

APPENDIX 6.6: WILD LAND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

1. The purpose of this Technical Appendix is to provide an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the attributes of potentially affected Wild Land Areas.

Policy and Guidance

2. Wild Land Areas are not a statutory designation but are Included in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). Supporting the planning policy, NatureScot have undertaken detailed analysis of Scotland and identified Wild Land areas and provided maps and descriptions of each. These build on earlier mapped studies which remain of relevance.
3. Scottish National Planning Framework 4 was approved in January 2023 by the Scottish Parliament but not yet adopted (expected February 2023). Natural Places policy g) relates to Wild Land Areas and it states that *‘development proposals in areas identified as wild land in the Nature Scot Wild Land Areas map will only be supported where the proposal will support meeting renewable energy targets; or is for small scale development...’* *‘All such proposals must be accompanied by a wild land impact assessment which sets out how design, siting, or other mitigation measures have been and will be used to minimise significant impacts on the qualities of the wild land, as well as any management and monitoring arrangements where appropriate.’*
4. It also states that *‘buffer zones around wild land will not be applied, and effects of development outwith wild land areas will not be a significant consideration.’*
5. This assessment is carried out with reference to the guidance provide in ‘Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas’ (NatureScot, September 2020). The guidance provides a methodology and general principles based on the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013, Landscape Institute and IEMA (GLVIA3).

Consultation, Scope and Study Area

6. NatureScot identify in their 2020 guidance that *“the guidance should only be applied to proposals whose nature, siting, scale or design are likely to result in a significant effect on the qualities of the WLA”* (para 5) and advise that *“An assessment will only be required where it has been deemed necessary by the competent authority.”* (para 6).
7. Consultees requested that the Wild Land Areas at Duirinish (c. 8.5 km away) and the Cuillins (c. 20 km away) be included in the assessment, *‘at least initially’* particularly with regard to potential cumulative and night-time effects given the uncertainty regarding lighting at the time of Scoping.

ZTV and Study Area

8. As indicated on **Figure 6.5**, theoretical visibility within the Duirinish Wild Land Area within the study area is largely contained to high ground on the edges nearer to the proposed development. This is particularly evident in elevated areas in close proximity of the North and South Mcleod's Tables, including adjoining saddles and smaller peaks that form a ridge at the border at the north of the WLA, with some further visibility found on the peaks of Ben Corkeval, Beinn na Coinnich and Bienn a' Chapuill in the wild land interior. Glens, lower areas and coastline to the interior of the Duirinish remaining outside the visible envelope.

Approach

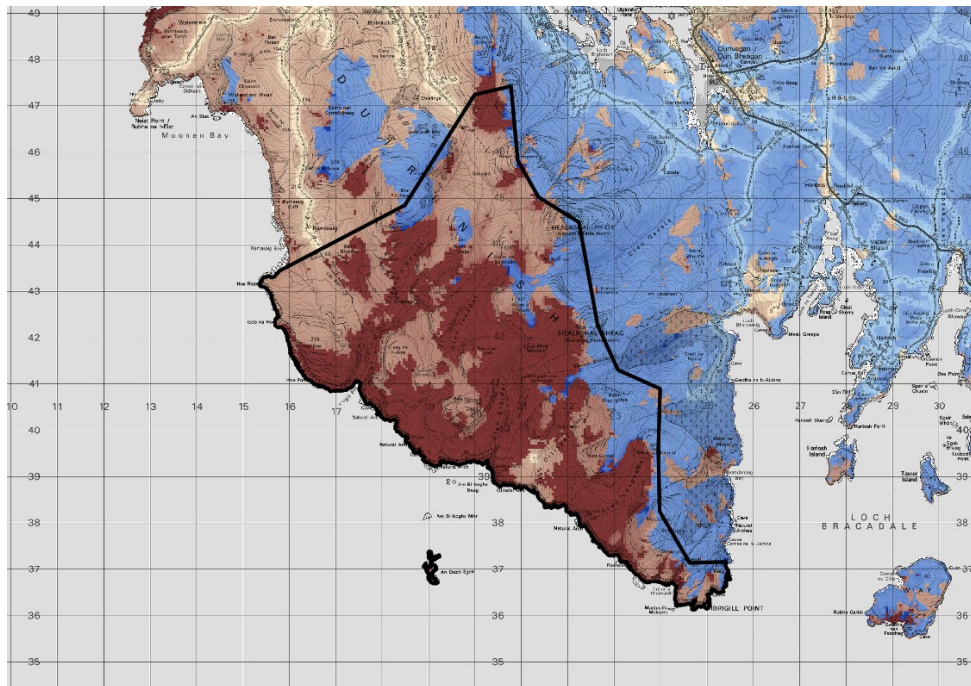
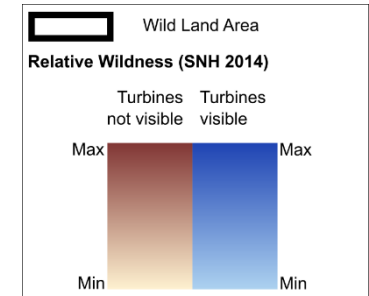
9. The approach to WLA assessment in accordance with the guidance follows a five step process, similar to standard LVIA methodology set out in GLVIA3:
- Define the study area and scope of assessment (see above)
 - Verify the WLA baseline;
 - Assess the sensitivity of the qualities;
 - Assess the magnitude of the effects;
 - Judgement of significance of effect.
10. The guidance identifies the key qualities of Wild Land Area (in general) to be:
- “WLAs have the following physical attributes:*
- *a high degree of perceived naturalness;*
 - *a lack of modern human artefacts or structures;*
 - *little evidence of contemporary land uses;*
 - *landform which is rugged, or otherwise physically challenging; and*
 - *remoteness and / or inaccessibility.*
- The perceptual responses evoked by these physical attributes include:*
- *a sense of sanctuary or solitude;*
 - *risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety;*
 - *perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and*
 - *fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places.”*
11. The documented and manifest qualities for each of the individual Wild Land Areas (WLAs) vary both between and within the WLAs and are considered below.

Assessment

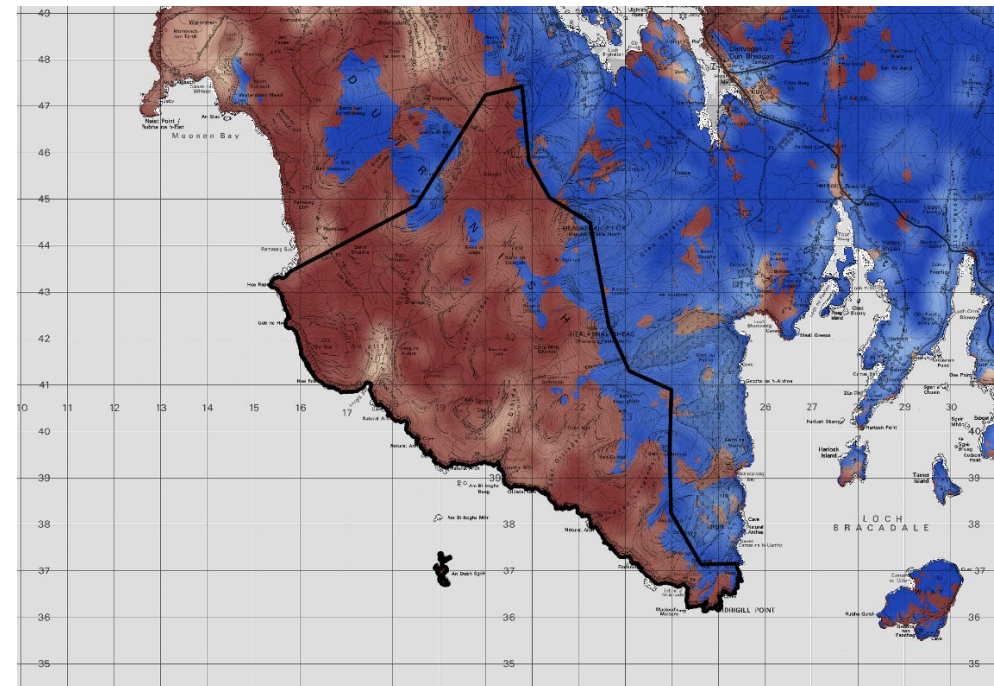
Wild Land Area: 22 Duirinish

Baseline

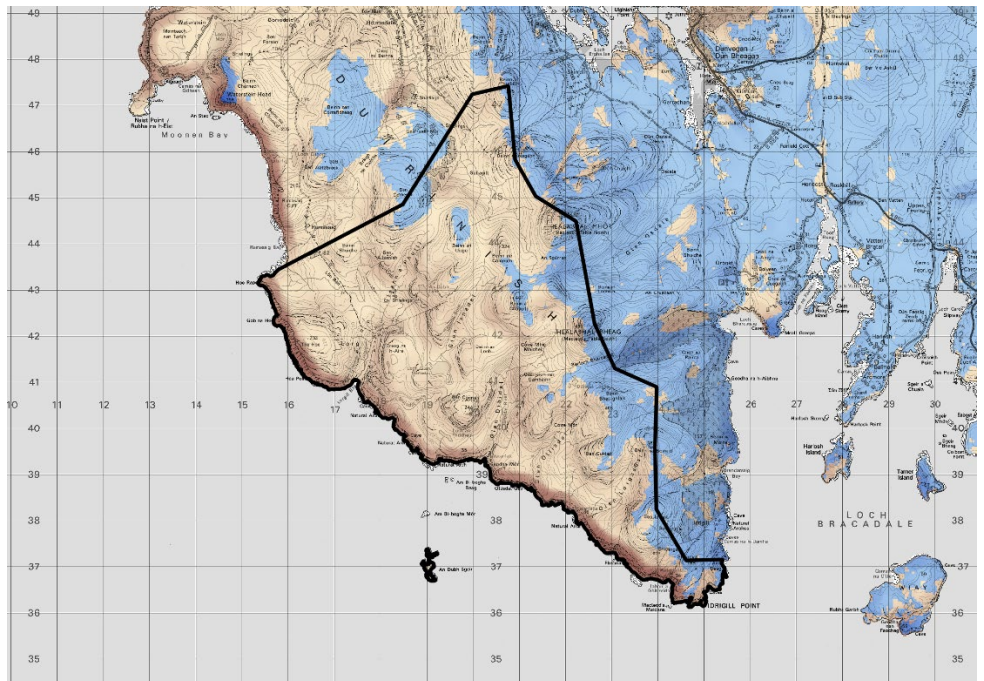
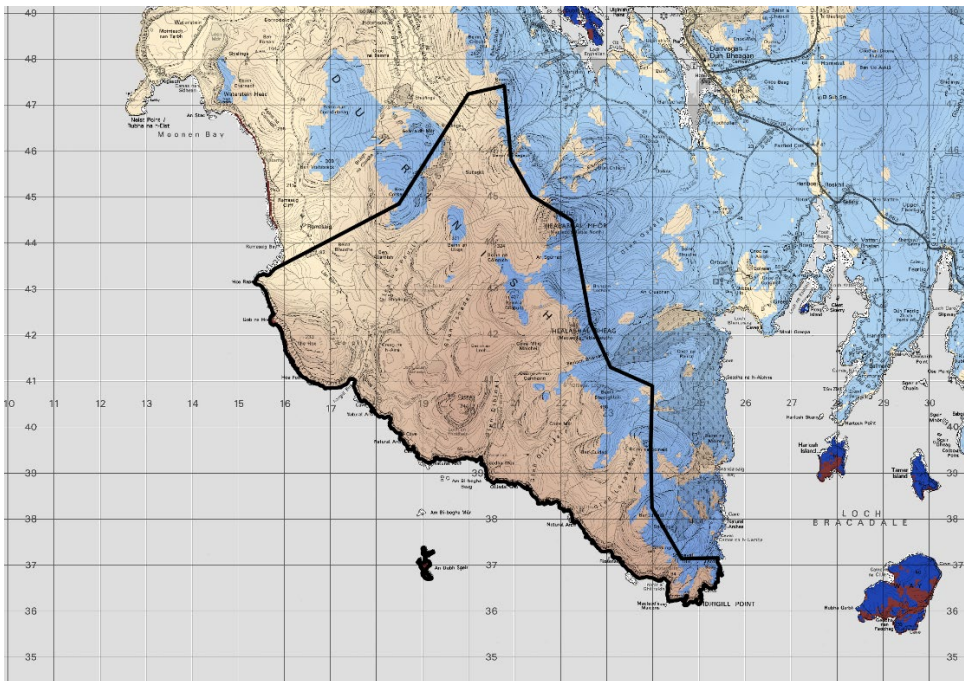
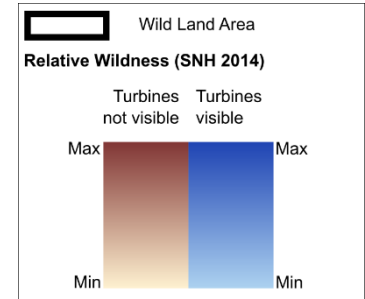
- The inset maps below show relative wildness within the study area (SNH 2014 data), overlaid with the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, and Wild Land Area boundary.



Wildness – Absence of Modern Artefacts

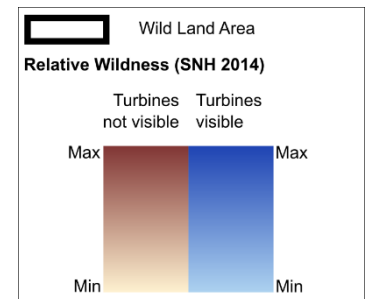
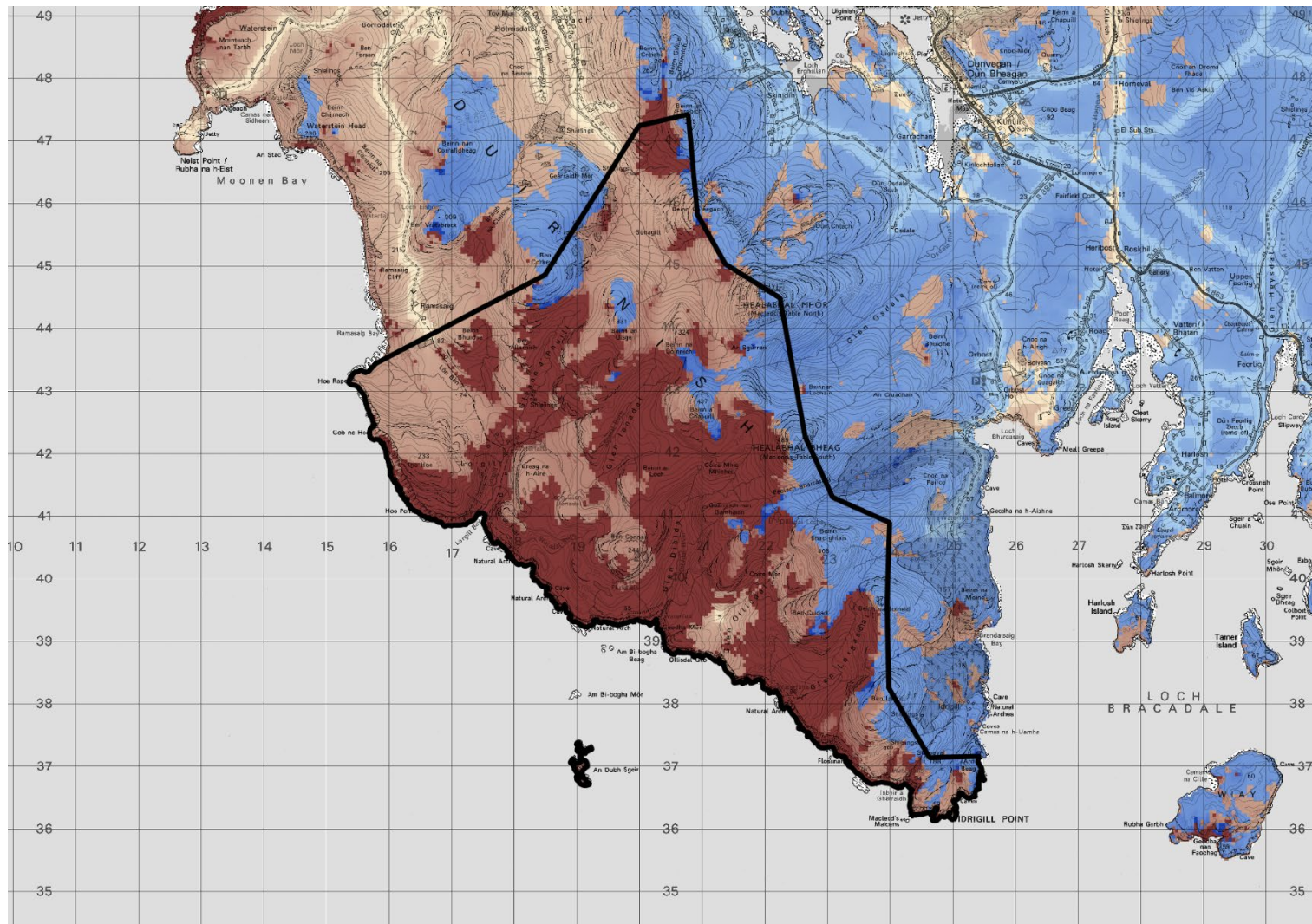


Wildness – Perceived Naturalness



Wildness – Remoteness from Roads and Ferries

Wildness – Rugged or Challenging Terrain



Wildness – Composite

13. The key attributes and qualities of the WLA as set out in the description are:
 - A dramatic coastal edge dominated by natural features, open views across the sea and exposure to dynamic weather conditions; and
 - Extensive inland peatland, with a stepped landform profile that rises to awe-inspiring distinctive hills and strongly influences accessibility.
14. Based on a review of the information presented above and site work, the following key points are noted in relation to the baseline and are taken into account in the assessment of sensitivity:
 - This WLA has a high degree of '*absence of modern artefacts*' within the interior of this area and '*perceived naturalness*' throughout, whereas the other physical attributes are at the lower ranges across this area.
 - These two key attributes of this WLA relate to the Special Qualities of the North Skye Special Landscape Area, designated by THC. Key experiences of the dramatic coast come from a long day or two day walk from Glendale to Orbost, via Idrigill Point along the coast. The distinctive hills are landmark features in the wider landscape and form distinctive skylines.

Effects

15. As set out within the LVIA chapter, potential effects on the Wild Land Area would arise as a result of:
 - Visual changes – as a result of the proposed development visible in views of moorland to the east, as noted in Viewpoint 9 from the summit of Macleod's Table North / Healabhal Mhor on the edge of this area. However, the extent of visibility of the proposed development would be very limited to the eastern edge and a few isolated summits.
 - Night time changes – Single existing low intensity light would be replaced with 4 medium intensity nacelle mounted aviation lights which would be visible from the same elevated areas within this WLA as noted on the ZTV. However, this would appear in the context of other lighting from coastal settlement. No cumulative lighting impacts.
 - Cumulative changes – There are two other proposals (Balmeanach and Beinn Mheadhonach replacement) considered in the cumulative assessment. They would be visible in combination with the proposed development in the same area of moorland which is already characterised by wind energy. They would add further turbines into this landscape, when seen from this area but would not increase the extent of area influenced by wind energy development.
16. A detailed assessment of how the changes described above may effect the Wild Land Area, considering the sensitivity of each of the key attributes / qualities; and setting out the magnitude of effects is provided below:

Key attribute / quality	Susceptibility	Value	Effects	Scale	Extent	Duration
A dramatic coastal edge dominated by natural features, open views across the sea and exposure to dynamic weather conditions	High	National	Given there would be no visibility (day or night time, singularly or cumulatively) from the coastal areas, nor much of the interior of this area, the impact on this key attribute would be very limited.	Negligible	Negligible	Permanent
Extensive inland peatland, with a stepped landform profile that rises to awe-inspiring distinctive hills and strongly influences accessibility	High	National	There would be no impact on the accessibility of this area. There would be little or no visibility from the inland peatland areas. There would only be some limited visibility to the proposed development, over 8.5 km away from the eastern edge and a few isolated summits, as illustrated in Viewpoint 9. This would include impacts during the day and night as a result of the 4 aviation lights. There would also be combined cumulative effects with the other proposals appearing in a similar part of the moorland, already affected by wind energy development. Whilst there would be these views from a limited part of the area, it would not have little or no influence the perception of this key attribute.	Small	Localised	Permanent
Sensitivity	High		Magnitude of Effects	Slight/Negligible		

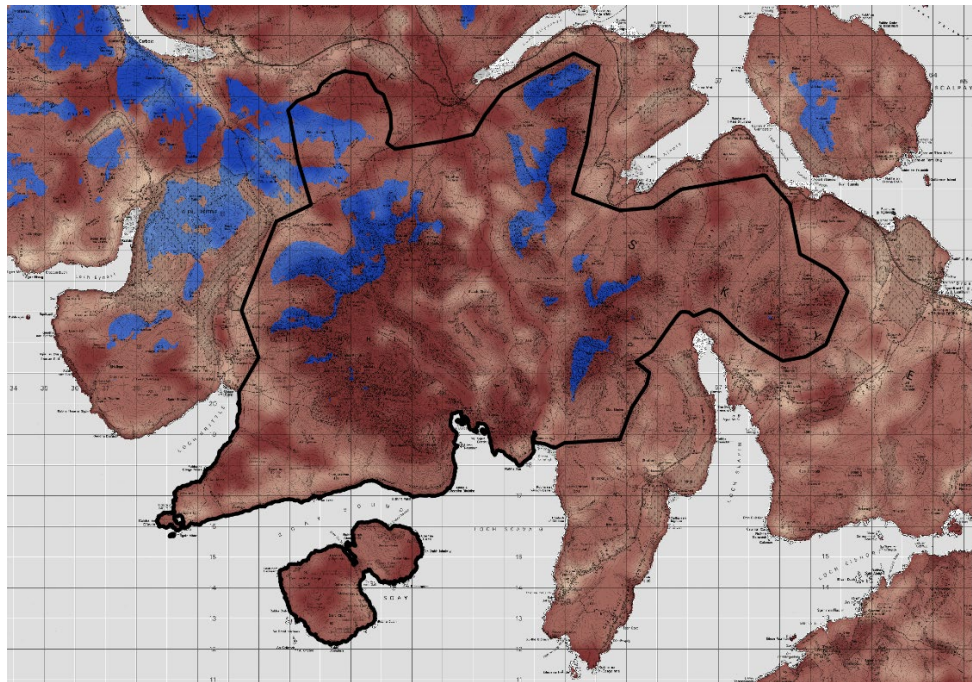
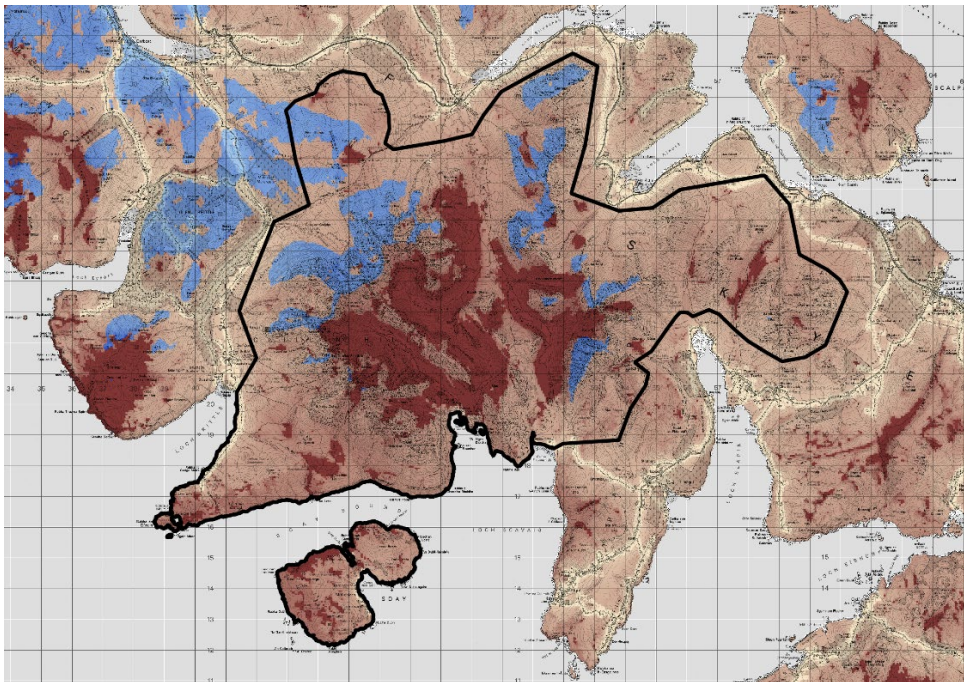
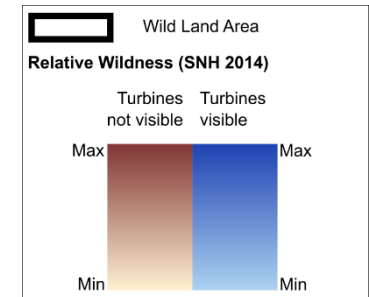
17. The physical attribute of the absence of modern artefacts is highest in the core of the area where there would be little intervisibility and influence. The proposed development is located in an area already affected by wind energy development and would be located over 8.5 km away and therefore would have a more limited impact on the perceived naturalness of the WLA itself. The aviation lighting (consisting of 4 medium intensity lights) would be noticeable from the edge of the this WLA but would not impact the core of this area or reduce the sense of sanctuary, solitude or wildness within. It would only be visible on the edge in the context of a more settled landscape. No notable reduction in wildness predicted.
18. As noted above, effects on the Duirinish WLA would be of Slight/Negligible magnitude. Taking into account the High sensitivity, these effects would be of **Moderate/minor significance** and **Adverse**, due to increased views of development outwith the WLA, but would be **Not Significant** on the qualities of the Duirinish WLA.

Assessment

Wild Land Area: 23 Cuillin

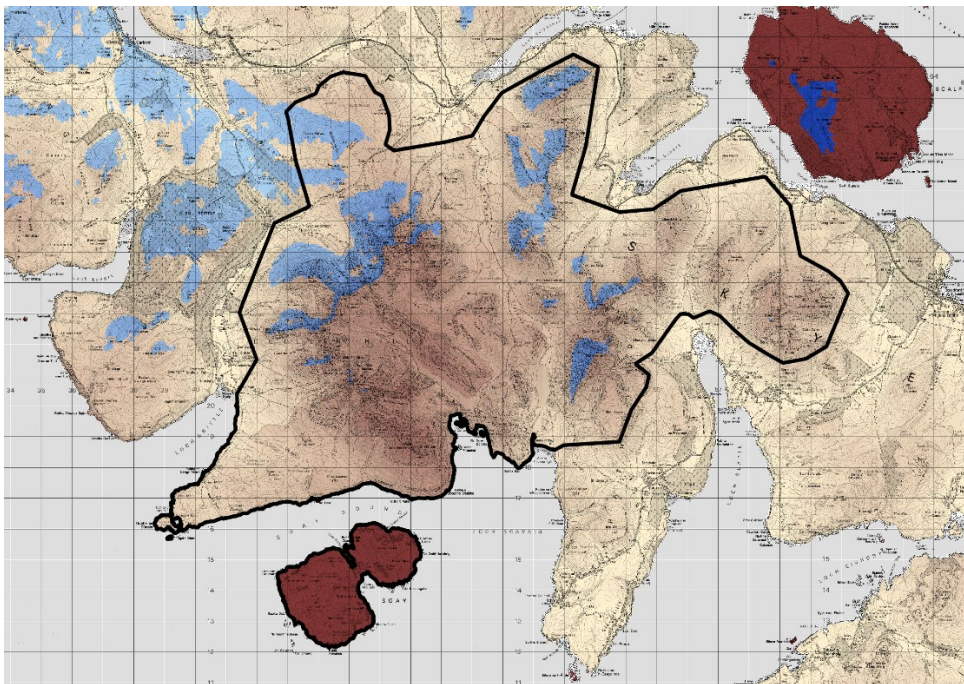
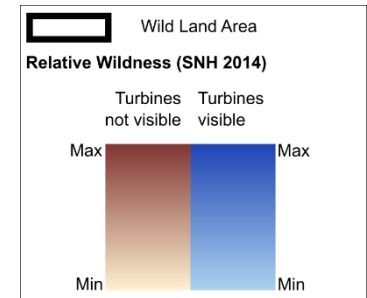
Baseline

19. The inset maps below show relative wildness within the study area (SNH 2014 data), overlaid with the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development, and Wild Land Area boundary.

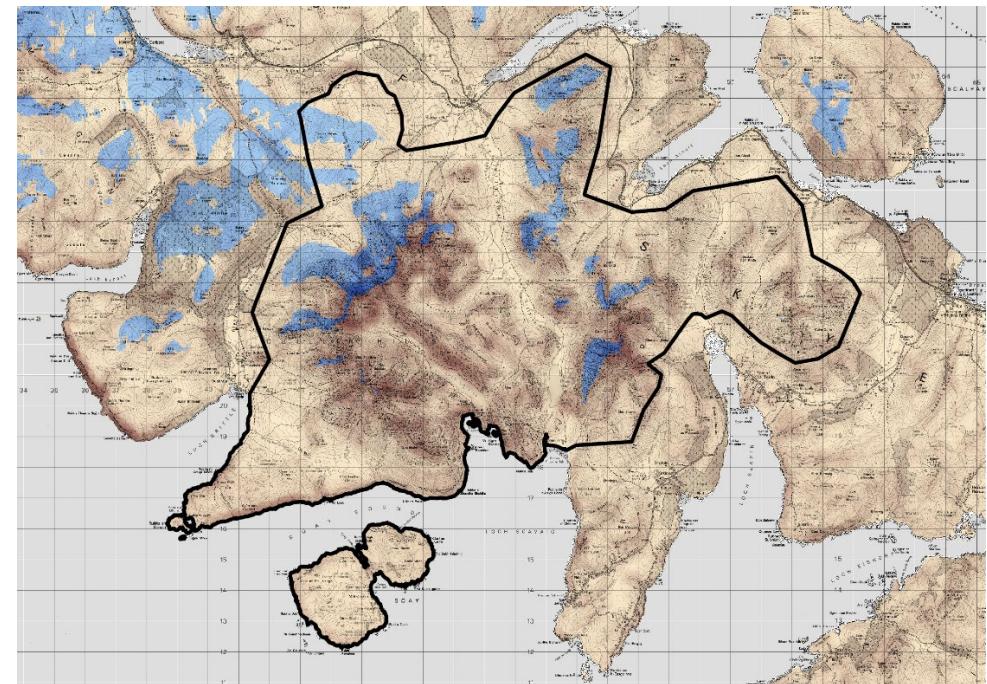


Wildness – Absence of Modern Artefacts

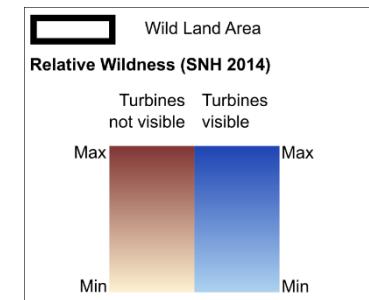
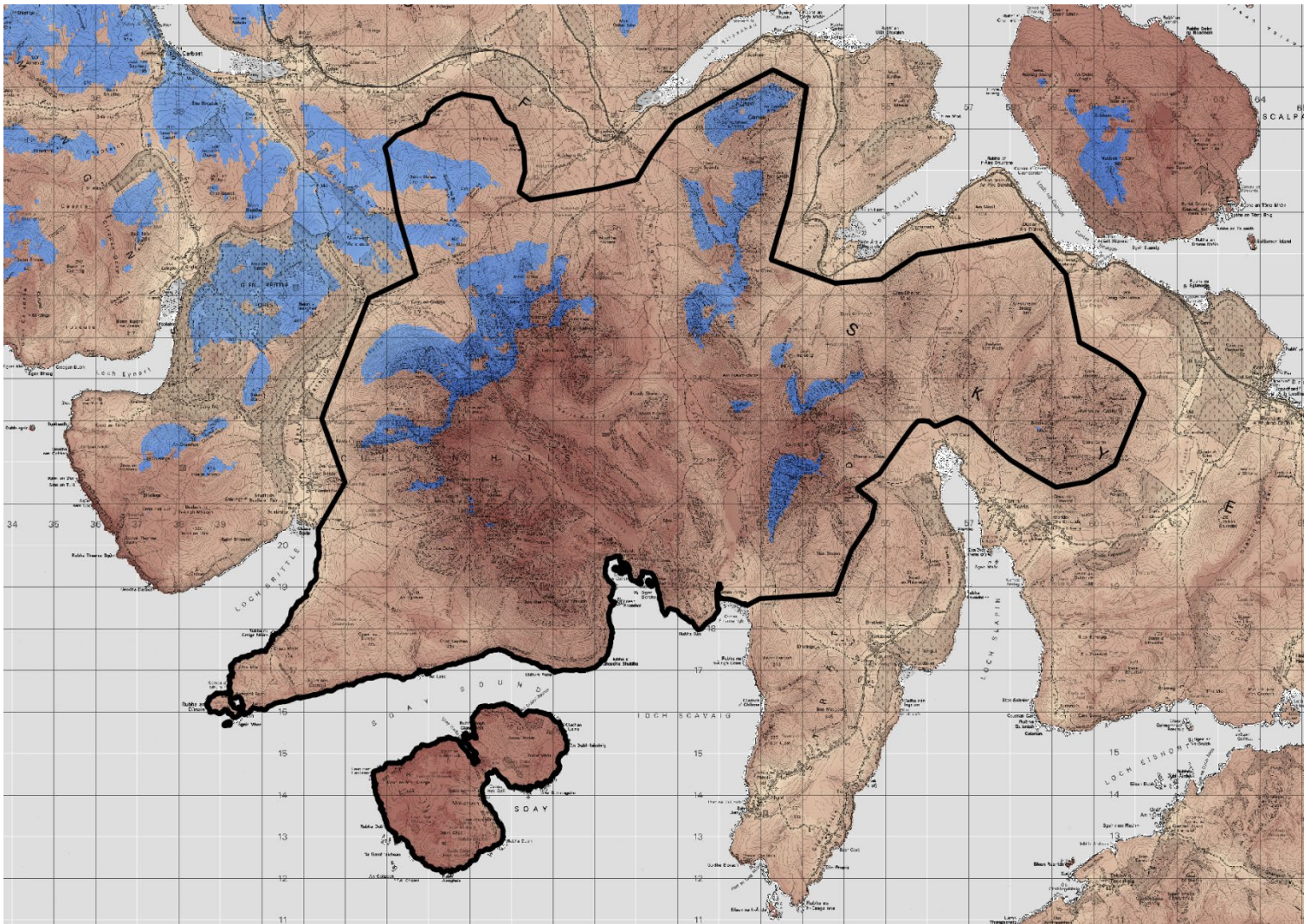
Wildness – Perceived Naturalness



Wildness – Remoteness from Roads and Ferries



Wildness – Rugged or Challenging Terrain



Wildness – Composite

20. The key attributes and qualities of the WLA as set out in the description are:
- Superlative high, steep, rocky mountains that are extremely rugged and contrast to the surrounding peatland and sea, emphasising a sense of awe;
 - A circle of mountains that contain a remote and secluded interior and a strong sense of sanctuary, with contrasting outward-facing slopes where human elements are more influential; and
 - A concentrated mountain area accessed by many different visitors to experience wild land qualities.
21. Based on a review of the information presented above and site work, the following key points are noted in relation to the baseline and are taken into account in the assessment of sensitivity:
- The physical characteristics of this extremely rugged mountain range relate to both the key attribute of WL and its Special Quality of the NSA as both a physical challenge and landmark feature.
 - The inner area expresses more strong Wild Land qualities than the outer slopes and summits/peaks where views to the surrounding human settlement is visible.

Effects

22. As set out within the LVIA chapter, potential effects on the Wild Land Area would arise as a result of:
- Visual changes – as a result of the proposed development visible in views of moorland to the north, as noted in **Viewpoint 18** from the summit of Bruach na Frithe, in the Black Cullins.
 - Night time changes – Single existing low intensity light (probably not visible from this WLA) would be replaced with 4 medium intensity nacelle mounted aviation lights which would be visible from the summits/peaks but at this distance, would not be particularly noticeable in the context of surrounding human development. No cumulative lighting impacts.
 - Cumulative changes – There are two other proposals (Balmeanach and Beinn Mheadhonach replacement) considered in the cumulative assessment. They would be visible in combination with the proposed development in the same area of moorland which is already characterised by wind energy. They would add further turbines into this distant landscape, when seen from this area but would not increase the extent of area influenced by wind energy development.
23. A detailed assessment of how the changes described above may effect the Wild Land Area, considering the sensitivity of each of the key attributes / qualities; and setting out the magnitude of effects is provided below:

Key attribute / quality	Susceptibility	Value	Effects	Scale	Extent	Duration
Superlative high, steep, rocky mountains that are extremely rugged and contrast to the surrounding peatland and sea, emphasising a sense of awe	High	National	There would be no physical changes or impacts on this WL quality.	Negligible	Negligible	Permanent

Key attribute / quality	Susceptibility	Value	Effects	Scale	Extent	Duration
A circle of mountains that contain a remote and secluded interior and a strong sense of sanctuary, with contrasting outward-facing slopes where human elements are more influential strongly influences accessibility	High	National	As illustrated in the ZTVs, there would be no impact on the remote core of this area.	Negligible	Negligible	Permanent
A concentrated mountain area accessed by many different visitors to experience wild land qualities	High	National	There would be no adverse impacts on visitors coming to experience the wild land qualities	Negligible	Negligible	Permanent
Sensitivity	High		Magnitude of Effects	Negligible		

24. The physical attribute of the absence of modern artefacts is highest in the core of the area where there would be little intervisibility and influence. The proposed development is located in an area already affected by wind energy development and would be located over 20 km away and therefore would have a more limited impact on the perceived naturalness of this WLA itself. The aviation lighting (consisting of 4 medium intensity lights) would be noticeable from the summits of this WLA but would not impact the core of this area or reduce the sense of sanctuary, solitude or wildness within. It would only be visible on the edge in the context of a more settled landscape. No notable reduction in wildness predicted.
25. As noted above, effects on the Cuillin Hills WLA would be of Negligible magnitude. Taking into account the High sensitivity, these effects would be of **Minor significance** and **Adverse**, due to increased views of development outwith the WLA, but would be **Not Significant** on the qualities of the Cuillin Hills WLA.