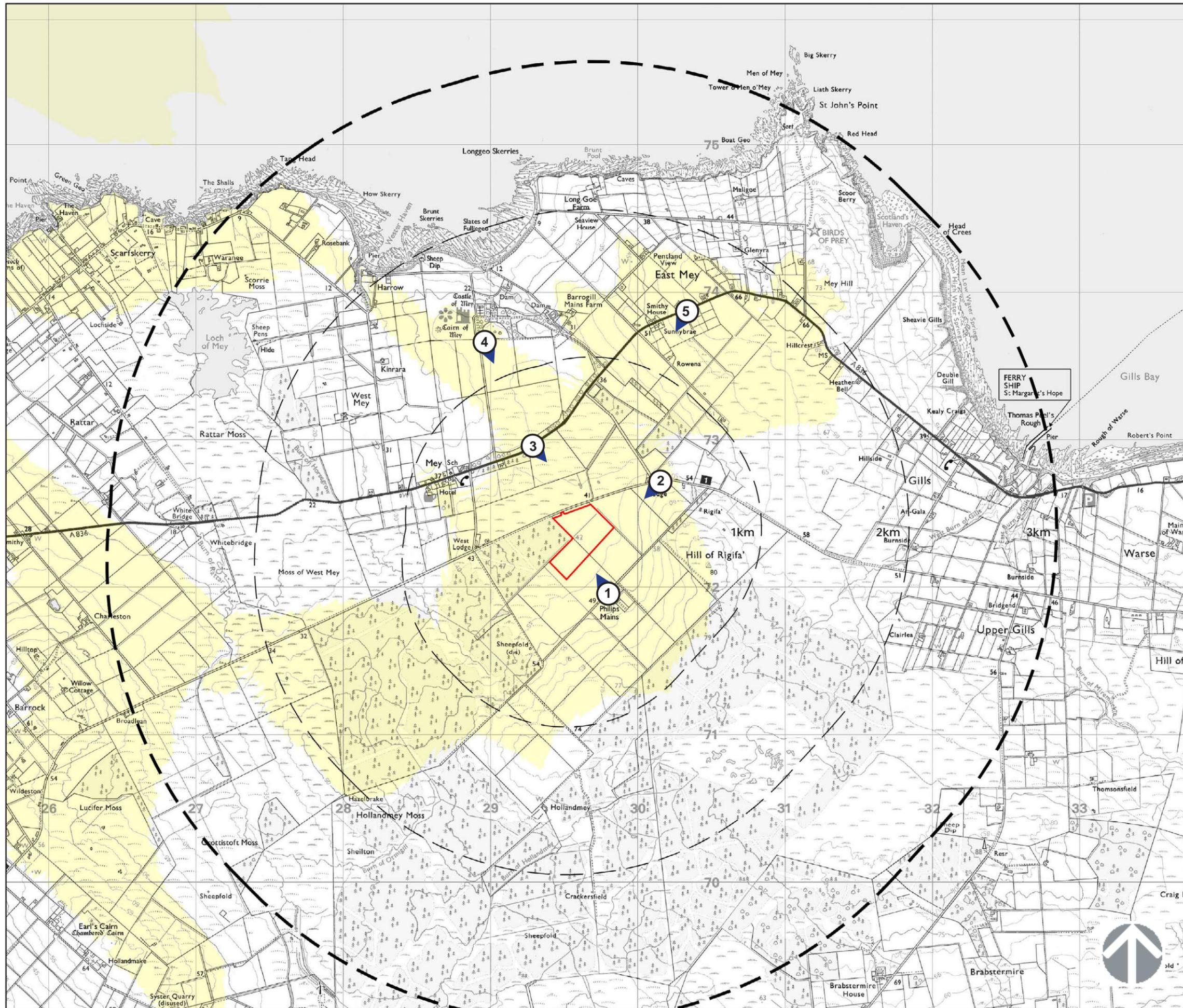
**Table B.1: Sensitivity of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT**

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
<b>Physical</b>				
Scale	Large scale featureless landscapes	Small to medium scale landscapes with some scaling features	The LCT is characterised as a ' <i>low-lying plain</i> , [with a] <i>gently undulating</i> ' landform, from which there are long distance views out to ' <i>Dunnet Head and the distant Orkney islands</i> '. These characteristics increase the sense of scale, although it is reduced in some areas based on localised tree cover / forestry.	Medium
Openness	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	The LCT is described as a ' <i>generally open, low-lying plain</i> '. However, the local area surrounding the Site is enclosed by forestry to the west and south, and by the rising landform at Hill of Rigifa to the east, hence is relatively enclosed and visually contained in comparison to wider parts of the LCT.	Low
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, flat or uniform landscapes	Dramatic, rugged and complex landscapes	The landscape forms a low-lying plain, with 'occasional smooth hills' located to the south and east.	Medium/Low
Land cover	Extensive areas of simple regular land cover (including farming and forestry)	Complex, intimate or mosaic cover	The local area is extensively farmed, albeit the characteristic ' <i>larger conifer woodlands located at the transition with the Sweeping Moorland and Flows</i> ' are evident in the vicinity of the Site.	Medium
Complexity and patterns	Simple and sweeping lines, linear features and patterns	Complex or irregular patterns	As above, agriculture is ' <i>the predominant land cover</i> ' with a rectilinear field pattern. Blocks of woodland and coniferous forestry form contrasting elements within the overall landscape pattern.	Medium

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	The Site is located within a rural area, primarily comprising traditional farmland. There are scattered elements of modern infrastructure, including Mey Community Wind Turbine, as well as the more distant Lochend Wind Farm. The Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station will also be located in close proximity to the Site as part of the future baseline	High/Medium
<b>Overall physical sensitivity</b>				Medium
<b>Perceptual</b>				
Wildness / Sense of Remoteness	Busy evidence of human activity	Remote, peaceful or sense and tranquillity, solitude and emptiness	The locality has limited development, and the scattered settlements within the Study Area are of low density. Human influences are evident based on <i>the 'prominent visibility of larger wind farms in adjacent Landscape Character Types'</i> (i.e. Lochend Wind Farm). The Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station will also be located in close proximity to the Site as part of the future baseline.	High/Medium
Perception of Change	Dynamic or modern landscapes	Ancient landscapes, designed landscapes or with obvious historical continuity	As above, the agricultural landuse and vernacular settlement patterns are suggestive of a traditional landscape with historic continuity. However, the scattered elements of infrastructure (Mey Community Wind Turbine and Gills Bay 132kV Switching Station, as well as the more distant Lochend Wind Farm) are suggestive of modern changes.	High/Medium
<b>Overall Perceptual Sensitivity</b>				High/Medium
<b>Visual</b>				

Factors affecting the sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity	Higher Sensitivity	Characteristics of local landscape at the Site	Sensitivity Rating
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low-lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	The local landscape is low-lying and does not contribute towards the skyline. The Site is back-clothed by surrounding forestry to the north / west, and surrounding areas of higher ground to the south / east.	Low
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	The LCT is described as having ' <i>extensive views</i> '. However, the local landscape is visually contained by forestry and landform to the west, south and east.	Low
<b>Overall Visual Sensitivity</b>				Low
<b>Value</b>				
Rarity	Commonplace	Rare	The agricultural landscape is relatively common, albeit its association with the coast, including the 'dramatic views from the northern part of this landscape to Dunnet Head and the distant Orkney islands' make it more distinctive.	Medium
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	The Castle of Mey GDL is located to the north of the Site. There are no other landscape designations within the Study Area.	Medium/Low
Cultural associations	No specific cultural associations	Strong cultural association	As above, the Castle of Mey is located to the north of the Site. The wider LCT also incorporates scattered historic features 'including brochs and cairns'.	Medium
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity function	Well used for amenity/recreation, especially for National trails or other long-distance routes	The LCT incorporates localised Core Paths, as well as sections of NCR 1 and the North Coast 500 route.	Medium
<b>Overall Value</b>				Medium
<b>Overall Sensitivity of the Farmed Lowland Plains LCT</b>				<b>Medium</b>

**Appendix C: Landscape Figures 1-5**



**LEGEND**

- Site Boundary
- Predicted Visibility
- Viewpoints

1. Minor Road near Phillips Mains
2. NCR 1, near East lodge
3. A836 (North Coast 500) at Mey
4. Minor road at Castle of Mey GDL
5. A836 (North Coast 500) at East Mey

0 500 1km

**NOTES:**

The calculations of this map are based on the 'bare earth' model of the landform and do not allow for any effects of screening from obstacles such as buildings and vegetation. The landform data was taken from Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 digital terrain model (gridded height data at 5m intervals).

This figure has been based on the following data:

Max Building Height: 3.0m

02	30/10/23	Update RLB, re-calc ZTV
01	12/06/23	Draft Issue

Issue Date Comments

Drawn AH Approved NH Date 12/06/23

Drawing Status

# Planning

Project: Mey BESS

Address: Phillips Mains farm, KW14 8XH

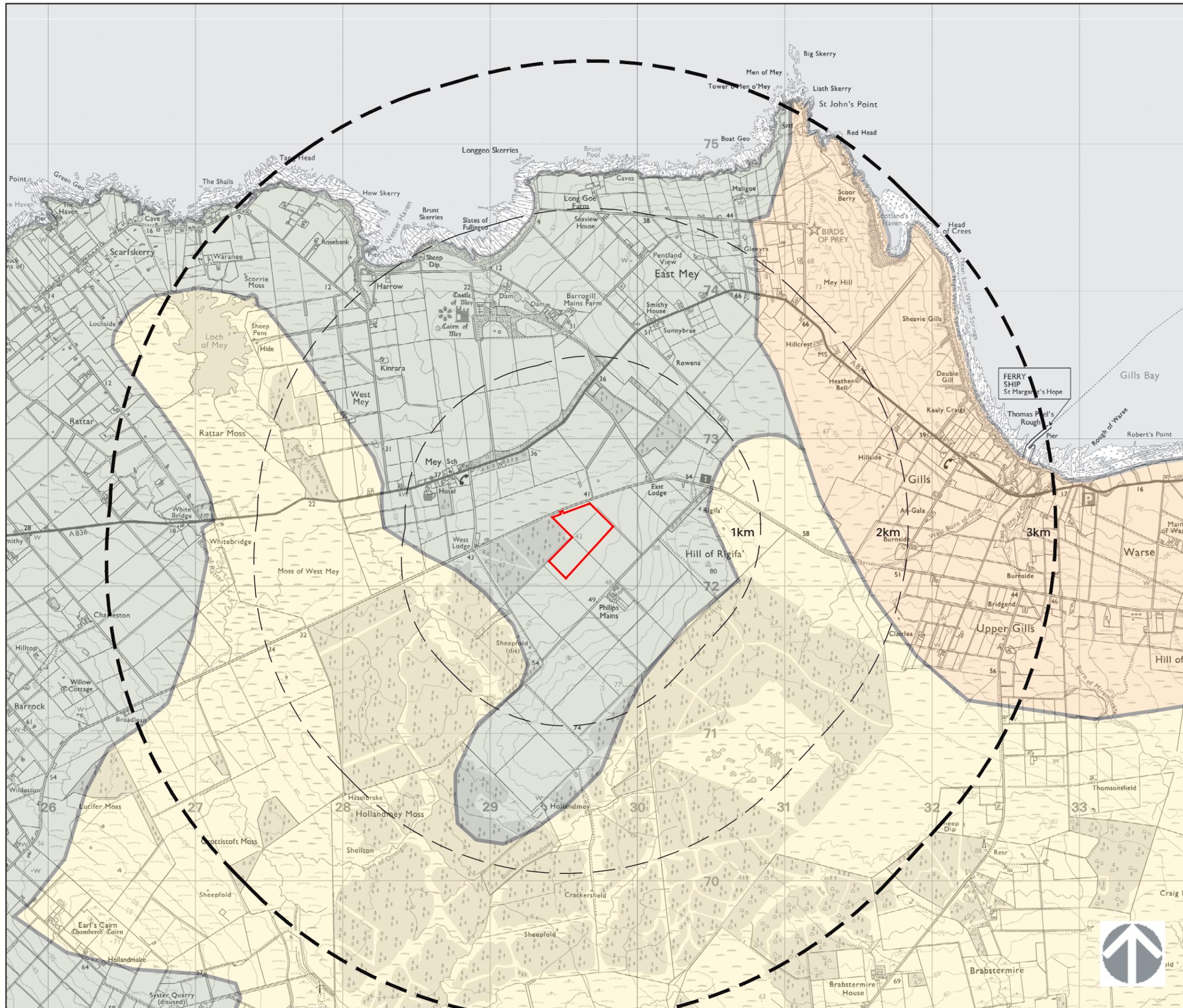
Client: Simec Atlantis Energy

Title LVA Figure 1  
Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoints

Issue: 02 Scale: 1:25,000 at A3

Simec Atlantis Energy

TGP Landscape Architects  
100 West Regent St  
Glasgow  
G2 2QD



LEGEND	
	Site Boundary
	Sweeping Moorland and Flows
	Farmed Lowland Plain
	Coastal Crofts & Small Farms

0 500 1km		
02	30/10/23	Update RLB
01	12/06/23	Draft Issue
Issue	Date	Comments

Drawn AH Approved NH Date 12/06/23

Drawing Status  
**Planning**

Project: Mey BESS  
 Address: Phillips Mains farm, KW14 8XH  
 Client: Simec Atlantis Energy

Title LVA Figure 2  
 Landscape Character Types

Issue: 02 Scale: 1:25,000 at A3

Simec Atlantis Energy

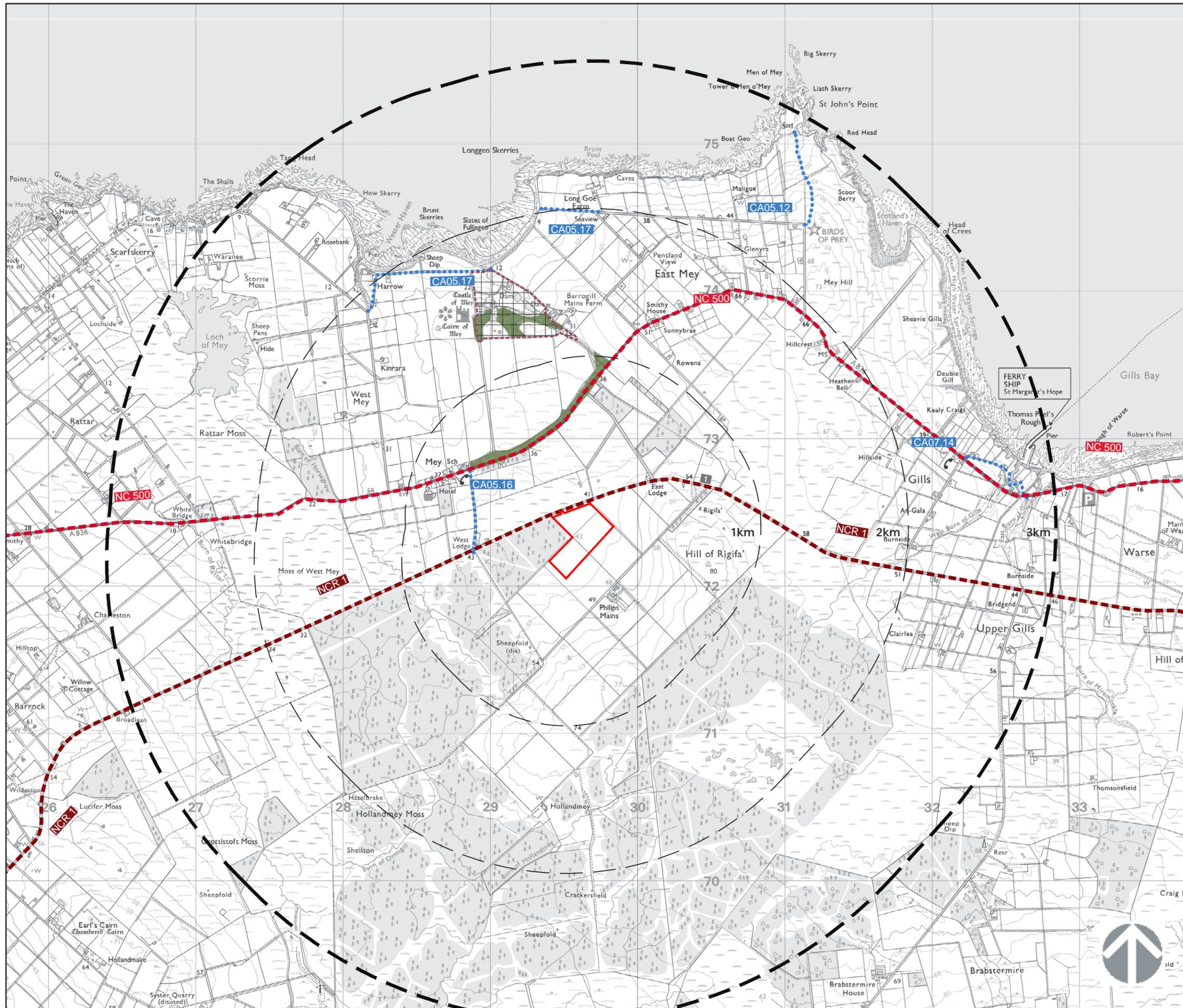


**SIMEC ATLANTIS ENERGY**

TGP Landscape Architects  
 100 West Regent St  
 Glasgow  
 G2 2QD



**TGP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**



**LEGEND**

- Site Boundary
- NCR 1
- Core Path
- NC 500
- Ancient Woodland
- Garden and Designed Landscapes

0 500 1km

02	30/10/23	Update RLB
01	12/06/23	Draft Issue
Issue	Date	Comments

Drawn AH Approved NH Date 12/06/23

Drawing Status

# Planning

Project: Mey BESS  
 Address: Phillips Mains farm, KW14 8XH  
 Client: Simec Atlantis Energy

Title LVA Figure 3  
 Landscape Designations, Ancient Woodland and Recreational Routes

Issue: 02 Scale: 1:25,000 at A3

Simec Atlantis Energy

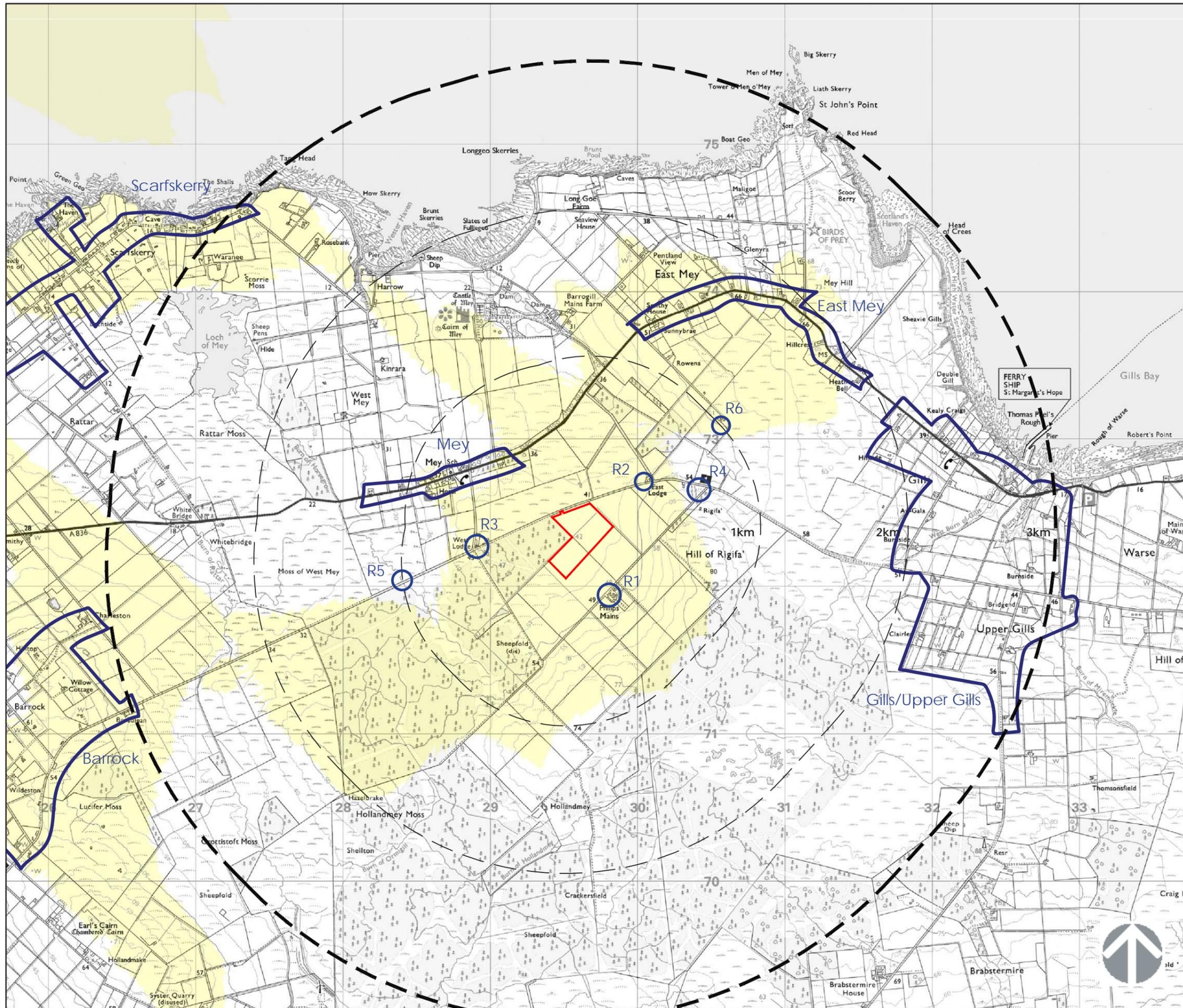


**SIMEC ATLANTIS ENERGY**

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 Glasgow G2 2QD



**TGP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**



**LEGEND**

-  Site Boundary
-  Predicted Visibility
-  Hamlets
-  R2 Dispersed Dwellings

R1. Philips Mains (nos. 1-3)  
 R2. East Lodge  
 R3. West Lodge, Woodlands, Bruach House and The Beaches  
 R4. Rigifa  
 R5. Kittiwake  
 R6. Hillhead

0 500 1km

02	30/10/23	Update RLB
01	12/06/23	Draft Issue
Issue	Date	Comments

Drawn AH Approved NH Date 12/06/23

Drawing Status

**Planning**

Project: Mey BESS  
 Address: Phillips Mains farm, KW14 8XH  
 Client: Simec Atlantis Energy

Title LVA Figure 4  
 Residential Receptors

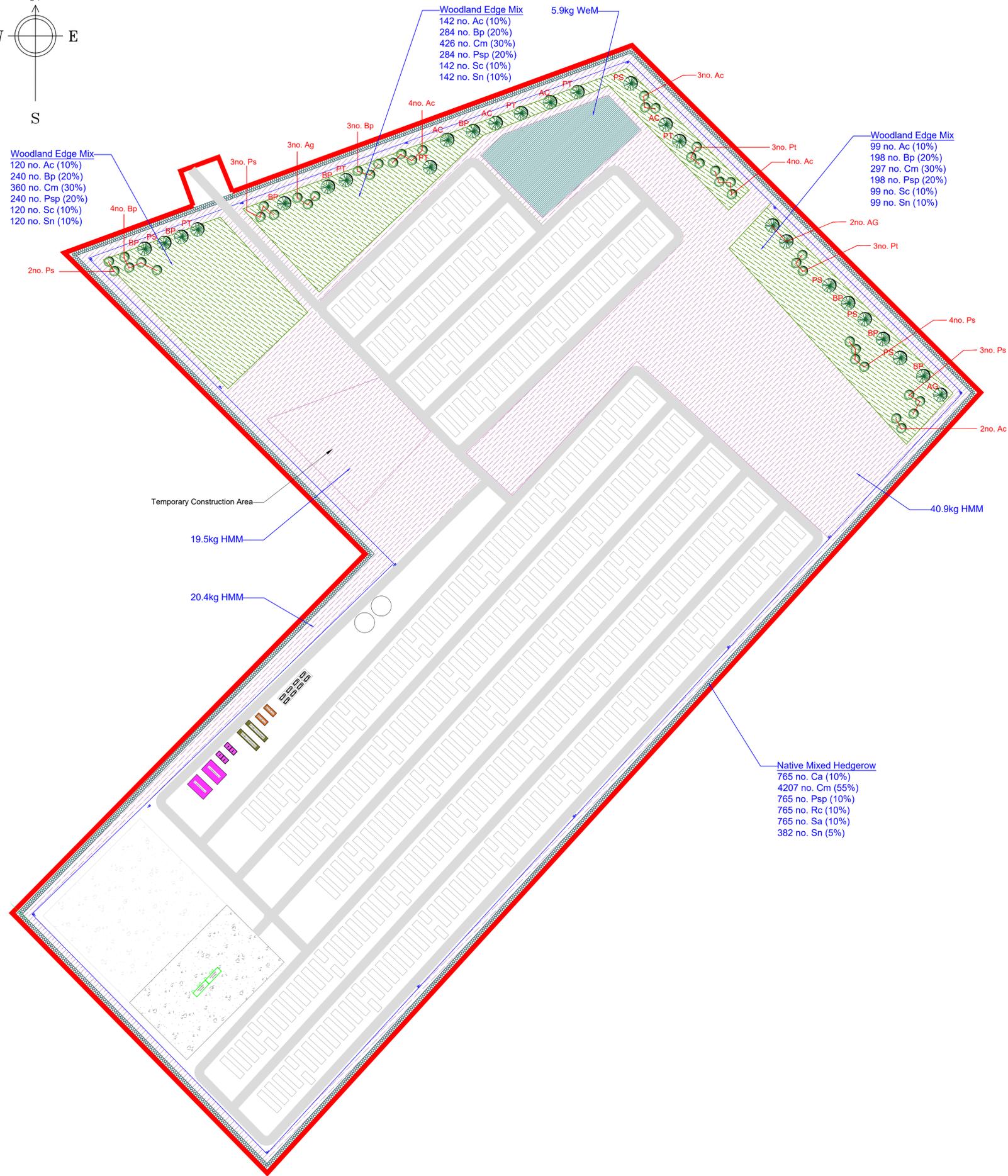
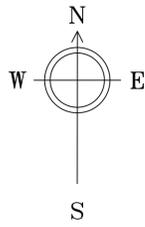
Issue: 02 Scale: 1:25,000 at A3

Simec Atlantis Energy

  
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**TGP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**



**Legend**

- Site Boundary
- Fence
- Proposed Native Tree (Select Standard)
- Proposed Native Tree (Feather)
- Proposed Native Woodland Edge Mix
- Proposed Native Mixed Hedgerow
- Proposed Native Wildflower Meadow
- Proposed Wet Wildflower Mix (SUDS area)

Native Trees (Select Standard)						
No.	Code	Species	Form	Height (cm)	Grown	Breaks
4	AC	Acer campestre	Select Standard	300-350	RB	3
3	AG	Alnus glutinosa	Select Standard	300-350	RB	3
8	BP	Betula pendula	Select Standard	300-350	RB	3
5	PS	Pinus sylvestris	Select Standard	300-350	RB	3
6	PT	Populus tremula	Select Standard	300-350	RB	3

Native Trees (Feathers)						
No.	Code	Species	Form	Height (cm)	Grown	Breaks
13	Ac	Acer campestre	Feather	150-175	2x: BR	3
3	Ag	Alnus glutinosa	Feather	150-175	2x: BR	3
7	Bp	Betula pendula	Feather	150-175	2x: BR	3
12	Ps	Pinus sylvestris	Feather	150-175	2x: BR	3
6	Pt	Populus tremula	Feather	150-175	2x: BR	3

Native Woodland Edge Mix (planted in groups of 3-7no. same species)							
No.	Code	% mix	Species	Form	Height (cm)	Grown	Spacing
361	Ac	10	Acer campestre	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	0.3/m2
722	Bp	20	Betula pendula	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	0.3/m2
1083	Cm	30	Crataegus monogyna	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	0.3/m2
722	Psp	20	Prunus spinosa	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	0.3/m2
361	Sc	10	Salix caprea	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	0.3/m2
361	Sn	10	Sambucus nigra	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	0.3/m2

Native Mixed Hedgerow (planted in double staggered row, 5no per m, in groups of 3-7no same species)							
No.	Code	% mix	Species	Form	Height (cm)	Grown	Pot size
765	Ca	10	Corylus avellana	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	N/A
4207	Cm	55	Crataegus monogyna	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	N/A
765	Psp	10	Prunus spinosa	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	N/A
765	Rc	10	Rosa canina	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	N/A
765	Sa	10	Sorbus aucuparia	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	N/A
382	Sn	5	Sambucus nigra	Transplant	60-80	1+1: BR	N/A

Native Wildflower Meadow			
Weight	Seed Mix	Description	Sowing rate
80.8kg	HMM	Hedgerow Meadow Mix (SCM4) by Scotia Seeds	3.0g / m2

Wet Wildflower Mix			
Weight	Seed Mix	Description	Sowing rate
5.9 kg	WeM	Wet Meadow Mix (SCM2) by Scotia Seeds	3.0g / m <sup>2</sup>

**Notes: Planting Approach**

- Topsoil: Where necessary, topsoil shall be a minimum of 400mm deep over new planting areas and graded to fall (excluding wildflower areas). Imported topsoil must be BS 3882:2015 compliant and existing topsoil must be cultivated in accordance with BS 3882:2015 outside Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of existing trees. No cultivation should take place in wet / waterlogged conditions and within the RPAs of existing trees.
- Native Trees (Select Standards and Feathers): trees to be planted in individual pits - Select Standards at 850x850x450mm, Feathers at 450x450x450mm, or dimensions of roots, whichever is greater. Each tree to be supported by 1no. stake and bio-degradable tie, and protected via rabbit guard. All native trees shall be of local provenance.
- Native Woodland Edge Mix: Bare root shrubs to be planted at rate of 0.3no. plants per m<sup>2</sup> (i.e. 1.8m centres). Planting areas cultivated to 150mm depth, in pits 150 x 150 x 150mm. Each plant to be supported by 1no. cane, and protected via rabbit guard. All plants shall be of local provenance.
- Native Mixed Hedgerow: Hedges to comprise a double staggered row of plants 400mm apart within each row, overall 5no. plants per linear metre. Species mixed throughout the hedge line in random groups of 3/7. 500mm wide trench excavated to take plants and topsoil cultivated to 450mm depth. All plants shall be of local provenance.
- Mulch: All tree and hedge planting areas to be covered using coarse bark mulch 50-75mm depth.
- Native Wildflower Meadow & Wet Wildflower Mix: prior to sowing, the ground shall be cultivated to depth of 50mm, reducing upper soil to fine till.
- Planting Seasons / Phasing: Planting to be undertaken in accordance with planting season (Nov - March for bare root plants), Wildflower Meadow to be sown upon completion of the works at first available season (Spring sowing from March to May, or Autumn sowing from Mid-August to late September).

**Notes: Future Management**

Management shall be undertaken in a manner which maintains the mix of plant species and prevents any one species from dominating. Weed control shall ensure any pernicious weeds are removed, allowing specified species to develop free of unnecessary competition.

Trees shall be periodically inspected to ensure they remain in a healthy and attractive condition. Pruning of trees shall be carried out in accordance with BS 3998: 1989. Maintenance works will observe bird nesting seasons (months of March to July inclusive) with management works to trees undertaken outwith this period. Replacement of any plants that are found to be dead or dying shall be undertaken on an annual basis up to the end of the fifth year following planting. This shall be undertaken at the first planting season with a like-for-like replacement.

All types of litter, debris and rubbish that has become trapped in tree branches shall be removed on a periodic basis.

Rev Date Note



Project	Mey BESS				
Title	Landscape Plan LVA Figure 5				
Date	Scale	Drawn	Checked		
01/11/23	1: 1000 @ A1	XX	NH		
Job	Suitability	No.	Issue	Revision	
2142	-	L01	-	-	
LI WORKSTAGE: 0/1 2 3 4 5 6					
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>					

**DISCLAIMER:**  
Do not scale from this drawing.  
All dimensions to be verified on site prior to commencement of works.  
Drawing to be read in conjunction with related TGP drawings, consultants drawings and any other relevant information.  
This drawing is the copyright of TGP Landscape Architects Ltd. unless otherwise specified.

**Appendix D - Landscape Visualisations: Viewpoints 1 – 5**

# Mey Mains BESS - LVA Viewpoints Plan



# VP 01 MINOR ROAD NEAR PHILLIPS MAINS



Grid Ref: E329815 N971971

Distance to Site Boundary: 0.27km

1:25,000

VP Description: This viewpoint is located on the track in front of the houses at Phillips Mains.





**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30

*The images contained on this page and the following page are not representative of scale and distance from the actual viewpoint and show the development in its wider context only*



**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

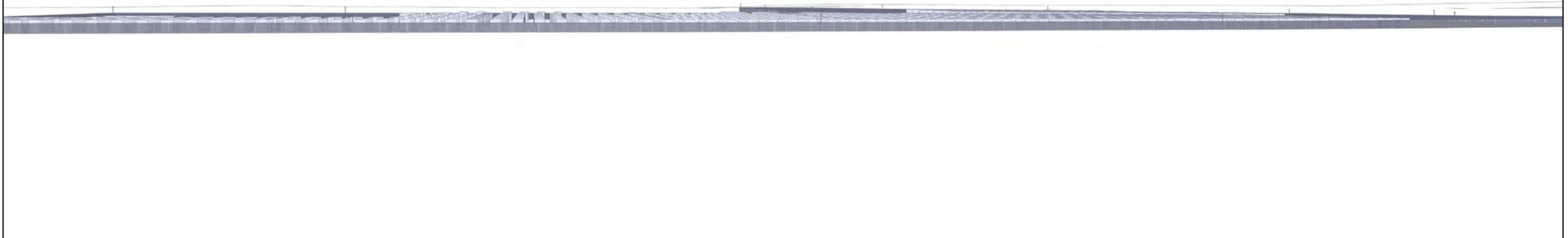
Distance to site boundary: 0.27km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30

*The images contained on this page and the following page are not representative of scale and distance from the actual viewpoint and show the development in its wider context only*



Existing view

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**



Wireline overlay



Photomontage

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

When viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx 500mm), this printed image is representative of our detailed central vision, but is not representative of scale and distance

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 50mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30



Photomontage after 10 years

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

When viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx 500mm), this printed image is representative of our detailed central vision, but is not representative of scale and distance

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 50mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30



Photomontage

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

This image should be viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx. 500mm)

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 75mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30



Photomontage after 10 years

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

This image should be viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx. 500mm)

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 75mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30

# VP 02 NCR 1 NEAR EAST LODGE



Grid Ref: E330150 N972709

Distance to Site Boundary: 0.45km

1:25,000



VP Description: This viewpoint is located on the minor road that forms part of NCR 1, near the isolated dwelling of East Lodge.



**VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge**

Distance to site boundary: 0.45km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:11

*The images contained on this page and the following page are not representative of scale and distance from the actual viewpoint and show the development in its wider context only*



**VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge**

Distance to site boundary: 0.45km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:11

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Existing view

VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge



Wireline overlay



Photomontage

**VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge**

When viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx 500mm), this printed image is representative of our detailed central vision, but is not representative of scale and distance

Distance to site boundary: 0.45km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 50mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:11



Photomontage after 10 years

**VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge**

When viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx 500mm), this printed image is representative of our detailed central vision, but is not representative of scale and distance

Distance to site boundary: 0.45km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 50mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:11



Photomontage

**VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge**

This image should be viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx. 500mm)

Distance to site boundary: 0.45km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 75mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:11



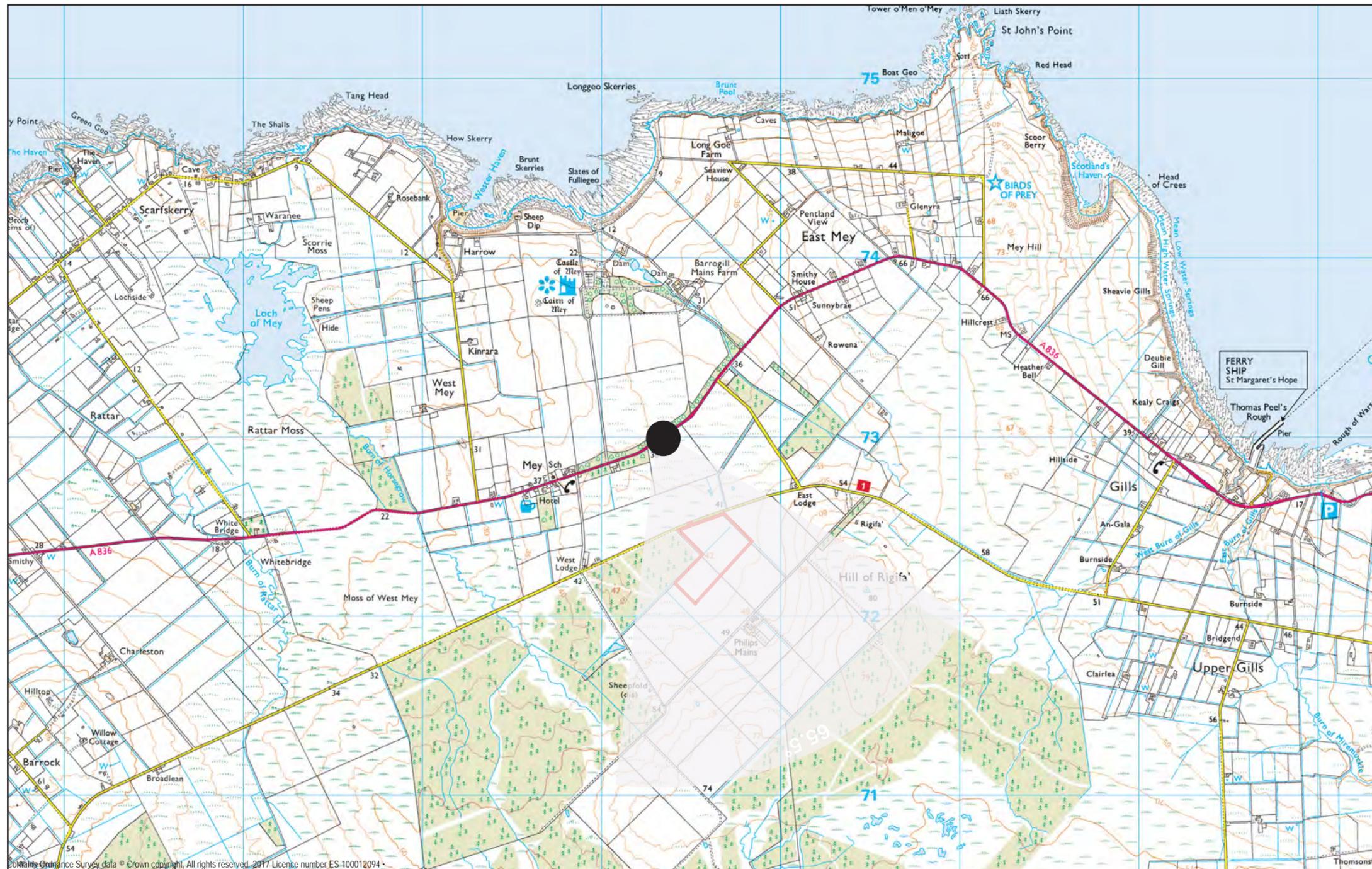
Photomontage after 10 years

**VIEWPOINT 2 - NCR 1, near East lodge**

This image should be viewed at a comfortable arm's length (approx. 500mm)

Distance to site boundary: 0.45km Camera: Canon 5D Focal length: 75mm  
Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:11

# VP 03 A836 (NORTH COAST 500) AT MEY



Grid Ref: E329414 N973021

Distance to Site Boundary: 0.54km

1:25,000

VP Description: This viewpoint is located at a gap in the roadside hedgerow near the hamley of Mey.





**VIEWPOINT 3 - A836 (North Coast 500) near Mey**

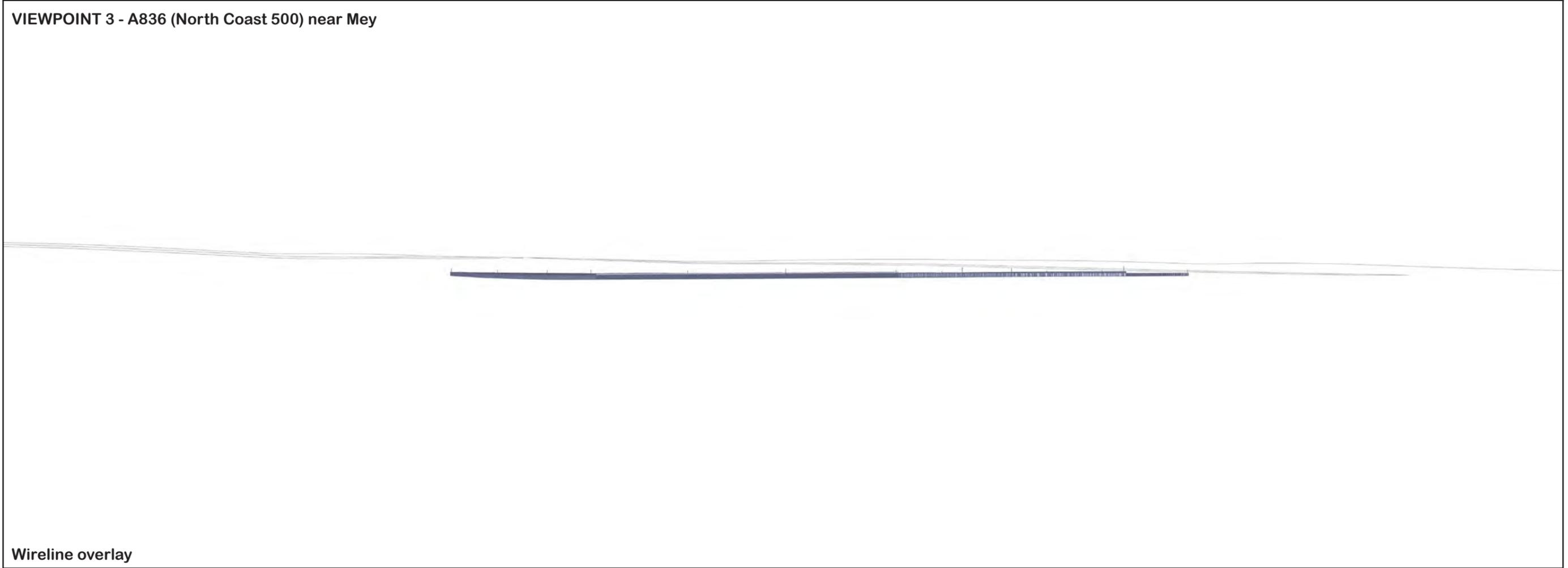
Distance to site boundary: 0.54km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 14:58

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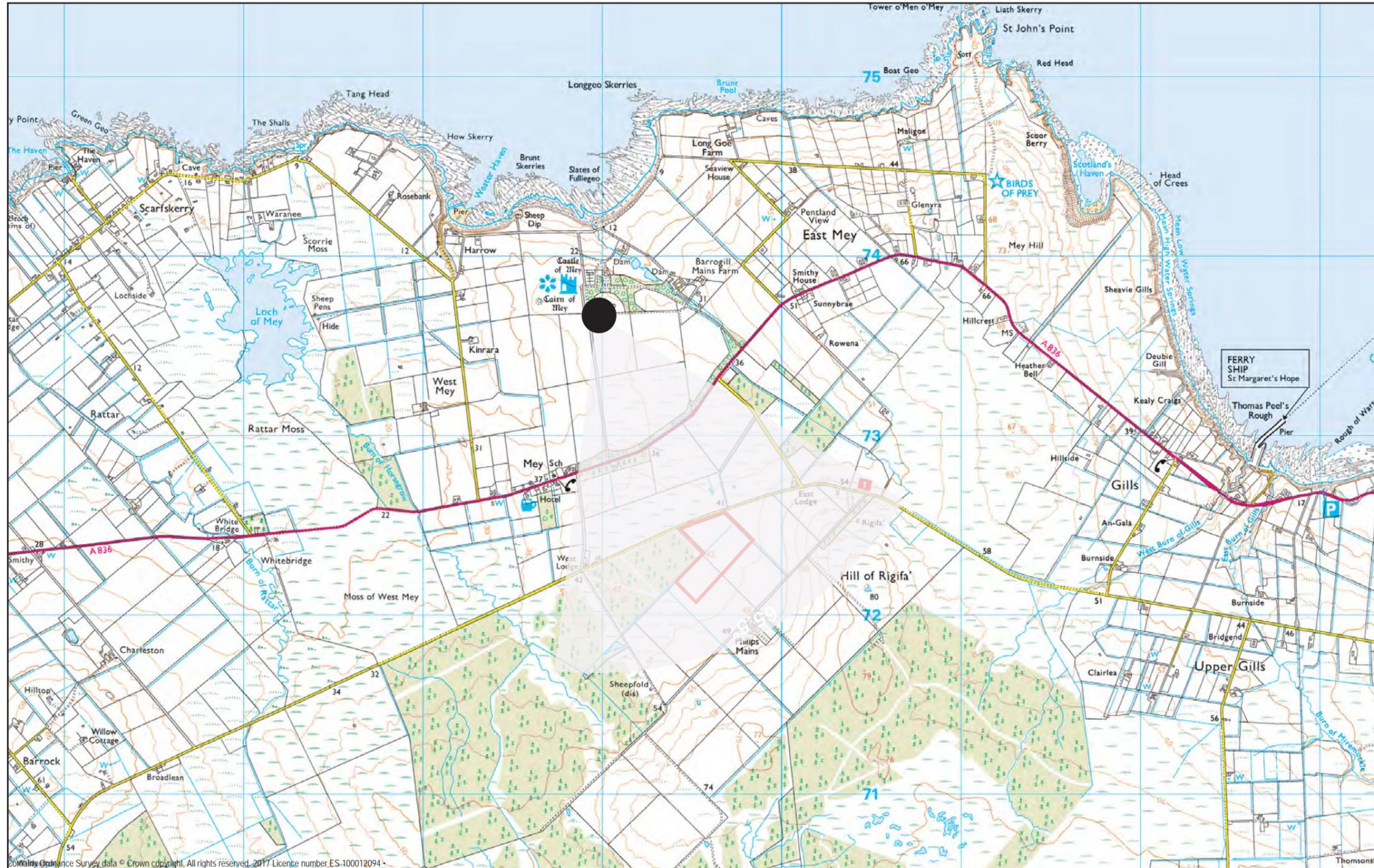
Existing view

VIEWPOINT 3 - A836 (North Coast 500) near Mey



Wireline overlay

VP 04 CASTLE OF MEY GDL



Grid Ref: E328958 N973663

Distance to Site Boundary: 1.29km

1:25,000

VP Description: This viewpoint is located on the southern edge of the Castle grounds.





**VIEWPOINT 4 - Castle of Mey GDL**

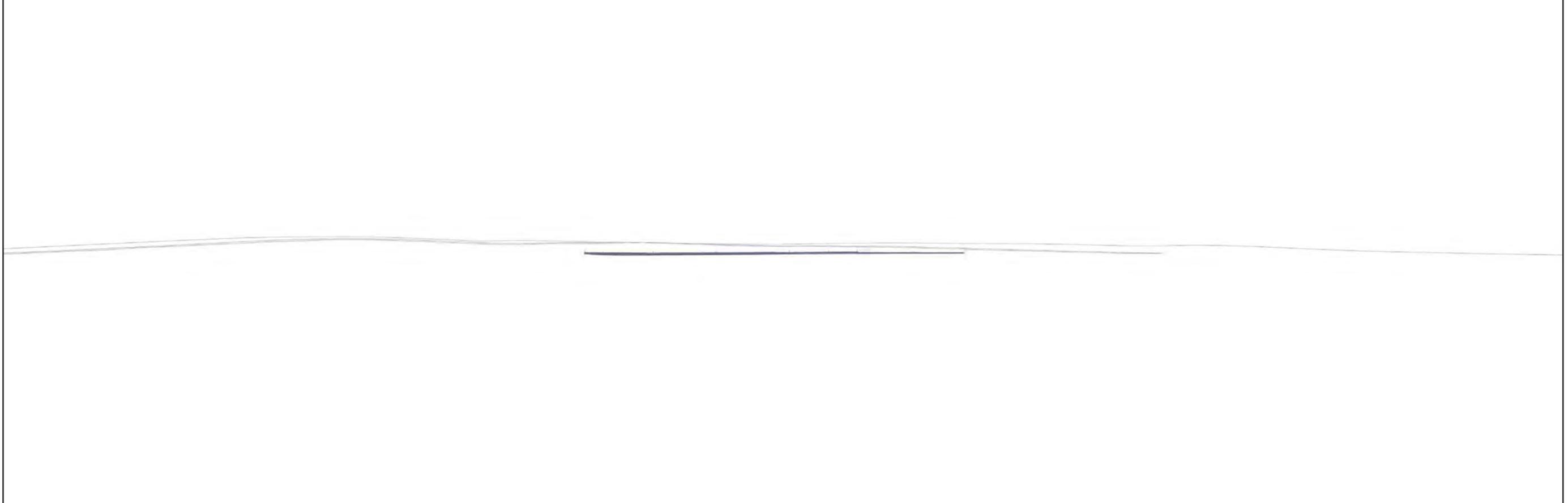
Distance to site boundary: 1.29km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 15:16

*The images contained on this page and the following page are not representative of scale and distance from the actual viewpoint and show the development in its wider context only*



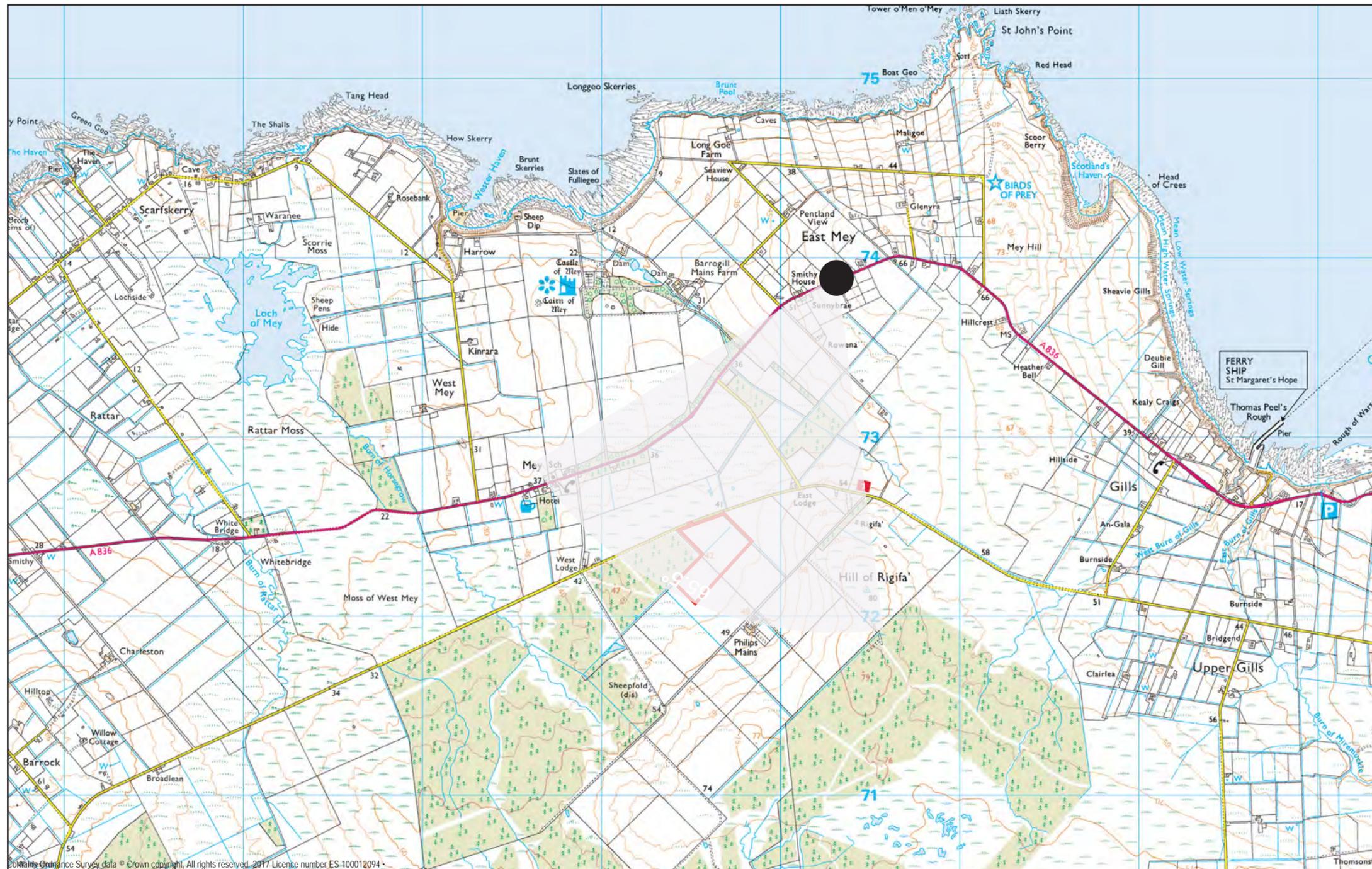
Existing view

**VIEWPOINT 4 - Castle of Mey GDL**



Wireline overlay

VP 05 A836 (NORTH COAST 500) AT EAST MEY



Grid Ref: E330318 N973849

Distance to Site Boundary: 1.45km

1:25,000



VP Description: This viewpoint is located at the side of the road within the hamlet of East Mey.



**VIEWPOINT 5 - A836 (North Coast 500) at East Mey**

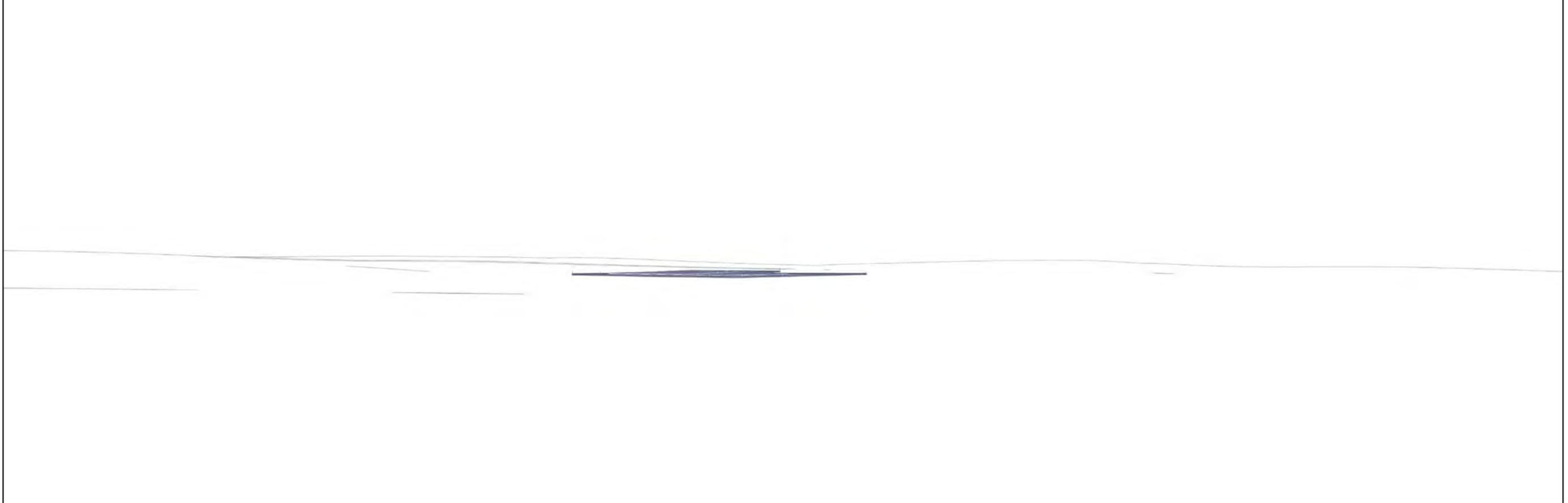
Distance to site boundary: 1.45km; Camera: Canon 5D; Focal length: 50mm vertical (27°); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 11:49

*The images contained on this page and the following page are not representative of scale and distance from the actual viewpoint and show the development in its wider context only*



Existing view

VIEWPOINT 5 - A836 (North Coast 500) at East Mey



Wireline overlay

## **Appendix E – Additional Visualisations: Viewpoint 1 at 90° AOV**

The following visualisation illustrates Viewpoint 1 at a wider angle of view, to incorporate the full extents of the Site and the surrounding context. It should be viewed in conjunction with the LVA Visualisations presented in Appendix D.



Existing view

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km; Camera: Canon 5D; AOV: 90° (cylindrical projection); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30

*The images contained on this page show the development in its wider context*



Photomontage

**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km; Camera: Canon 5D; AOV: 90° (cylindrical projection); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30

*The images contained on this page show the development in its wider context*



**VIEWPOINT 1 - Minor Road near Phillips Mains**

Distance to site boundary: 0.27km; Camera: Canon 5D; AOV: 90° (cylindrical projection); Camera height: 1.5m; Date: 10/08/2023 Time: 12:30

*The images contained on this page show the development in its wider context*