

March 2025

# Glen Earrach Pumped Storage Hydro

## Environmental Impact Assessment Report

**Volume 2: Main Report**  
**Chapter 16: Socioeconomics, Tourism and Recreation**

Glen Earrach Energy Ltd

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# 16. Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism

## 16.1 Introduction

- 16.1.1 This chapter assesses the potential socio-economic, recreation and tourism impacts resulting from the Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development, as it is described in **Chapter 2: Project and Site Description (Volume 2: Main Report)**.
- 16.1.2 The chapter also identifies relevant socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors and sets out proposed mitigation measures to minimise any potential adverse impacts of the Proposed Development. The following deliverables, contained within Volume 3: Figures, support this chapter:
- **Figure 16.1 (Sheets 1-7):** Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism Features.
  - **Figure 16.2 (Sheets 1-4):** Outline Access Management Plan Recreational Routes and Paths.
- 16.1.3 This chapter is also supported by the following Appendices, contained within **Volume 5: Appendices**:
- **Appendix 16.1:** Outline Access Management Plan.
  - **Appendix 16.2:** Recreation and Tourism Features within 5 km of the Proposed Development Site.
- 16.1.4 A separate **Socio-Economic Statement** has been prepared to demonstrate how the Proposed Development will maximise the net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits of the Proposed Development, as per NPF4 Policy 11 (c). It also demonstrates how the Proposed Development will benefit the local community and contribute to the wellbeing of the Highlands, as per the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) Policy 67 Renewable Energy Developments.
- 16.1.5 As described within **Chapter 2 Project and Site Description** and summarised within **Chapter 3 Evolution of Design and Alternatives (Volume 2: Main Report)**, the Proposed Development presents two options, Option A and Option B. The differences between these options involve the location of the below ground works and the associated positioning of the Upper Control Works within the Headpond footprint. This assessment has considered both Options A and B; regardless of which option is taken forward, the conclusions of Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism assessment remain the same for both.

## 16.2 Legislation, Policy and Other Key Documents

- 16.2.1 This section identifies legislation, policy and other key documents of relevance to the assessment of the potential socio-economic, recreation and tourism impacts associated with the Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development.

### Legislation

- 16.2.2 Legislation relevant to this chapter includes The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which provides the public a right of responsible access over most land in Scotland. It also sets out a duty on landowners to manage land in a way which respects access rights.

### National Planning Policy

- 16.2.3 National Planning Policy 4 (NPF4) (Scottish Government, 2023)<sup>1</sup> identifies eighteen National Developments, defined as significant developments of national importance. The Proposed Development falls under National Development 2 'Pumped Hydro Storage' and is considered to have in principle support under NPF4 as a national priority.

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government. (2023). National Planning Framework 4. [Online]. Available: [National Planning Framework 4 \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx). [Accessed: 28/08/24]

- 16.2.4 Pumped storage hydro schemes contribute to NPF4 spatial principles; rural revitalisation, rebalanced development, conserving and recycling assets, and a just transition. In doing so, the Proposed Development supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places.
- 16.2.5 The following policies under NPF4 have been identified as being of particular relevance to the Proposed Development and any resulting impacts on socio-economics, recreation and tourism.
- Policy 11 Energy:
    - Encourages, promotes and facilitates all forms of renewable energy development: onshore generation, storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure.
  - Part (c) of Policy 11:
    - Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.
  - Policy 20 Blue and Green Infrastructure:
    - Protects and enhances blue and green infrastructure and their networks and seeks to safeguard access rights and core paths, including active travel routes, and encourage new and enhanced opportunities for access linked to wider networks.
  - Policy 25 Community Wealth Building:
    - Encourages, promotes and facilitates a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels. Part A of the policy outlines that proposals which contribute to local or regional community building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities, will be supported.
  - Policy 29 Rural Development
    - Encourages rural economic activity, innovation and diversification whilst ensuring that the distinctive character of the rural area and the service function of small towns, natural assets and cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced.

## Local Planning Policy

- 16.2.6 The HwLDP (Highland Council, 2012)<sup>2</sup> was adopted in 2012 and sets the following vision for the region:
- “By 2030, Highland will be one of Europe’s leading regions. We will have created sustainable communities, balancing population growth, economic development and the safeguarding of the environment across the area and have built a fairer and healthier Highlands.”*
- 16.2.7 Renewable energy is identified as supporting a “Competitive, Sustainable and Adaptable Highland Economy”. The vision also notes that a “Healthier Highlands” will be achieved including by providing access to enjoy the outdoors, and that better opportunities for all and a “fairer Highland” will be provided by “promoting opportunities that allow for investment in services and infrastructure, and opportunities for investment and diversification in the economy”.
- 16.2.8 The following HwLDP policies are relevant to this chapter:
- Policy 28 – Sustainable Design which notes support for developments which promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people of Highland;
  - Policy 57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage which categorises natural, built and cultural heritage into locally and regionally important, nationally important and internationally important with development taking account of the level of importance and the impact on the feature;
  - Policy 67 – Renewable Energy Developments. The supporting text to the policy notes that The Highland Council will expect developments to benefit the local community and contribute to the wellbeing of the Highlands, whilst recognising wider national interests;

<sup>2</sup> Highland Council (2012). Highland-wide Local Development Plan. [Online]. Available at: [Highland-wide Local Development Plan | Highland-wide Local Development Plan | The Highland Council](#)

- Policy 77 – Public Access states that where a proposal affects a route included in a Core Paths Plan or an access point to water, or significantly affects wider access rights, then The Highland Council will require it to either:
  - retain the existing path or water access point while maintaining or enhancing its amenity value; or
  - ensure alternative access provision that is no less attractive, is safe and convenient for public use, and does not damage or disturb species or habitats.
- Policy 78 – Long Distance Routes state that The Highland Council, with its partners, will safeguard and seek to enhance long distance routes and their settings. This includes the Great Glen Way and the Great Glen Canoe Trail.

16.2.9 The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) (Highland Council, 2024)<sup>3</sup> is also relevant. The plan focuses on the regional and settlement strategies of the Inner Moray Firth area, including Balnain, Drumnadrochit and Foyers which are in proximity to the Proposed Development Site.

16.2.10 The Highland Council is currently preparing a new Highland Local Development Plan, which is currently at an early stage and, as such, has no planning weight. Once the plan is drafted it will form part of the Development Plan for Highland and will be used to determine planning applications and steer future development and investment.

## Other Highland Council Documents

16.2.11 The Highland Council's Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment was agreed by The Highland Council on 27 June 2024. The Charter aims to:

- embed an approach to community wealth building into Highland;
- maximise economic benefits from our natural environment and resources;
- engage and involve relevant stakeholders to understand how we can continually improve our impact; and
- unlock economic opportunities for area.

16.2.12 The Charter notes that it is “highly desirable for companies to have identified their commitment to the charter in place prior to the start of the formal planning process, which as Members are aware, is entirely separate from any discussion on community benefit”. To this end, the Applicant has undertaken discussions with The Highland Council separate from the planning process and has undertaken to achieve the principles of the Charter across all stages of the Proposed Development.

16.2.13 Further details on the how the Proposed Development will align with the principles of the Charter are contained within the **Socio-Economic Benefits Statement**. These measures will continue to be developed in parallel with the planning process, in partnership with the local community and relevant stakeholders.

16.2.14 The Highland Council declared a Highland Housing Challenge in June 2024, as set out in the Declaring the Highland Housing Challenge and Identifying Solutions to Resolve it Report (Highland Council, 2024)<sup>4</sup>. The declaration was made in recognition of the issues facing The Highland Council and its partners in meeting the current and anticipated future demand for housing in the area. It recognised that some solutions to future housing supply are contained in the Council's Social Value Charter for Renewables.

16.2.15 The Highland Council's Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024 – 2030 (Highland Council, 2024)<sup>5</sup> sets out the importance of tourism in the Highlands and the key drivers of the sector, including the local landscape and culture, and the thriving outdoor adventure and cruise industries. It notes that The Highland Council, as part of its own approach to effective visitor management, will support opportunities to make the long-distance hiking routes more attractive through better maintenance, route improvements and promotion and will develop, maintain and promote the existing path network to benefit visitors and communities.

<sup>3</sup> Highland Council (2024). Core Paths In Highland Council Area Map. [Online] Available at: [Core Paths in Highland Council area \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2449/sustainable_tourism_strategy_2024-2030)

<sup>4</sup> Declaring the Highland Housing Challenge and identifying Solutions to Resolve it Report (2024). [Online] Available at: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83525/item\\_13\\_the\\_highland\\_housing\\_challenge](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83525/item_13_the_highland_housing_challenge)

<sup>5</sup> Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024 to 2030. [Online] Available at: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2449/sustainable\\_tourism\\_strategy\\_2024-2030](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2449/sustainable_tourism_strategy_2024-2030)

## Local Place Plans

- 16.2.16 The draft Glen Urquhart Community Council Local Place Plan 2024-2034 (Glen Urquhart Community Council, 2024)<sup>6</sup> notes that the Glen Urquhart community strongly urges its inclusion on consultations on renewable energy proposals, which would have a significant impact on the people that live there, visitors to the area and local businesses. It also outlines community benefits from renewable energy schemes would support the implementation of the Local Place Plan.
- 16.2.17 The Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Action Plan 2018 - 2023 (Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Action Plan 2018 -2023, 2018)<sup>7</sup> was adopted in 2018 and sets out the vision for the area, the issues that matter and priority actions and projects. The Plan identifies local environment and heritage as major assets and Fort Augustus as being at the heart of a great long distance path network. Community concern is outlined in that existing health and care services should be protected and further developed. Traffic concerns are also raised, including problems on the A82 and noise from night-time heavy goods vehicle traffic.
- 16.2.18 Subsequently in 2022, the Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Action Plan 2018-2023: Review of Themes and Priorities<sup>8</sup> (Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston Community Company, 2022) was carried out. Community feedback informed the 2022 review and responses raised a range of matters, including access to services, transport issues and diversifying the local economy so that it is less reliant on tourism and people have year - round access to services.
- 16.2.19 The Stratherrick & Foyers Community Action Plan 2021 (Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust, 2021)<sup>9</sup> sets a vision to nurture the environment, sustain the economy and develop the community. Themes are identified in the Stratherrick & Foyers Local Place Plan (Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust, 2023)<sup>10</sup> including community life i.e. enabling the local community to meet and be active, outdoors, nature and heritage i.e. sustaining and nurturing our natural and cultural heritage for locals, visitors and nature itself.

## Other Documents / Initiatives

- 16.2.20 The following documents are also considered relevant.
- 16.2.21 The Tourism in Scotland: the economic contribution of the sector (Scottish Government, 2018)<sup>11</sup>, the report provides an overview of tourism in Scotland and the significant contribution that tourism makes to Scotland's economy.
- 16.2.22 The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (NatureScot, 2005)<sup>12</sup> provides detailed guidance for users to follow when enjoying the outdoors and for owners or managers of land and water to adhere to in respect of the public's statutory access rights.
- 16.2.23 The Euromonitor Travel Trends for Scotland Report (2024) (Commissioned by VisitScotland)<sup>13</sup> provides a summary of travel trends, drawing on various case studies and travellers' experiences to highlight trends that will influence Scottish tourism from 2024 to 2027. The report identified key themes including 'Places and Immersive Experiences', which relates to how visitors connect to Scotland's heritage and landscapes.
- 16.2.24 The Regional Economic Strategy – Draft June 2024 (Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership, 2024)<sup>14</sup> seeks to maximise the economic and community benefits from renewable energy investments and drive the region's move to net zero and climate resilience/adaptation. It also recognises the contribution of the

<sup>6</sup> Glen Urquhart Community Council Local Place Plan 2024-2034. [Online] Available at: [Glen Urquhart Community Council Local Place Plan 2024-2034](#)

<sup>7</sup>Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Action Plan 2018-2023 [Online] Available at: <https://communitycompany.co.uk/979-2/>

<sup>8</sup> Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Action Plan 2018-2023: Review of Themes and Priorities [Online] Available at: [https://d1hxd0sho1wxko.cloudfront.net/production/general/FAGCC-CAP-review-2022\\_2024-09-04-085809\\_c1th.pdf](https://d1hxd0sho1wxko.cloudfront.net/production/general/FAGCC-CAP-review-2022_2024-09-04-085809_c1th.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Stratherrick & Foyers Community Action Plan (2021). [Online] Available at: <https://www.stratherrickcommunity.org.uk/community-action-plan>

<sup>10</sup> Stratherrick & Foyers Local Plan (2023). Available at: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2302/stratherrick\\_and\\_foyers\\_local\\_place\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2302/stratherrick_and_foyers_local_place_plan)

<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government (2018). Tourism in Scotland: The Economic Contribution of the Sector. [Online] Available at: [Chapter 3: The Tourism Sector in Scotland\[14\] - Tourism in Scotland: the economic contribution of the sector - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) [Accessed 22/08/2024]

<sup>12</sup> NatureScot (2005) Scottish Outdoor Access Code [Online] Available: [Publication 2005 - Scottish Outdoor Access Code.pdf \(nature.scot\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2021). Public attitudes tracker. [Online] Available at: [DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>14</sup> Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (2024). Regional Economic Strategy (Draft June 2024). [Online] Available at: <https://highlandsandislandsrep.scot/media/gewntsqi/hirep-draft-strategy.pdf>



Highlands' other industries, including food and drink, and primary sectors (including aquaculture), sustainable tourism and hospitality, life sciences, marine and health industries and heritage and creative industries.

- 16.2.25 The Highland Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee unanimously endorsed the Regional Economic Strategy in February 2025<sup>15</sup>. The Chair of the Committee stated that: *"Scottish and UK Governments have acknowledged that the Highlands and Islands have a vital role to play in terms of meeting climate change targets and supporting the shift to clean, green sources of energy. To do this effectively we need a strong collaborative approach to make such that during transformational change we can maximise the economic and social benefits for our communities and businesses in all parts of the region"*.
- 16.2.26 The Highlands and Islands Enterprise Strategy 2023-2028<sup>16</sup> sets out a vision for Highland and Islands to be a 'leading net zero region with a dynamic wellbeing economy, which benefits its growing population and makes a valued contribution to Scotland'.
- 16.2.27 The vision<sup>17</sup> for the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal is to position Inverness and the Highlands as a region of digital opportunity. The Deal contains a number of proposals under three broad headings: A Growing Economy; Enabling the Economy and A Skilled Economy. The Proposed Development will support all three headings.
- 16.2.28 In 2023 Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport<sup>18</sup> was selected by the Scottish and UK Governments as one of the two locations for a green freeport in Scotland. The Proposed Development is not located in the Green Freeport area; however, it aligns with the Green Freeport's policy objectives by supporting the decarbonisation of the energy sector, contributing to the just transition to net zero, and promoting high-quality green job creation through the delivery of renewable energy infrastructure.

## The Economic Contribution of Pumped Storage Hydro

- 16.2.29 The Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro Report<sup>19</sup> was produced in 2023 by BiGGAR Economics and commissioned by members of the UK Pumped Storage Hydro Working Group to estimate the potential economic impact of investment in the pumped storage hydro sector.
- 16.2.30 The study includes analysis of six projects being developed by the UK Pumped Storage Hydro Working Group, as summarised in
- 16.2.31 Table 16-1 Output and storage capacity of various UK Pumped Storage Hydro Working Group schemes, below. Whilst the report does not account for the contribution of the Proposed Development, an assessment of the economic contribution (jobs and the average Gross Value Added (GVA) per direct construction worker) at the Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development are set out in Section 16.5: Assessment of Effects.

**Table 16-1: Output and storage capacity of various UK Pumped Storage Hydro Working Group schemes**

Project (Year Operational)	Region	Output Capacity (MW)	Storage Capacity (GWh)
Loch na Cathrach (formally Red John) (2027)	Highlands, Scotland	450	2.9
Glenmuckloch (2029)	Dumfries & Galloway, Scotland	210	1.6
Cruachan Expansion (2030)	Argyll & Bute, Scotland	600	1.6
Corrievarkie (2031)	Perth & Kinross, Scotland	600	14.5
Coire Glas (2031)	Highlands, Scotland	1,500	30.0

<sup>15</sup> Committee endorses Regional Economic Strategy (2025) [Online] Available at:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/16491/committee\\_endorses\\_regional\\_economic\\_strategy](https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/16491/committee_endorses_regional_economic_strategy)

<sup>16</sup> Highlands and Islands Enterprise Strategy 2023-2028 [Online] Available at: [hie-strategy-2023-28-final-031023.pdf](https://www.hie-strategy-2023-28-final-031023.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Transforming the Highland Economy [Online] Available at: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/210/community\\_development\\_regeneration\\_projects/712/transforming\\_the\\_highland\\_economy](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/210/community_development_regeneration_projects/712/transforming_the_highland_economy)

<sup>18</sup> Cities and Regions Green Ports [Accessed Online 03/04/2025] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/cities-regions/green-ports/>

<sup>19</sup> BiGGAR Economics (2023). The Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro. A report to Scottish Renewables. [Online] Available: [Microsoft Word - Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro in the UK 5May23.docx \(scottishrenewables.com\)](https://www.scottishrenewables.com/microsoft-word-economic-impact-of-pumped-storage-hydro-in-the-uk-5may23.docx)

Project (Year Operational)	Region	Output Capacity (MW)	Storage Capacity (GWh)
Balliemanoach (2034)	Argyll & Bute, Scotland	1,500	45.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,910</b>	<b>95.8</b>

Source: *The Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro Report (BiGGAR Economics, 2023)*. Note: The above data is presented as stated in the source document.

16.2.32 The combined investment in these projects is expected to be around £6-8 billion gross value added (GVA), as identified in the BiGGAR Economics Report. The BiGGAR Economics Report further identified that during the development and construction phases, the projects shown in **Table 16.1** are expected to contribute:

- £4.2-5.8 billion GVA and 67,900-92,800 years of employment in the UK; and
- £677-926 million GVA and 10,600-14,500 years of employment in the local areas where the projects are based.

16.2.33 These projects will also support employment in operations and maintenance for decades after their construction.

## Impacts of Renewable Energy on Tourism

16.2.34 A desk-based review of relevant studies and surveys has been carried out to inform the consideration of the economic impacts of renewable energy developments on tourism. The key findings of the studies and surveys are detailed below.

16.2.35 The Public Attitudes Tracker: Energy Infrastructure and Energy Sources (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ), 2024)<sup>20</sup> national survey outlines the levels of public support for renewable energy. It shows that 71% of respondents rate the importance of “energy generated from cleaner, low-carbon sources” as ‘high’ or ‘very high’, providing confidence that the public generally support renewable energy developments such as the Proposed Development.

16.2.36 MKA Economics undertook a Survey of Visit Inverness Loch Ness Members<sup>21</sup> to gain headline views on renewable developments. The survey resulted in 22 returns, predominantly from accommodation businesses with returns from visitor attractions, food and drink and out/indoor recreational activities. It found that:

- Only 10 % were not supportive of green energy investments in the Loch Ness area.
- ‘Green sustainable energy’ was seen as one of the main benefits of a new green energy proposal, with other popular responses including ‘inward investment’ and ‘community investment’. ‘Construction spend and activity’ and ‘jobs’ were also noted.
- 19 % felt that visitors may be persuaded from not visiting an area due to the presence of a green energy development.

16.2.37 BiGGAR Economics undertook a Tourism Impact Review of Offshore Windfarms in 2020<sup>22</sup>. The review considered the effects upon tourism and visitor spending and visitor behaviour in areas where offshore wind farms have been built. The review found no relationship between tourism, visitor spending and tourism-related employment in coastal areas and the construction phase of 11 comparable offshore windfarm developments. Nine of the eleven developments included onshore infrastructure.

16.2.38 It also found no relationship between the performance of the visitor economy and the construction of onshore infrastructure or offshore wind farms in two landscape designated areas (Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park). BiGGAR Economics also noted that the findings were reflective of previous studies on grid infrastructure projects.

<sup>20</sup> DESNZ (2024) Public Attitudes Tracker: Energy infrastructure and energy security, Summer 2024, UK [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-summer-2024/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-energy-infrastructure-and-energy-security-summer-2024-uk>

<sup>21</sup> MKA Economics (2022). Survey of Visit Inverness Loch Ness Members

<sup>22</sup> BiGGAR Economics (2020). Tourism Impact Review of Offshore Windfarms in 2020 [Online] Available at: [Appendix 13 Tourism Impact Review](#)

- 16.2.39 A further Study (2021) by BiGGAR Economics<sup>23</sup> considered the change in employment in tourism-related industries in the vicinity of 44 wind farm case studies. In relation to construction and operation, the study found that in the local area adjacent to 11 of 16 case studies, tourism related employment grew by more than the Scottish average over the period that the wind farm was constructed and became operational.
- 16.2.40 The study concluded that there was “no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authority areas nor in the locality of wind farm sites”.
- 16.2.41 The RenewableUK report Onshore Wind Direct & Wider Economic Impacts (2012)<sup>24</sup> outlines that construction and operational worker spend, when workers stay away from home, will benefit accommodation and food and drink providers. Based on three of these windfarm projects, it estimated that for every megawatt constructed £7,500 is spent in the local area on accommodation and on food and drink.

## 16.3 Consultation

- 16.3.1 **Table 16-2 Summary of Scoping** Consultation provides detail on the EIA scoping consultation comments received that are relevant to this socio-economic, recreation and tourism chapter. The key issues and actions taken to address these points are set out within the table.

**Table 16-2 Summary of Scoping Consultation**

Consultee	Key issue	Summary of Response and Action Taken
Glen Urquhart Community Council	<p>Provide socio-economic information on who may be affected including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individual households, local communities or a wider socio-economic group such as tourists and tourist related businesses and recreational groups etc.</li> </ul> <p>The application should include economic information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>potential number of jobs and the economic activity, both regional and local, associated with the procurement, construction, operation and decommissioning of the development.</li> </ul> <p>The EIAR should provide details of the community engagement process, including establishment of a community liaison group and outline a process of partnership with impacted groups.</p>	<p>The impacts of the Proposed Development on socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors within the Study Area has been assessed.</p> <p>The economic and employment impacts of the Proposed Development are considered in <b>Section 16.5 Assessment of Effects</b> of the assessment.</p> <p>The application includes the submission of the Pre-Application Consultation pack that sets out the engagement process. Within the EIAR mitigation measures include the proposed establishment of a community liaison group and channels for communication with the community at each stage.</p>
Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council	<p>The scoping response made the following comments relevant to the chapter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outlines concerns about the lack of consultation.</li> <li>Impacts on the Great Glen Way.</li> <li>Notes the range of visitor accommodation and attractions found within about a mile of the site on the opposite side of Loch Ness, and note that the visual impact of construction will be huge.</li> <li>Notes potential for impacts for locals to travel via the B862 to avoid impacts on the A82.</li> <li>Ensure consideration of Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan.</li> </ul>	<p>It is noted that there has been engagement with the Community Council since the Scoping Report was drafted. This included holding engagement events within the community council area and seeking the views of the community council.</p> <p>Impacts on the Great Glen Way have been considered in <b>Section 16.5: Assessment of Effects</b> of this assessment.</p> <p>The range of visitor accommodation and attractions found on the east side of Loch Ness is acknowledged, and the impacts have been assessed in <b>Section 16.5 Assessment of Effects</b> of this assessment.</p> <p>Transport impacts are assessed in <b>Chapter 13 Access Traffic and Transport (Volume 2: Main Report)</b>; however, consideration is given to the impacts on the level of access deprivation that the community face in <b>Section 16.5: Assessment of Effects</b>.</p>

<sup>23</sup> Offshore Wind Farm Construction and Tourism (2021). [Online] Available at: [Microsoft Word - BiGGAR Economics Wind Farms and Tourism 2021.docx](#)

<sup>24</sup> RenewableUK report Onshore Wind Direct & Wider Economic Impacts (2012). [Online] Available at: [RenewableUK report Onshore Wind Direct & Wider Economic Impacts](#)

Consultee	Key issue	Summary of Response and Action Taken
		The Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan has been considered in the preparation of this assessment.
Mowi Scotland Limited	<p>The contribution that the farmed fish sector makes to the Scottish Economy is more than £760 million per year through direct, supply chain and employment impacts.</p> <p>Freshwater lochs are noted as an important part of the farming cycle for rainbow trout and salmon.</p> <p>Notes that freshwater salmon was not referenced in the socio-economic chapter of the scoping report.</p> <p>The response outlines that Loch Ness would be subject to permanent hydrological modification and as such the scope of EIA Chapter 10 and 11 should be expanded to cover impacts at the construction and operational stage specific to fish farms.</p>	<p>The economic contribution of fish farming is acknowledged.</p> <p>Given the findings of EIA <b>Chapter 9 Aquatic and Marine Ecology, Chapter 10 Water Environment and Chapter 11 Flood Risk and Water Resources (Volume 2: Main Report)</b>, it is considered that there will be no significant adverse impacts on fish farming in Loch Ness.</p> <p>Fish farms, present on Loch Ness will be able to discuss any issues or provide feedback on the programme of construction activities, via the proposed Community Liaison Group.</p>
Scottish Canals	<p>Outlines the contribution of the Caledonian Canal to The Highlands economy and requests that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential impact of access to existing Caledonian Canal leisure and commercial moorings, including jetties and wharves around Loch Ness is included.</li> <li>Hydrological assessments assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the use of existing Caledonian Canal operations, boat access and egress and infrastructure.</li> <li>A canal management plan be prepared given the potential for conflict between canal construction traffic and those undertaking recreational activities on the canal.</li> </ul>	<p>Impacts on the water environment have been assessed in <b>Chapter 10 Water Environment (Volume 2: Main Report)</b>, and it is considered that Operation of the Proposed Development will not significantly impact leisure cruises or access to mooring etc on Loch Ness.</p> <p>Leisure cruises, present on Loch Ness will be able to discuss any issues or provide feedback on the programme of construction activities, via the proposed Community Liaison Group, or the long-term communication channels to be established for the Operational Phase.</p> <p>Safe working practices are an embedded feature of the construction stage, including for water-based construction traffic in proximity to recreational activities.</p>
The Highland Council Planning	<p>The EIAR should estimate who may be affected including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individual households, local communities or a wider socio-economic group such as tourists and tourist related businesses, recreational groups etc.</li> </ul> <p>The application should include economic information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>potential number of jobs and the economic activity, both regional and local, associated with the procurement, construction, operation and decommissioning of the development.</li> </ul> <p>A Housing Strategy will be submitted with the application setting out potential options for workers accommodation including utilising temporary on-site accommodation where feasible.</p>	<p>This assessment has assessed the impacts of the Proposed Development on socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors within the Study Area.</p> <p>The economic and employment impacts of the Proposed Development at the Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases are considered in <b>Section 16.5 Assessment of Effects</b> of the assessment.</p> <p>The strategy for housing including details of the on-site workers accommodation and supporting welfare infrastructure is provided within <b>Chapter 2 Project and Site Description (Volume 2: Main Report)</b>.</p>
The Highland Council (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber) Access Office	Identifies a potential significant negative impact on public access.	<p>A number of recreational routes fall within the Proposed Development Site. The routes have been subject to direct discussions with The Highland Council's Access Officer and Forestry Land Scotland regarding the re-routing. Management measures are proposed to maintain recreational access.</p> <p><b>Appendix 16.1: Outline Access Management Plan</b> has been prepared following engagement with The Highland Council's Access Officers.</p>
Caley Cruisers Ltd	Notes concerns regarding cumulative impact on their business and the operability of the canal with	Impacts on the water environment have been assessed in <b>Chapter 10 Water Environment (Volume 2: Main Report)</b> .

Consultee	Key issue	Summary of Response and Action Taken
	issues arising from abnormally low and high-water levels.	<p>Leisure cruises, present on Loch Ness will be able to raise issues or provide feedback on the programme of construction activities, via the proposed Community Liaison Group.</p> <p>If concerns persist during the Operational Phase , loch users will be able to raise issues in the first 12 months via the Community Liaison Group or, in the longer term, via established communication channels. The Applicant will outline how these concerns have been considered and, where appropriate, addressed or remediated.</p>

- 16.3.2 Further details on consultation undertaken for the Proposed Development can be found within **Appendix 4.3: Consultation Tracker (Volume 5: Appendices)**, and feedback from the public consultation is included in the **Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report** submitted with the Section 36 Application.

## 16.4 Methodology

### Study Area

- 16.4.1 The Study Area for the socio-economic, recreation and tourism assessment is shown on **Figure 16.1 (Sheets 1-6): Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism Receptors (Volume 3)** and extends to:
- Tourism and Recreation Receptors: 5 km from the Proposed Development Site to ensure receptors in the wider area around the Proposed Development Site are considered. Note the Study Area extends to the east side of Loch Ness.
  - Users of Loch Ness: Recreation and commercial users of Loch Ness in relation to potential impacts resulting from the Construction and Operation of the Proposed Development.
  - Economy of The Highland Council area: The Highland Council area as an economic unit to allow consideration of employment and GVA impacts.

### Guidance and Standards

- 16.4.2 There is no specific guidance directly applicable to the assessment of the socio-economic, recreation and tourism effects of pumped storage hydro schemes. However, there are a number of guidance documents which are of relevance. The following guidance documents have informed the approach to the assessment undertaken throughout this chapter:
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment: Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to: Delivering Quality Development (IEMA, 2016)<sup>25</sup>.
  - Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook: Guidance for competent authorities, consultation bodies, and others involved in the Environmental Impact Assessment process in Scotland (NatureScot, 2018)<sup>26</sup>.
  - Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects (International Association for Impact Assessment, 2015)<sup>27</sup>.
  - Net Economic Benefit and Planning (Scottish Government, 2016)<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Institute Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2016) Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to: Delivering Quality Development.

<sup>26</sup> Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook: *Guidance for competent authorities, consultation bodies, and others involved in the Environmental Impact Assessment process in Scotland* (NatureScot, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects (International Association for Impact Assessment, 2015) [Online] Available at:

[Social Impact Assessment Guidance for Assessing and Managing the Social Impacts of Projects](#)

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Government (2016), Net Economic Benefit and Planning [Online] Available at: [draft-advice-on-net-economic-benefit-and-planning/documents/draft-advice-net-economic-benefit-planning-pdf/](#)



- Impact Appraisal and Evaluation Guide (Scottish Enterprise, 2008)<sup>29</sup>.

## Assessment Methodology

- 16.4.3 The assessment methodology employed throughout this chapter to determine the impact of the Proposed Development upon local socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors reflects that of the magnitude of change and significance criteria set out in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)**.
- 16.4.4 Sensitivity of Receptors - the sensitivity of the receptor takes into account the receptor's value or quality in terms of the socio-economic, recreation or tourism activities it supports and the ability to absorb an effect without perceptible change. The sensitivity criteria have been derived taking into account relevant legislation, statutory designations or classifications.
- 16.4.5 Magnitude of Change - the magnitude of change criteria consider the scale of the predicted changes to existing conditions, taking into account its duration, the reversibility of the effect and whether the effect is direct or indirect.
- 16.4.6 Significance of Effects - the approach to the assessment of effects and determination of significance is as per **Table 4.7: Approach to the Assessment of Significance in Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)**. The approach is also informed by professional judgement. The significance of effect is based on a combination of the sensitivity or importance of the receptor and the magnitude of change from a potential effect. As noted in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)**, this general approach has been treated as a framework during the assessment.

## Limitations And Assumptions

- 16.4.7 It should be noted that the following features have been assessed separately within the relevant EIA chapters and therefore do not fall within the scope of the socio-economic, recreation and tourism assessment:
- Impacts on visual amenity of recreation and tourism receptors are considered in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Assessment (Volume 2: Main Report)**, except where visual impacts specifically affect visitor experience at accommodation and attractions, which is assessed within this chapter.
  - Impacts on the water environment, including water levels in Loch Ness, are considered within **Chapter 10 Water Environment (Volume 2: Main Report)** and **Chapter 11 Flood Risk and Water Resources (Volume 2: Main Report)**. A response to a specific operator is included in **Table 16.2: Summary of Consultation**.
  - Impacts on fish farming are considered within **Chapter 9 Aquatic and Marine Ecology (Volume 2: Main Report)**, **Chapter 10 Water Environment (Volume 2: Main Report)**, and **Chapter 11 Flood Risk and Water Resources (Volume 2: Main Report)**. A response to a specific operator is included in **Table 16.2: Summary of Consultation**.
  - Impacts on traffic volumes and the local road network and severance for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians will be assessed within **Chapter 12: Access Traffic & Transport (Volume 2: Main Report)**, except where Construction and Operational traffic will impact on a community's ability to access services or areas within a community.
  - Impacts on commercial forestry is assessed within **Chapter 18: Forestry (Volume 2: Main Report)**.

## 16.5 Baseline Environment

- 16.5.1 To assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development, it is necessary to determine the environmental conditions, resources and receptors that currently exist within the Proposed Development Site and Study Area.
- 16.5.2 Baseline information has been collated from a variety of publicly available sources as well as through public consultation (feedback is detailed in the Pre-application Consultation Report) and consultation with The Highland Council.

<sup>29</sup> Scottish Enterprise, Impact Appraisal and Evaluation Guide (2008) [Online] Available at: <https://www.scottish-enterprise.com/media/ajuffbuz/scottish-enterprise-appraisal-evaluation-guidance.pdf>

## Existing Land Use

- 16.5.3 The Proposed Development Site is in The Highland Council area, centred on national grid reference NH 45255 22395 approximately 9.5 km to the south of Drumnadrochit and 6.5 km north of Invermoriston. The land within the Proposed Development Site is predominately held by a single private landowner and is identified within the James Hutton Institute's Land Capability for Agriculture maps as class 6.3 (i.e. land capable of use as rough grazing). The Headpond location, at Loch nam Breac Dearga, sits approximately 485 m above ordnance datum (AOD).
- 16.5.4 Pockets of woodland are restricted to the eastern, southern and southwestern boundaries of the Proposed Development Site. These areas include commercial forestry, along the A82 and the main access to the Proposed Development Site, which is currently a commercial forestry route. No woodland is present within the Headpond area of the Proposed Development Site.

## Population

### Demographics

- 16.5.5 The Proposed Development Site is in a predominantly rural area. Alltsigh and Grotaiag are the only settlements within the Proposed Development Site. Alltsigh is located to the south and offers a youth hostel and some isolated dwellings approximately 2.9 km south of the Headpond. Grotaiag consists of sporadic dwellings and holiday rental properties approximately 3 km east of the Headpond.
- 16.5.6 The proposed main access to the Proposed Development Site is via the Balnain Main Access located approximately 0.5 km south of the village of Balnain, adjacent to Forestry and Land Scotland's (FLS) existing Balnain Car Park.
- 16.5.7 The Proposed Development Site straddles two community council areas, namely the Glen Urquhart and Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Councils. Based on estimates in the most recent community council plans, the combined population of these areas is 3,205.
- 16.5.8 Within the Study Area, the two largest settlements are Invermoriston, lying 9.5 km to the south, and Drumnadrochit 6.5 km to the north of the Proposed Development Site. Drumnadrochit is the larger settlement with an estimated population of 1,130. This is the only settlement within the Study Area with a population exceeding 500 people<sup>30</sup> highlighting the rural character of the Proposed Development Site area.
- 16.5.9 It should also be noted that the entirety of the Proposed Development Site is designated as 'Remote Rural Area' within the Scottish Government's Urban and Rural Classification (2020)<sup>31</sup>.
- 16.5.10 The settlement of Foyers is on the east side of Loch Ness and is located 1.3 km from the Lower Control Works. Foyers is located within the Stratherrick & Foyers Community Council area. The total population of the Community Council area is around 800.
- 16.5.11 **Table 16-3 Population by age group (2023)** shows the population breakdown by age group for the Loch Ness Intermediate Zone, from the 2022 Census and The Highland Council area, from the mid-2023 population estimates, compared with the average for Scotland. The Loch Ness area (61.3%) has a similar proportion of working population to the wider Highland Council area (60.6%) compared with the total for Scotland (63.2%) and a larger proportion of elderly people (25.7%) than The Highland Council area (23.2%) and Scotland (19.6%).

**Table 16-3 Population by age group (2023)**

Age Group	Total Population		Percentage of the Total Population		
	Loch Ness Intermediate Zone (2022)	Highland Council Area (2023)	Loch Ness Intermediate Zone (2022)	Highland Council Area (2023)	Scotland (2023)
0 - 15	597	36,951	13.0%	15.6%	16.3%
16 - 24	365	19,799	8.0%	8.4%	10.7%
25 - 44	832	53,181	18.1%	22.5%	25.7%
45 - 64	1623	69,179	35.3%	29.3%	27.0%

<sup>30</sup>National Records for Scotland, 2020. [Online] Available at: [projected-population-of-scotland-2020-based-unrevised](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/projected-population-of-scotland-2020-based-unrevised)

<sup>31</sup> Scottish Governments Urban and Rural Classifications (2020). [Online] Available at: [scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2020/](https://www.scottishgovernment.gov.uk/urban-rural-classification-2020/)

Age Group	Total Population		Percentage of the Total Population		
	Loch Ness Intermediate Zone (2022)	Highland Council Area (2023)	Loch Ness Intermediate Zone (2022)	Highland Council Area (2023)	Scotland (2023)
65 - 74	695	30,855	15.1%	13.1%	11%
75+	487	26,365	10.6%	11.2%	9.3%
All Ages	4599	236,330	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Scotland's Census, 2022 and National Records of Scotland, 2024<sup>32</sup>

- 16.5.12 **Table 16-4 Population Change 2001 – 2022** below, shows the change for both The Highland Council area and Scotland's population for the census years 2001 and 2022. This table shows that The Highland Council area has seen population growth over the last 22 years, notably the population is aging due to both the existing local population aging and an influx of retirement aged people moving to the area with the largest growth in those over the ages of 65. Similarly, Scotland has seen growth in the same demographics for the same period but not at the same levels seen within The Highland Council area.

**Table 16-4 Population Change 2001 - 2022**

Age Group	Population of The Highland Council area		Population Change between 2001 and 2022	
	2001	2022	Highland Council	Scotland
0-15	40,889	37,239	-8.93 %	-8.31 %
16-24	19,312	19,554	1.25 %	2.83 %
25-44	57,208	52,851	-7.62 %	-7.11 %
45-64	56,721	69,861	23.17 %	21.18 %
65-74	19,457	30,858	58.60 %	34.50 %
75 and over	15,333	24,985	62.95 %	36.73 %
All Ages	208,920	238,060	13.95 %	7.46 %

Source: National Records of Scotland, 2023<sup>33</sup>

- 16.5.13 Together, these population statistics collectively highlight an aging demographic, which, over time, could negatively impact the local area by reducing the number of individuals contributing to productivity and, in turn, economic growth.

- 16.5.14 Community receptors within the Study Area are shown in **Figure 16.1 Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism Receptors (Volume 3: Figures)**. These receptors include Balnain Primary School, Glen Urquhart Childcare Centre, Glen Urquhart Primary School, Glen Urquhart High School, Foyers Primary School and Glenurquhart Library and Learning Centre.

## Employment

- 16.5.15 Employment rates for The Highland Council are identified in **Table 16-5 Employment rates for working age population (16 – 64)**. This table presents a comparison of total employment rates for The Highland Council, Scotland and the United Kingdom (UK).

**Table 16-5 Employment rates for working age population (16 – 64)**

Highland Council (%)	Scotland (%)	United Kingdom (%)
76.0	74.7	74.5

Source: Office for National Statistics 2022<sup>34</sup>

- 16.5.16 **Table 16-6 Employee Jobs by Sector**, below, provides a breakdown of employment by industry. The four largest employment sectors in The Highland Council area are Human Health and Social Work Activities (17.1%), Wholesale and Retail Trade (14.4%), Accommodation and Food Services (13.5%) and Education (8.1%).

<sup>32</sup> Office for National Statistics (2024). Mid-2023 Population Estimates for Settlements and Localities in Scotland. [Online] Available at: [Mid-2023 Population Estimates for Settlements and Localities in Scotland | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/mid-2023-population-estimates-for-settlements-and-localities-in-scotland)

<sup>33</sup> Nomis Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (2023). Employee Jobs 2022. [Online] Available at: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/)

<sup>34</sup> Office for National Statistics (2024). Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in Highland. [Online] Available at: [Highland's employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/)



**Table 16-6 Employee Jobs by Sector**

Employment Sector	Job numbers (Highland Region)	Highland %	Scotland %
Full-time	72,000	64.9	67.3
Part-time	40,000	36.0	32.7
<b>Sector (above 3.5%)</b>			
Manufacturing	6,000	5.4	6.9
Construction	8,000	7.2	5.7
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Vehicles	16,000	14.4	12.9
Transportation and Storage	4,500	4.1	4.1
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	15,000	13.5	8.4
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	6,000	5.4	7.4
Administrative and support Service Activities	6,000	5.4	8.1
Public Administration and Defence	6,000	5.4	6.5
Education	9,000	8.1	7.5
Human Health and Social Work Activities	19,000	17.1	15.7
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	4,000	3.6	3.0

Source: Nomis Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (2023)<sup>35</sup>

## Housing

- 16.5.17 Based on The Highland Council Local Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028 (Highland Council, 2023)<sup>36</sup>, the number of dwellings in The Highland Council area equates to 122,235. This is a 1.2% increase from 120,785 in 2021 which exceeds the increase in number of dwellings across Scotland (0.9%). Owner occupation dominates the region's housing system with 70% of homes in this tenure. The social housing sector accounts for 18% of local households whilst the private rented sector in the region accounts for 12% of properties.

## Health and Wellbeing

- 16.5.18 Local primary health care facilities include Drumnadrochit Health Centre and Foyers Medical Centre. The nearest accident and emergency to the Proposed Development Site is located at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness. Statistics from the Scottish Public Health Observatory's (ScotPHO) key health and wellbeing indicators are shown in **Table 16-7 Key Health and Wellbeing Indicators for Loch Ness Intermediate Zone**, below. Drawing on Scottish Government data, this table compares key ScotPHO health and wellbeing indicators for the Study Area against the Scottish average.

**Table 16-7 Key Health and Wellbeing Indicators for Loch Ness Intermediate Zone**

Indicator	Loch Ness Intermediate Zone	Scotland
Patients with emergency hospitalisations (EASR per 100,000)	6074.0	7034.5
Average Life Expectancy (Females)	84.4	80.7

<sup>35</sup> Nomis Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (2023). Employee Jobs 2022. [Online] Available at: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

<sup>36</sup> Highland Council (2023). Highland Council Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028. [Online] Available at: [2023\\_04\\_13\\_Final\\_Highland\\_LHS\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.hc.gov.scot/media/2023/04/13/Final_Highland_LHS_(1).pdf)

Average Life Expectancy (Males)	81.2	76.5
People living in 15% most 'access deprived' areas (%)	78.6	15.0
Road traffic accident casualties (EASR per 100,000)	85.6	54.7

Source: The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) 2023 Online Profiles Tool.<sup>37</sup>

- 16.5.19 From the data set out in the table above, it is clear that the general health of the population of the Loch Ness Intermediate Zone is above Scotland as a whole. However, the local community is disproportionately impacted by road traffic accident casualties and limited access to essential services.
- 16.5.20 Since 2007, the national standard<sup>38</sup> for accident and emergency (A&E) is that 95% of patients wait no longer than 4 hours from arrival to admission, discharge or transfer for A&E treatment. In January 2025<sup>39</sup> only 66% of attendances at A&E services nationally were seen within 4 hours. The figure for NHS Highland was notably higher at 83%, but still below the standard.

## Recreation Receptors

### Overview

- 16.5.21 A review of publicly available information for the Study Area has been undertaken. This review identified key recreation receptors within 5 km of the Proposed Development Site. The recreational receptors are as follows:
- Long distance trails and cycling routes;
  - Core paths and short distance trails;
  - Lochs and other water bodies (excl. tourism of Loch Ness); and
  - Glenmoriston shooting ground.
- 16.5.22 Recreation receptors identified within the Study Area have been set out in **Appendix 16.2 Recreation and Tourism Features within 5km of the Proposed Development Site (Volume 5: Appendices)** and are shown in **Figure 16.1 Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism Receptors (Volume 3: Figures)**.
- 16.5.23 The following recreation receptors, identified within the Study Area, have the potential to be impacted by the Proposed Development:
- Recreational routes; and
  - Recreational fishing at Loch nam Breac Dearga.

### Recreation Routes

- 16.5.24 Recreation routes support outdoor pursuits and activities. Recreation routes within the Study Area are core paths, long-distance routes, local paths and public rights of way (PRoW). There are several core paths, walking trails and long-distance routes located within the Proposed Development Site, as set out below.
- 16.5.25 The following core paths are located within the Proposed Development Site and follow the route of the northern access track to the main area of the Proposed Development Site<sup>40</sup>:
- Core Path 02.02: Forestry Commission car park to Shenval (low);
  - Core Path 02.03: Forestry Commission car park to Shenval (upper);

<sup>37</sup> Scottish Public Health Observatory (2023). Online Profiles Tool [Online] Available at: [Online Profiles Tool - ScotPHO](https://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/NHSScotlandperformance/AE-LDP)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/NHSScotlandperformance/AE-LDP>

<sup>39</sup> Public Health Scotland (2025) Accident and Emergency: Downloads and Open Data [Online] Available at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/31792/2025-03-04-ae-monthly-attendance-and-waiting-times.xlsx>

<sup>40</sup> Highland Council (2024). Core Paths In Highland Council Area Map. [Online] Available at: [Core Paths in Highland Council area \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

- Core Path 13.01: Drumnadrochit to Balnain; and
- Core Path 13.02: Cnoc a Bhuachaille.

16.5.26 The following long-distance routes are located within the Proposed Development Site:

- Great Glen Way: runs north/south through the Creag-nan-Eun Forest and through the southeastern portion of the Proposed Development Site. The route lies parallel to the western shore of Loch Ness and the A82, travelling approximately 10 km between Alltsigh and Grottaig within the Proposed Development Site.
- Loch Ness 360: overlaps with the Great Glen Way and the South Loch Ness Trail to provide a full loop of Loch Ness. The section of the track which follows the Great Glen Way and therefore falls within the Proposed Development Site similarly travels approximately 10 km between Alltsigh and Grottaig within the Proposed Development Site.
- Affric Kintail Way: the section within the Proposed Development Site is to the south of Balnain and follows the existing FLS track which would be used to access the Proposed Development Site.
- Great Glen Canoe Trail: a long-distance canoeing trail approximately 95 km in length across Scotland which passes through both Loch Lochy and Loch Ness. The entirety of Loch Ness is included within the trail with both the east and west banks of Loch Ness providing amenities for users of the trail. Approximately 6.7 km of this route is located within the Proposed Development Site where the trail travels between the Loch Oich to Foyers and Foyers to Dochgarroch portions<sup>41</sup>.

16.5.27 The following walking route, identified as regionally important due to its popularity, is also known to fall within the Proposed Development Site:

- Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit and walking trail: the summit is approximately 510 m south of the Headpond.

16.5.28 Analysis of the Ramblers Scotland's Scottish Path Maps found two additional unnamed path networks, considered to be of local importance, within the Proposed Development Site. The first is located within the northern portion of the Proposed Development Site, approximately 3.6 km north of the Headpond. Initially, this path is a large forest track gradually climbing up from Drumnadrochit. As the path progresses, it joins an older and fainter route that is mostly clear and firm underfoot. The second path is in the west of the Proposed Development Site and is approximately 1.7 km west of the Headpond. This path is characterised as an easy-angled track, quite rocky underfoot but very clear and firm.

## Tourism Receptors

### Overview

16.5.29 A review of national and regional tourism strategies (VisitScotland, 2023)<sup>42</sup>, together with publicly available information including statistics for the Study Area, has been undertaken. This review identified key tourism receptors within 5 km of the Proposed Development Site.

16.5.30 The tourism receptors identified within the Study Area can be loosely split into the following categories:

- Scenic areas and nature reserves which includes lochs, forestry and mountains; and
- Visitor and historic attractions, which includes museums, galleries, outdoor activities and archaeological features that are promoted for tourists.

### Tourism Industry

16.5.31 Tourism is an important contributor to the Highland region's local economy. VisitScotland compiles annual tourism statistics for Scotland which provide an overview of the tourism sector's contribution to the economy, number of visits to the region and popular attractions. Key points from the 2024 Scotland visitor survey based on data gathered in 2023 (VisitScotland, 2024)<sup>43 44</sup> include:

<sup>41</sup> Scottish Canals (2024). Discover the Great Glen Canoe Trail. [Online] Available at:

<https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/visit/things-to-do/paddling/discover-the-great-glen-canoe-trail>

<sup>42</sup> VisitScotland (2024). Scotland Visitor Survey 2023: Highland region. [Online] Available:

<https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/highlands>

<sup>43</sup> VisitScotland (2024). Scotland Visitor Survey 2023: Highland region. [Online] Available:

<https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/highlands>

<sup>44</sup> VisitScotland (2024). Scotland Visitor Survey 2023. [Online] Available: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/about-our-visitors/visitor-survey#other>

- In 2023, there was a total of 16.4 million overnight visits to Scotland, including domestic and international overnight trips and day visits, of these 2.3 million were to the Highland region.
- The average overnight visitor spend in 2023 was £333.
- UK residents took 6.6-million-day trips to the Highland region.
- A total of 7.64 million nights in Highland's accommodation were taken by UK and international visitors. This accounts for both serviced and non-serviced accommodation.
- There was an estimated total spend of £762 million in the Highland region by international and UK visitors in 2023.

16.5.32 These statistics confirm the Highland region as a destination for both domestic and international tourism and reiterate the importance of tourism to the local economy.

### Scenic Areas and Nature Reserves

16.5.33 Areas designated for their landscape and nature value are not necessarily marketed for tourism but could contribute to tourists' preference for an area. VisitScotland's surveys confirm that landscape is the most important factor that attracts visitors to the country (VisitScotland, 2024)<sup>45</sup>. Scenic areas and nature reserves often provide educational and / or recreational infrastructure and facilities.

16.5.34 **Table 16.8 Reasons for choosing the Highland region** shows that 85% of those surveyed in the Scotland Visitor Survey (VisitScotland, 2024)<sup>46</sup> choose the region's scenery and landscape as their top reason for visiting. Similarly, as shown in **Table 16.9 Attractions or activities undertaken in the Highland region**, 56% of those sampled state the hillwalking, mountaineering, hiking or rambling opportunities as their primary attraction to the Highland region.

**Table 16-8 Reasons for choosing the Highland region**

Rank	Top reason for choosing Scotland	% of Highland visitor sample
1	The scenery/landscape	84
2	The history and culture	69
3	Scotland's people	30
4	Outdoor activities available	29
5	A Scottish attraction	20

Source: VisitScotland (2024)<sup>44</sup>

**Table 16-9 Attractions or activities undertaken in the Highland region**

Rank	Attractions and activities undertaken	% of Highland visitor sample
1	A castle or fort	43
2	Shopping	36
3	Viewed architecture and buildings	35
4	Place of worship	35
5	A museum	33

Source: VisitScotland (2024)<sup>44</sup>

16.5.35 The following scenic areas and nature reserves are within the Proposed Development Site:

16.5.36 Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area (SLA) shown in **Figure 6.3 Special Landscape Areas and Operational Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Volume 3: Figures)**, surrounds and includes Loch Ness from Lochend in the north to Fort Augustus in the south, taking in the easternmost section of the Proposed Development Site, including Meall Fuar-mhonaidh.

<sup>45</sup> VisitScotland (2024). Scotland Visitor Survey 2023. [Online] Available: [scotland-visitor-survey-2023-local-area-fact-sheet-inverness.pdf](#)

<sup>46</sup> VisitScotland (2024). Scotland Visitor Survey 2023. [Online] Available: [scotland-visitor-survey-2023-local-area-fact-sheet-inverness.pdf](#)

16.5.37 Loch Ness is a key visitor attraction notable for its size, being the largest body of fresh water in Great Britain by volume. Loch Ness has cultural significance and international recognition, including as the legendary home of the Loch Ness Monster. The loch is used recreationally for boating, fishing and water sports.

16.5.38 Visitor attractions within the Study Area include:

- Urquhart Castle which lies approximately 3.7 km east of the Proposed Development Site and represents the most visited paid attraction in the Highland region and the 5th most visited paid attraction in Scotland (VisitScotland, 2024)<sup>47</sup>.
- Leisure cruises are based around the Loch, including Loch Ness Cruises which is located approximately 1.6 km east of the Proposed Development Site. Other locations for cruises include Inverness, Fort Augustus and Foyers.
- The Loch Ness Centre, an art gallery and exhibition centre approximately 1.6 km east of the Proposed Development Site which also offers boat tours of Loch Ness.
- The Falls of Divach, a popular waterfall approximately 1.6 km east of the Proposed Development Site.
- Falls of Foyers, a popular waterfall with surrounding walking trails approximately 1.3 km south of the Proposed Development Site.

16.5.39 A full list of these sites is included within **Appendix 16.2: Recreation and Tourism Features within 5 km of the Proposed Development Site (Volume 5: Appendices)** and shown on **Figure 16.1 Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism Receptors (Volume 3: Figures)**.

## Tourist Services

16.5.40 In addition to visitor attractions and resources, a range of services which cater to tourists and visitors fall within the Study Area. These services include shops, restaurants, hotels, B&Bs and self-catered accommodation. A full list of these services is set out within **Appendix 16.2: Recreation and Tourism Features within 5 km of the Proposed Development Site (Volume 5: Appendices)**.

16.5.41 As shown in **Table 16-10 % Net Rooms Occupancy by Area and Accommodation Type**, the occupancy rates for 2023 were higher on average for both hotels and self-catered accommodation for the Highland region compared with the average for Scotland. It should be noted that at the time of writing, the data for Guest Houses and B&Bs for the Highland area is incomplete for 2023. For months where data is missing, these cells have been marked with an asterisk below.

**Table 16-10 % Net Rooms Occupancy by Area and Accommodation Type**

Month	Hotels (%)		Guest Houses and B&Bs (%)		Self-catering (%)	
	Highland Region (2023)	Scotland (2023)	Highland Region (2023)	Scotland (2023)	Highland Region (2023)	Scotland (2023)
January	54.87	47.3	*	40.8	25.28	29.5
February	59.18	51.9	*	23.1	27.59	29.4
March	56.83	54.1	39.64	76.1	31.58	30.7
April	65.30	71.1	59.67	70.4	52.98	46.0
May	74.01	73.6	82.84	79.5	57.32	50.8
June	83.55	75.1	*	73.8	61.93	52.8
July	82.48	61.4	*	83.9	67.23	58.2
August	82.88	80.1	*	89.1	65.29	58.4
September	86.07	84.5	*	78.5	68.05	56.3
October	66.45	79.1	*	65.8	52.66	45.8
November	46.39	62.7	*	58.2	29.53	31.2
December	54.22	44.3	*	60.9	34.58	29.9

<sup>47</sup> VisitScotland (2024). Visitor Attraction Figures 2023. [Online] Available at : [Visitor Attractions - Research & Insights | VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitScotland.org)

<b>Annual Average (%)</b>	<b>67.80</b>	<b>65.43</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>66.68</b>	<b>47.84</b>	<b>43.25</b>
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Source: VisitScotland (2024)<sup>48</sup>

- 16.5.42 The occupancy rates above demonstrate that maximum occupancy for both hotels and self-catered accommodation for the Highland region occurs between June and September.

## 16.6 Assessment of Effects

- 16.6.1 The Proposed Development has the potential to result in both adverse and beneficial impacts on a range of socio-economic, recreational and tourism receptors. To assess the overall significance of an effect it is necessary to establish the magnitude of the effect occurring i.e. the change to the existing baseline conditions as a result of the Proposed Development and the sensitivity or importance of the receiving environment or receptor.

- 16.6.2 The following sections assess the potential impacts upon different receptors during the Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases and establishes the significance of effect.

### Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase

#### Potential Effects on Economy (Employment)

- 16.6.3 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase is expected to take two years and comprise the following activities: Site Investigations, Site Clearance, Existing Access Track Upgrades, Affric Kintail Way Core Path Works, Borrow Pit Establishment/Expansion of Existing Quarries, Construction Compound Set-Up, Workers Accommodation Set-Up, New Access Tracks, Watercourse Crossings, Tunnel Portals Establishment, and Main Access Tunnel Excavation.
- 16.6.4 The Applicant expects that these works would generate a peak, temporary workforce of 375 people – or 100 person years of employment (PYE) in year 1 and 375 PYE in year two – which equates to a total of 475 gross direct PYEs onsite over the two year Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase.

#### Leakage

- 16.6.5 Leakage effects are the benefits to those outside of The Highland Council area. Due to the nature of the scheme and its specific construction requirements, it is assumed a 50% of construction staff could be sourced from within The Highland Council Area, with the remainder sourced from outside the area. This is assessed as high additionality in the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Additionality Guide<sup>49</sup>, reflecting that employment benefits will go to people living outside of The Highland Council area. The leakage effect would be subject to labour availability and take-up at the time of Construction. However, it is considered to be a reasonable assumption on which to base this assessment, stemming from professional experience and benchmarking against other comparable renewable energy projects. As such, 50% of staff would be likely to have permanent residence outside of The Highland Council area. This indicates that a noticeable number of jobs would be taken up by people living outside of this area.
- 16.6.6 An adjustment of 50% has therefore been applied to the estimated average 475 PYE during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase to estimate the jobs created within the target area. On this basis, it is estimated that the Proposed Development would create 238 PYEs for residents within The Highland Council area during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase.

#### Displacement

- 16.6.7 Economic impact assessments must also consider displacement effects resulting from the Proposed Development, which may lead to adverse effects on economic activities in other areas. This may comprise labour and geographical displacement i.e. where the Proposed Development demands workers from other projects/activities and locations. An assumption of 25% displacement has been made at both local and national levels, to reflect the nature of the Proposed Development which is not expected to generate significant displacement. This is based on observations of the assessment of economic impacts for similar schemes in the Highlands and also reflects the HCA Additionality Guide (Homes and Communities Agency, 2014)<sup>50</sup> standards (or 'ready reckoners') for displacement. Within the context of a construction project in the Highland Council area, a

<sup>48</sup> VisitScotland (2024) Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey 2023. [Online]. Available at: [Accommodation - Occupancy Statistics | VisitScotland.org](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ec4b9e5274a2e87db1c92/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Homes and Communities Agency (2014) HCA Additionality Guide. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ec4b9e5274a2e87db1c92/additionality\\_guide\\_2014\\_full.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ec4b9e5274a2e87db1c92/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Homes and Communities Agency (2014) HCA Additionality Guide. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ec4b9e5274a2e87db1c92/additionality\\_guide\\_2014\\_full.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ec4b9e5274a2e87db1c92/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf).



displacement factor of 25% is considered appropriate according to the DLUHC Appraisal Guide (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2023)<sup>51</sup>.

16.6.8 Displacement measures the extent to which the benefits of a development are offset by reductions in output or employment elsewhere. Any additional demand for labour cannot simply be treated as a net benefit, in this case the creation of 238 gross direct PYE, as it has the potential to displace workers from other positions and the net benefit is reduced to the extent that this occurs.

16.6.9 This estimate reflects that there are expected to be some displacement effects, however, according to the Office for National Statistics (2024)<sup>52</sup>, as indicated in the baseline, The Highland Council area has an ageing population with a slightly lower economic activity rate than Scotland and Great Britain, suggesting levels of displacement would be slightly smaller relative to the Scotland and Great Britain equivalents. This displacement level (25%) is assessed as appropriate for a construction project and has been applied in socio-economic assessments for other comparable energy infrastructure projects at the planning stage. This factor is a best practice approach in the absence of specific local information which may suggest a different level of displacement being used. Applying this level of displacement to the total gross direct average employment figure results in a net direct employment figure of 178 PYEs during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase in The Highland Council area.

### Multiplier Effect

16.6.10 In addition to the direct employment generated by the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase of the Proposed Development, there will be an increase in local employment arising from indirect and induced effects of the Pre-Construction activity. Employment growth will arise locally through manufacturing services and suppliers to the construction process (indirect or supply linkage multipliers). Additionally, it is assumed that part of the income of the construction workers and suppliers will be spent in The Highland Council area, generating further employment (in terms of induced or income multipliers).

16.6.11 The effect of the multiplier depends on the size of the geographical area that is being considered, the local supply linkages and income leakage from the area. The multiplier effects for different Scottish industries are provided by the Scottish Government<sup>53</sup>, with the construction sector having a Type II multiplier (which also reflects induced effects) of 1.9. As the guidance does not specify regional level multipliers, to assess the effect at The Highland Council area level, the national multiplier has been discounted by 50% to 1.6. This is to reflect that linkages at this geographical level will be weaker. Applying the 1.6 multiplier to the net direct employment figure of 178 PYEs results in net indirect and induced employment of 107 PYEs during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase in The Highland Council area.

16.6.12 **Table 16-11. Net Additional Construction Employment (PYEs) from the Proposed Development during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase** presents the temporary annual employment generated by the Proposed Development during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, accounting for leakage, displacement and multiplier effects. The Proposed Development will support, on average, 623 total net PYE during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phases. Of these, 285 PYE will be expected to be taken up by residents in The Highland Council area.

**Table 16-11. Net Additional Construction Employment (PYEs) from the Proposed Development during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase**

	The Highland Council area	Outside of The Highland Council area
Gross Direct Employment	238	237
Displacement	-60	-59
Net Direct Employment	178	178
Indirect & Induced Employment	107	160
Net Average Additional Employment <sup>54</sup>	285	338

Source: AECOM Calculations (2025)

<sup>51</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023), DLUHC Appraisal Guide. Available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dluhc-appraisal-guide/dluhc-appraisal-guide>.

<sup>52</sup> Office for National Statistics (2024). Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in Highland. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/labourmarketlocal/S12000017/>.

<sup>53</sup> Scottish Government (2024). Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998-2021 (Published 2024) [Online]. Available at: [Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998-2021 - gov.scot](https://supply.useandinputoutputtables.gov.scot).

<sup>54</sup> Sum of Net Direct Employment and Indirect and Induced Employment

- 16.6.13 The sensitivity of the workforce to employment changes has been assessed as medium. This accounts for the relatively high levels of people in The Highland Council area who 'want a job' (22.3%) and relatively low population of working age (60.8%) compared to the Scottish (16.4%) and Great Britain (18.1%) comparators, who want a job and where there is a slightly higher population of working age (63.5% in Scotland and 62.9% in Great Britain)<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, the workforce in The Highland Council area is assessed to be of medium sensitivity due to its capacity to benefit from additional employment opportunities.
- 16.6.14 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase of the Proposed Development is expected to be particularly labour-intensive and to run over an extended period. As such, it is well placed to support high-quality, medium-term employment in a rural area where such opportunities are limited.
- 16.6.15 It is estimated that an average of 285 PYE will be required from within The Highland Council area during this Phase. While this represents a meaningful contribution to local employment, it constitutes a relatively modest proportion of the overall construction workforce in the area. Therefore, the impact of construction employment generation in The Highland Council area is assessed to be of a low magnitude.
- 16.6.16 The impact is therefore assessed to be small and temporary in nature which results in a Minor Beneficial effect.

### Potential Effects on Economy (Gross Value Added)

- 16.6.17 Applying the average gross value added (GVA) per direct construction worker job in The Highland Council area to the total number of workers (PYE) required by the Proposed Development gives the total GVA arising from the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase. GVA has been calculated using the average GVA per worker in the civil engineering sector in Scotland and in The Highland Council area. In Scotland, GVA per worker in this sector is estimated to be £83,164 per head, whilst in The Highland Council area this is £75,183. By applying these to the total direct workers (PYE) generated by the Proposed Development, it is estimated that Construction will contribute approximately £49.5 million to the national economy, of which £21.4 million would likely be within The Highland Council area. This is shown in **Table 16.12. Gross Direct Value Added per annum from the Proposed Development during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase.**

**Table 16-12. Gross Value Added from the Proposed Development during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase**

	The Highland Council Area	Outside of The Highland Council Area	Total
GVA per worker	£75,183	£83,164	
Average Net Employment	285	338	623
GVA	£21.4m	£28.1m	£49.5m

Source: Scottish Government (2023) Scottish Annual Business Statistics 2021

- 16.6.18 The sensitivity of the economy within The Highland Council area has been assessed as medium on the basis that the civil engineering industry in The Highland Council area is not an exact comparable economy to Scotland's civil engineering industry overall, and the GVA per head in The Highland Council area is approximately 10% lower than the national average.
- 16.6.19 Due to the size of GVA generation associated with the Proposed Development during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase relative to the GVA of The Highland Council area, this impact has been assessed as being of medium magnitude.
- 16.6.20 This results in a temporary Moderate Beneficial effect.

### Potential Effects on the Local Community

- 16.6.21 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase will require a workforce of up to 475 PYE over two years. Workers will be mainly accommodated on-site in Temporary Workers Accommodation. Providing on-site accommodation will avoid significant impacts on existing housing stock and will avoid wider character and amenity impacts from locating construction workforce in small rural settlements or within Inverness.
- 16.6.22 The influx of construction workers has the potential to strain existing community and health services within the Study Area, and it is noted that the local community plan documents for Glen Urquhart references concerns with GP capacity in the area and that allied health services, including dental, physiotherapy and podiatry are located

<sup>55</sup> Office for National Statistics (2024). Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in Highland. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/labourmarket/local/S12000017/>.



in Inverness. To avoid impacts on existing primary health and community services and facilities on-site health care and recreational facilities will be provided to workers. This will support the well-being of workers, whilst ensuring that local health, community and recreational facilities are not adversely impacted.

- 16.6.23 The community has a low capacity to absorb change associated with the influx of construction workers, particularly given the concerns raised over GP provision in the local community plan documents and the recognised housing challenge, and as such has a high sensitivity to impacts. Taking account of the provision of Temporary Workers Accommodation on-site and the level of facilities offered over the full length of the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, the magnitude of the change to the local community is considered negligible. The significance is therefore considered to be Minor Adverse.
- 16.6.24 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Works have the potential to impact upon a community's way of life and disrupt businesses and services. Consideration has therefore been given to the location of the construction compounds to avoid, as far as practicable, impacts on the surrounding community, with public consultation feedback also informing the compound locations. The Temporary Workers Accommodation and other compounds have therefore been moved to the north of the site to minimise the potential for Construction impacts on the community.
- 16.6.25 Communities and the community receptors are considered to have a medium sensitivity, given the potential for the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works, including noise, vibration, traffic and visual effects, to impact on the way of life or daily operations of the community receptors, and the concerns raised in the pre-application consultation. As the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase will largely be located within the Proposed Development Site and away from residential properties and other community receptors the magnitude of change is considered to be low. It is therefore considered that the works would not adversely affect the way of life or daily operations of the residents and other community receptors.
- 16.6.26 As a result, the significance of effect is considered to be Minor Adverse.

### Potential Effects on Access

- 16.6.27 The Highland Council area has a notably high percentage of people living in the 15% most 'access deprived' areas of Scotland, which impacts on the ability of the community to travel to basic services. Access concerns are also reflected in the local community plan documents for Glen Urquhart, and Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston. It is recognised that the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase has the potential to exacerbate access issues for the communities within the Study Area on the west side of Loch Ness where Pre-Construction and Enabling works will be located.
- 16.6.28 In recognition of the potential for disruption to the local transport network which would impact on access to services, local businesses and community facilities, avoiding, as far as practicable, impacts on the A82 and local roads has been a key project objective. Feedback from the community has also been used to inform the access routes to the Proposed Development Site. This in part resulted in the main access utilising the existing commercial forestry road via the A831 from Balnain and not via access points from A82. Other initiatives to avoid impacts on accessibility, include the provision of shuttle buses for construction workers to access Inverness and local settlements.
- 16.6.29 Impacts from construction traffic on school bus pick up and drop off locations were raised by the community at the pre-application consultations. Measures to ensure safe and convenient access to school bus pick up and drop off locations are detailed in **Chapter 13: Access, Traffic & Transport (Volume 2: Main Report)**.
- 16.6.30 While impacts on the A82 and other local roads have been minimised through the design development process, there is the potential for some disruption for the community in terms of access to services, local businesses and community facilities and to different areas within the Study Area. This is particularly for communities along the A831 and A82, especially in the environs of Drumnadrochit and Milton where Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase traffic may impact on movement within communities. Access is also important for recreation and tourism sectors, which are important components of the local economy.
- 16.6.31 Access to the Proposed Development Site will be via an existing commercial forestry road at Balnain (Balnain Main Access) and the proposed construction work, associated traffic and required upgrades to the track have been discussed with FLS. The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works and associated traffic will be managed to avoid significant impacts on the commercial forestry use of the road. Access to the FLS public car park at Balnain will be maintained for walkers and other recreational users.
- 16.6.32 The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which is embedded into the design of the Proposed Development, will minimise traffic congestion on the local road network during Construction Phases of the

Proposed Development and will be employed to ensure construction traffic movements occur at set times, avoiding peak periods and minimising impacts on community facilities and visitor attractions.

- 16.6.33 Given the access deprivation that exists in The Highland Council area, the community has a low capacity to absorb change, , and as such has a high sensitivity to impacts. The magnitude of the change to access is considered to be low, which takes account of the embedded mitigation of the CTMP minimising access impacts.
- 16.6.34 The significance is therefore considered to be Minor Adverse.

## Potential Effects on Recreation

### Recreational Routes

- 16.6.35 The main Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase access will be via the existing commercial forestry road accessed from the A831 in Balnain. Part of this commercial forestry road also forms part of the Affric Kintail Way and Core Path 13.01 until these routes turn off the road and head towards Drumnadrochit. Core Path 13.02 then follows the commercial forestry road before diverting off and following a forest track. A section of the Coiltie Loop also follows the commercial forestry road. These routes have recreational value for walkers and other recreational users. Sections of Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 also intersect with the Affric Kintail Way and Core Path 13.01.
- 16.6.36 Construction traffic may impact upon the enjoyment that locals and visitors experience walking on the routes; however, Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works and Construction Phase alterations to the corridor are embedded in the design of the Proposed Development. Once in place these alterations will maintain access to a commensurate standard by widening and diverting the route onto FLS land.
- 16.6.37 Public consultation feedback highlighted Meall Fuar–mhonaidh as a popular walk for residents and visitors. The route to the summit of Meall Fuar–mhonaidh will not be impacted by the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase and works to alter Loch nam Breac Dearga (the Headpond) do not occur under this Phase of the Proposed Development.
- 16.6.38 There are sections of the Great Glen Way, Loch Ness 360, Great Glen Canoe Trail within the Proposed Development Site and wider routes within the Study Area but are not anticipated to be impacted by the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase.
- 16.6.39 The potential sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance of individual recreation routes with the potential to be impacted during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase has been assessed and set out in **Table 16-13: Assessment of Recreation Routes During Construction**, below.

**Table 16-13 Assessment of Recreation Routes During Pre-Construction and Enabling**

Recreation Route	Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance
Affric Kintail Way	A section of the Affric Kintail Way follows the commercial forestry road and will require widening and diversions to maintain access.  The Affric Kintail Way is a long-distance route; however, the impacted section is also used as a commercial forestry road, reducing the magnitude of change introduced by construction traffic.	Medium	Medium	Moderate
Core paths within Proposed Development Site (02.02; 02.03; 13.01; and 13.02)	Core Paths 13.01 and 13.02 follow the commercial forestry road which will require widening and diversions to maintain access as discussed in relation to the Affric Kintail Way. Short sections of Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 also intersect with the commercial forestry road. The Coiltie Loop Trail also follows the commercial forestry road.	Low	Medium	Minor
Coiltie Loop Trail				
Core paths around Drumnadrochit	Core paths around Drumnadrochit fall within areas of existing forestry. This land use, alongside the area's topography, will screen the Proposed Development from view for users of these recreational routes.	Low	Low	Negligible
Core paths to the north of the Proposed Development Site	Core paths to the north of the Proposed Development Site will have restricted views of the Proposed Development on account of the surrounding dense woodland and nearby hills. Summits including Carn Macsna, Carn a Bhainne and Carn na h-Imrich present visual separation from the Proposed Development Site.	Low	Low	Negligible

Recreation Route	Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance
Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit route	The Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit route is a popular route for local and visitors. The rounded shape of the 699 m summit and prominent position make it a distinctive landmark, visible from along much of Loch Ness. The route is located approximately 510 m south of the Headpond, however works on the Headpond do not commence at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase.	Low	Low	Negligible

- 16.6.40 The significance of effect on Affric Kintail Way is considered Moderate Adverse. For other routes identified in **Table 16-13: Assessment of Recreation Routes During Construction** the significance of effect is considered Negligible to Minor Adverse.

### Recreational Fishing

- 16.6.41 No Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works will be required at Loch nam Breac Dearga.

### Potential Effects on Tourism

- 16.6.42 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase will require a workforce of around 375 people at the it's peak. Workers who do not live locally will be accommodated on-site in Temporary Workers Accommodation. Once this is established it will avoid the need to utilise visitor accommodation to house workers, which will avoid impacts on the availability of visitor accommodation for tourists. This will avoid tourists being displaced from staying in the area.
- 16.6.43 It is anticipated that during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, workers will be provided with opportunities to spend locally in shops, food and drink establishments and potentially visit local visitor attractions, which will support local businesses throughout the year. These opportunities will be provided in a managed way, via the proposed shuttle bus connections to Inverness and local settlements.
- 16.6.44 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase activities resulting in increased noise and traffic have the potential to impact on the enjoyment and quality of a visitor's experience or stay at visitor attractions and accommodation, and concerns about the potential impacts were raised by owners of visitor accommodation businesses at the pre-application consultation events.
- 16.6.45 The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works are located within the northwestern part of the Proposed Development Site and away from Loch Ness, limiting the extent of potential impacts on visitor attractions to those on the west side of Loch Ness, which includes the Falls of Divach, The Loch Ness Centre, Nessie Land and Urquhart Castle. The Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works will be located away from visitor accommodation; however construction traffic will pass visitor accommodation located along the A82 and A831.
- 16.6.46 Given the importance of the tourist sector, the significance of the attractions, particularly Urquhart Castle and the wider Loch Ness scenic area, and the visitors that they attract, visitor attractions have an up to high sensitivity to the pre-construction and enabling works. The impact magnitude of change is however, considered to be negligible given that the attractions are located away from the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase works.
- 16.6.47 The significance of the impact is therefore considered to be up to Minor Adverse.

## Construction

### Potential Effects on Economy (Employment)

- 16.6.48 The Construction Phase, excluding works associated with the Pre-construction and Enabling Phase, is expected to be approximately 60 months (five years). Therefore, the likely effects of Construction will be of a medium-term temporary nature. Although the construction jobs it will generate are temporary, they represent a positive economic effect over a substantial period to deliver the scale and type of activities required.
- 16.6.49 The Applicant estimates that the Proposed Development will require an average of 588 PYEs, over five years, which equates to 2,940 PYEs in total over the Construction Phase. The size of the workforce will fluctuate throughout the Construction period, increasing or decreasing in response to the specific activities required.

### Leakage

- 16.6.50 As per the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, it is estimated that 50% of construction staff could be sourced from The Highland Council area, which will be subject to labour availability and take-up at the time of the

Construction Phase. This has also been informed by benchmarking against comparable renewable energy projects. An adjustment of 50% has therefore been applied to the estimated average 2,940 gross direct PYEs on-site during the Construction Phase to estimate the jobs created within the target area. On this basis, it is estimated that the Proposed Development will create 1,470 PYEs for residents within The Highland Council area during the Construction Phase.

### Displacement

- 16.6.51 As detailed in the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, a low displacement factor of 25% is considered appropriate for Construction. Applying this level of displacement to the gross direct PYEs figure results in a net direct employment figure of 1,103 PYEs during the Construction Phase in The Highland Council area.

### Multiplier Effect

- 16.6.52 A national multiplier effect of 1.9 has been selected for the assessment in line with Scottish Government guidance<sup>56</sup>. As explained in the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase section, to assess effects for The Highland Council area, this multiplier has been discounted by 50% to 1.6. Applying the 1.6 multiplier to the net direct employment figure of 1,103 PYEs results in net indirect and induced employment of 662 PYEs generated during the Construction Phase in The Highland Council area.

- 16.6.53 **Table 16-14: Net Additional Construction Employment (PYEs) from the Proposed Development during the Construction Phase** shows the temporary annual employment generated by the Proposed Development accounting for leakage, displacement and multiplier effects. The Proposed Development will support, on average, 3,859 total net PYE per annum during the Construction Phase. Of these, 1,765 jobs per annum will be expected to be taken up by residents in The Highland Council area.

**Table 16-14. Net Additional Construction Employment (PYE) from the Proposed Development during the Construction Phase**

	The Highland Council Area	Outside of The Highland Council Area
Gross Direct Employment	1,470	1,470
Displacement	-367	-368
Net Direct Employment	1,103	1,102
Indirect & Induced Employment	662	992
Net Average Additional Employment <sup>57</sup>	1,765	2,094

Source: AECOM Calculations (2025)

- 16.6.54 Following the approach in the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, the sensitivity of the workforce in The Highland Council area to employment changes is assessed to be medium. This is due to the capacity of the local labour force to benefit from additional employment in different sectors, and as rural areas typically lack employment opportunities.
- 16.6.55 The construction of large-scale pumped storage hydro schemes is particularly labour intensive with relatively long timescales, meaning these developments can support high-quality, long-term employment in rural areas which often lack employment opportunities. Pumped storage hydro therefore has the potential to attract and retain working age adults and boost growth in rural areas, supporting the UK government levelling-up policy and Scottish Government policies on 'Just Transition'. 'Just Transition' is a commitment to ending Scottish contribution to climate change in a way that is "fair and leaves no one behind"<sup>58</sup>. The policy lists several actions, which includes investments in key net zero markets such as energy and supporting reskilling and retraining for people access to 'green jobs' in related sectors.
- 16.6.56 The Construction employment assessment sets out that there will be an average net additional employment of 1,765 PYE required from The Highland Council area to complete the Proposed Development. An addition of 1,765 PYE would represent a notable contribution, but of relatively modest proportions, to the size of the total construction sector, therefore the impact of construction employment generation in The Highland Council area is assessed to be of a medium magnitude.

<sup>56</sup> Scottish Government (2024). Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998-2021 (Published 2024) [Online]. Available at: [Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998-2021 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/just-transition/).

<sup>57</sup> Sum of Net Direct Employment and Indirect and Induced Employment

<sup>58</sup> Scottish Government (2025). Climate Change Policy. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/just-transition/>.

- 16.6.57 The impact is therefore assessed to be moderate and temporary in nature which results in a short-term temporary Moderate Beneficial effect.

### Potential Effects on Economy (Gross Value Added)

- 16.6.58 Applying the average GVA per civil engineering worker in The Highland Council area and Scotland to the total number of construction workers generated from the Proposed Development gives the total GVA arising from the Construction Phase. This has been calculated using the same approach as the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase, where in Scotland, GVA per worker in the civil engineering sector is estimated to be £83,164 per head, whilst in The Highland Council area, this is £75,183. By applying these to the total direct construction workers (PYE) generated by the Proposed Development, it is estimated that Construction will contribute approximately £306.8 million to the national economy, of which £132.7 million would likely be within The Highland Council area. This is shown in **Table 16-15 Gross Direct Value Added per annum from the Proposed Development during the Construction Phase**.

**Table 16-15. Gross Value Added from the Proposed Development during the Construction Phase**

	The Highland Council area	Outside of The Highland Council area	Total
GVA per worker	£75,183	£83,164	
Average Net Employment	1,765	2,094	3,859
GVA	£132.7m	£174.1m	£306.8m

Source: AECOM Calculations (2025)

- 16.6.59 The sensitivity of the economy within The Highland Council area has been assessed as medium on the basis that the civil engineering industry in the area is not an exact comparable economy to Scotland's civil engineering industry overall, and the GVA per head in the former is approximately 10% lower than the national average.
- 16.6.60 Due to the size of GVA generation during Construction associated with the Proposed Development relative to The Highland Council area GVA, this impact has been assessed as being of medium magnitude. This results in a temporary Moderate Beneficial effect.

### Potential Effects on the Community

- 16.6.61 Construction Phase works will require a workforce of up to 1,000 people at the peak of the Construction period. Workers will be accommodated on-site in Temporary Workers Accommodation. Providing on-site accommodation will avoid significant impacts on existing housing stock and will avoid wider character and amenity impacts from locating construction workforce in small rural settlements or within Inverness.
- 16.6.62 The influx of construction workers has the potential to strain existing community and health services within the Study Area, and it is noted that the local community plan documents for Glen Urquhart references concerns with GP capacity in the area and that allied health services, including dental, physiotherapy and podiatry are located in Inverness. To avoid impacts on existing primary health and community services and facilities on-site health care and recreational facilities will be provided for workers. This will support the well-being of workers, whilst ensuring that pressure on community and recreational facilities, utilised by the community, is not increased.
- 16.6.63 The community has a low capacity to absorb change associated with the influx of construction workers, particularly given the concerns raised over GP provision in the local community plan documents, and as such has a high sensitivity to impacts. The magnitude of the change to the local community is considered negligible, which takes account of the provision of the Temporary Workers Accommodation on-site and the level of facilities offered over the full length of the Construction period.
- 16.6.64 The significance is therefore considered to be Minor Adverse.
- 16.6.65 Construction Phase works have the potential to impact upon a community's way of life and disrupt businesses and services. As detailed in **Chapter 3: Evolution of Design and Alternatives (Volume 2: Main Report)**, consideration has been given to the location of the Construction Compounds to avoid, as far as practicable, impacts on the surrounding community, with public consultation feedback also informing the compound locations. The Temporary Workers Accommodation and other compounds have therefore been moved to the north of the site to minimise the potential for Construction impacts on the community.
- 16.6.66 The main construction areas of the Headpond and Lower Control Works are not located within settlements. Construction of the Lower Control Works will, however, be visible to the community at Foyers on the east side of



Loch Ness. Construction noise will also be perceptible at Foyers, however the impact will not be significant in noise assessment terms assessed in **Chapter 14: Noise and Vibration (Volume 2: Main Report)**.

- 16.6.67 Communities and the community receptors are considered to have a medium sensitivity, given the potential for Construction works to impact on the way of life or daily operations of the community receptors, and the concerns raised at the pre-application consultation events.
- 16.6.68 The magnitude of change is Low as there will not be any direct impacts. Although construction activities will be visible from some community receptors including on the east side of Loch Ness in Foyers and noise will be perceptible, the works will not be located within any settlements. The Construction Phase will therefore not significantly impact the way of life of the community or the daily operations of the various community receptors.
- 16.6.69 As a result, the significance is considered to be Minor Adverse.

### Potential Effects on Access

- 16.6.70 The Highland region has a notably high percentage of people living in the 15% most 'access deprived' areas of Scotland, which impacts on the ability of the community to travel to basic services. Access concerns are also reflected in the local community plan documents for Glen Urquhart, and Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston. It is recognised that the Construction Phase has the potential to exacerbate access issues for the communities within the Study Area, particularly those located on the west side of Loch Ness where Construction Phase works will be present.
- 16.6.71 In recognition of the potential for disruption to the local transport network, which would impact on access to services, local businesses and community facilities, avoiding, as far as practicable, impacts on the A82 and local roads has been a key project objective. Feedback from the community has also been used to inform the access routes to the Proposed Development Site. This in part resulted in the main access being from the existing commercial forestry road via the A831 from Balnain and not via access points from A82. Other initiatives to avoid impacts on accessibility, include the provision of shuttle buses for construction workers to access Inverness and local settlements.
- 16.6.72 While impacts on the A82 and other local roads have been minimised through the Proposed Development design process, there is the potential for some disruption for the community in terms of access to services, local businesses and community facilities and to different areas within the Study Area. This is particularly for communities along the A831, and especially in the environs of Drumnadrochit and Milton where construction traffic may impact on movement within communities. Access is also important for recreation and tourism sectors, which are important components of the local economy.
- 16.6.73 Access to the site will be via an existing commercial forestry road at Balnain and the proposed construction work, associated traffic and required upgrades to the road have been discussed with Forestry and Land Scotland. The Construction Phase works and associated traffic will be managed to avoid significant impacts on the commercial forestry use of the road.
- 16.6.74 The community has a low capacity to absorb change, given the access deprivation that exists, and as such has a high sensitivity to impacts. The magnitude of the change to access is considered low, which takes account of the length of construction, but also the CTMP and the steps in the design process to minimise impacts on access.
- 16.6.75 The significance is therefore considered to be Minor Adverse.

### Potential Effects on Recreation

#### Recreational Routes

- 16.6.76 The main Construction Phase works access will be via the existing commercial forestry road accessed from Balnain.
- 16.6.77 The commercial forestry road also forms part of the Affric Kintail Way and Core Path 13.01 until these routes turn off the road and head towards Drumnadrochit. Core Path 13.02 then follows the commercial forestry road before diverting off and following a forest track. The Coiltie Loop also follows the forestry road. These routes have recreational value for walkers and other recreational users. Sections of Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 also intersect with the Affric Kintail Way and Core Path 13.01.
- 16.6.78 Construction traffic may impact upon the enjoyment that locals and visitors experience walking on the routes; however, alterations to the corridor are embedded in the design. These alterations will maintain access to a commensurate standard by widening and diverting the route onto FLS land. A car park is located on Core Path

02.02 and is adjacent to Core Path 13.01 within the Proposed Development Site. Access to the FLS public car park at Balnain will be maintained for walkers and other recreational users.

- 16.6.79 Public consultation feedback highlighted Meall Fuar–mhonaidh as a popular walk for residents and visitors. The route to the summit of Meall Fuar–mhonaidh will not be impacted by Construction Phase works. However, walkers will be aware of construction noise and visual amenity impacts, due to the proximity of the route to the Headpond and other construction areas. This may impact on the enjoyment of this route for both local walkers and visitors, but access will be maintained and views of Loch Ness unimpeded.
- 16.6.80 The Great Glen Way and Loch Ness 360 are within the Proposed Development Site, but where works intersect these routes they will occur below ground, and, as such will not impact on the recreational enjoyment of the route.
- 16.6.81 The potential sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance of individual recreation routes during construction has been assessed and set out in **Table 16-16 Assessment of Recreation Routes During Construction**, below.

**Table 16-16 Assessment of Recreation Routes During Construction**

Recreation Route	Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance
Loch Ness 360	Despite the Loch Ness 360 falling within the Proposed Development Site, views of the Proposed Development from here will be restricted on account of the existing topography. Tunnelling works as part of the Construction Phase will occur 100m below ground and therefore will not impact upon this route.	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
Great Glen Way	Despite the Great Glen Way falling within the Proposed Development Site, views of the Proposed Development from here will be restricted on account of the existing topography. Tunnelling works as part of the Construction Phase will occur 100m below ground and therefore will not impact upon this route.	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
Great Glen Canoe Trail	The Great Glen Canoe Trail is located on Loch Ness, however the limited surface area of Loch Ness required for the Tailpond Construction works and proximity of the works to the banks of the loch makes it possible for trail users to avoid construction areas.	Medium	Low	Minor
Affric Kintail Way (a long distance route)	A section of the Affric Kintail Way follows the commercial forestry road and will require widening and diversions to maintain access.  The Affric Kintail Way is a long-distance route and is considered to have a medium sensitivity. However, this is tempered by the routes existing use for commercial forestry.	Medium	Medium	Moderate
Core paths within Proposed Development Site (02.02; 02.03; 13.01; and 13.02)	Core Paths 13.01 and 13.02 follow the commercial forestry road which will require widening and diversions to maintain access, as discussed in relation to the Affric Kintail Way. Short sections of Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 also intersect with the commercial forestry road.	Low	Medium	Minor
Coiltie Loop Trail	The Coiltie Loop Trail also follows the commercial forestry road.			
Core paths around Drumnadrochit	Core paths around Drumnadrochit fall within areas of existing forestry. This land use, alongside the area's topography, will screen the Proposed Development from view for users of these recreational routes.	Low	Low	Negligible
Core paths to the north of the Proposed Development Site	Core paths to the north of the Proposed Development Site will have restricted views of the Proposed Development on account of the surrounding dense woodland and nearby hills. Summits including Carn Macsna, Carn a Bhainne and Carn na h-Imrich present visual separation from the Proposed Development Site.	Low	Low	Negligible
Core paths to the east of Loch Ness	Core paths falling to the east of Loch Ness will physically be separated from the Construction Phase works and as such access will be maintained. Recreational users will	Low	Low	Negligible

Recreation Route	Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance
	however be impacted by the presence of construction activity on the west side of Loch Ness.			
Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit route	The Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit route is a popular route for local and visitors. The rounded shape of the 699m summit and prominent position make it a distinctive landmark, visible from along much of Loch Ness. Located approximately 510m south of the Headpond. The Construction Phase works will not have a physical impact on the route, but recreational users enjoyment will be impacted by the proximity to Construction works and views of Loch nam Breac Dearga altered by Construction works. Users will still be able to appreciate wider views from the route.	Low	Low	Negligible

- 16.6.82 The Significance of effect on Affric Kintail Way is considered to be Moderate. For other routes identified in **Table 16.16 Assessment of Recreation Routes During Construction** the significance of effect is Negligible to Minor Adverse.

### Recreational Fishing

- 16.6.83 The Proposed Development will require Construction Phase works at Loch nam Breac Dearga to form the Headpond and Loch Ness to form the Lower Control Works.
- 16.6.84 The Construction Phase works result in Loch nam Breac Dearga not being accessible during the Construction period and, recreational uses, such as fishing, will end, due to the loch's long-term use as the Headpond. Feedback received as part of the public consultation period outlined that the loch is occasionally used for recreational fishing. It is understood that the loch is not heavily used for fishing, and that a number of alternative lochs exist for fishing within the Study Area.
- 16.6.85 The sensitivity of Loch nam Breac Dearga is considered to be negligible due to the limited number of users. The magnitude of change is considered to be negligible as appropriate alternatives to Loch nam Breac Dearga exist for fishing.
- 16.6.86 The potential effects are predicted to be Negligible.

### Potential Effects on Tourism

- 16.6.87 The Construction Phase works will require a workforce of up to 1,765 PYEs at the peak Construction period. Workers who do not live locally will be accommodated on-site in Temporary Workers Accommodation. This will avoid the need to utilise visitor accommodation to house workers, which will avoid impacts on the availability of visitor accommodation for tourists and so avoids tourists being displaced from staying in the area.
- 16.6.88 It is anticipated that during the Construction Phase, workers will be provided with opportunities to spend locally in shops, food and drink establishments and potentially visit local visitor attractions, which will support local businesses throughout the year. These opportunities will be provided in a managed way, via the proposed shuttle bus connections to Inverness and local settlements.
- 16.6.89 Construction activities resulting in increased noise and traffic have the potential to impact on the enjoyment and quality of a visitors experience or stay at visitor attractions and accommodation, and concerns about the potential impacts were raised by owners of visitor accommodation businesses at the pre-application consultation events. The works also have the potential to impact on the enjoyment of the surrounding landscape (a key reason for tourists to visits the Highlands) and the setting of attractions, as detailed in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (Volume 2: Main Report)**.
- 16.6.90 Given the importance of the tourist sector, the significance of the attractions, particularly Urquhart Castle, and the visitors that they attract, visitor attractions have an up to high sensitivity to Construction works. The Construction Phase works will not occur in the immediate vicinity of tourist attractions or accommodation except for the Lower Control Works at Loch Ness. Consequently, there will be no impact on the identified tourist attractions or accommodations, except for those at Loch Ness.
- 16.6.91 Loch Ness is a scenic attraction for visitors with cultural significance at a local, regional and national level. Loch Ness is used for a variety of water based recreational uses, including swimming, fishing and boating. The Great Glen Canoe Trail is located on Loch Ness and a number of leisure cruises operate on the loch. The Construction



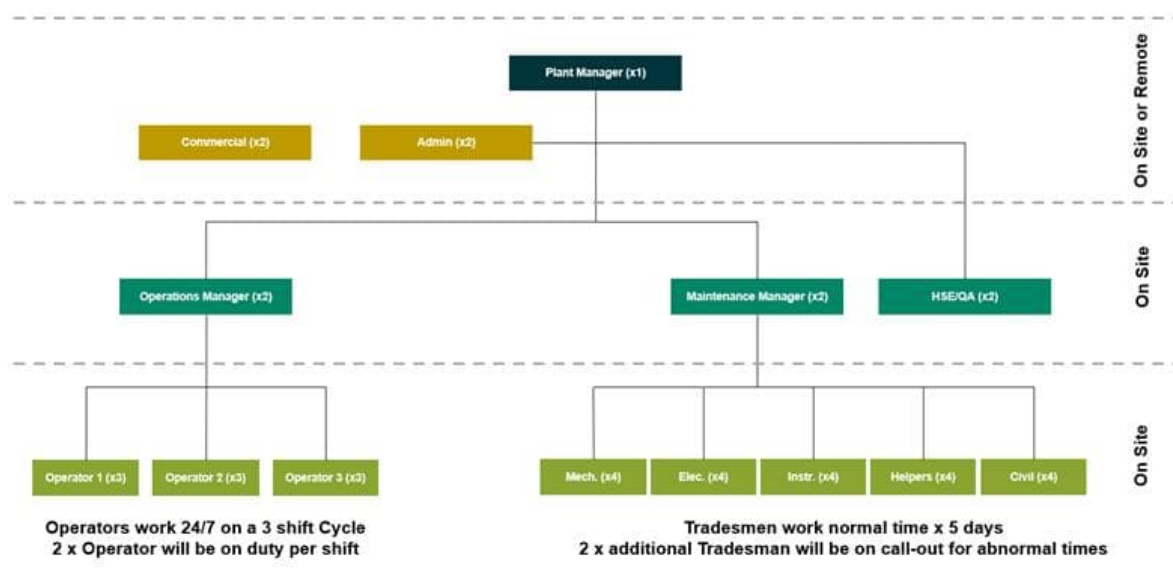
Phase works on Loch Ness will however be to a limited area around the Lower Control Works, and the ability to undertake recreational activities will only be impacted in the small area around the works. The sensitivity of Loch Ness is considered to be high due to its national importance.

- 16.6.92 The magnitude of change is considered to be negligible given that the Construction Phase works are located away from the visitor attractions and visitors will still be able access and enjoy the visitor attractions and wider scenery within the Study Area.
- 16.6.93 The significance of the impact on Loch Ness as a tourism attraction is therefore considered to be up to Minor Adverse.
- 16.6.94 Visitor accommodation, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, hostels and self-catering units, are found within the Proposed Development Site and wider 5 km Study Area. Concerns were raised in the public consultation about the potential for Construction Phase works to impact on the level of enjoyment experienced by visitors and that visitors may stay elsewhere, due to impacts on the outlook and/or noise impacts from visitor accommodation.
- 16.6.95 The Construction Phase works will be located away from visitor accommodation; however, construction traffic will pass visitor accommodation located along the along the A82 and A831. Construction of the Lower Control Works will also be visible at Foyers on the east side of Loch Ness. The Scoping Response from Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council outlined the range of visitor accommodation found in Foyers and the potential for visual impacts. The visual impacts are assessed in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (Volume 2: Main Report)**. Construction noise will be perceptible in Foyers, although the impact has been assessed as per **Chapter 14: Noise and Vibration (Volume 2: Main Report)** and determined not to be significant. It is recognised that the construction works have the potential to detract from the enjoyment of guests staying in Foyers and other visitors, particularly those seeking to enjoy the scenic setting on Loch Ness.
- 16.6.96 Visitor accommodation is considered to be tolerant of change (informed by the research into the impacts of construction activities on tourism outlined in **Section 16.4 Baseline Environment**) and therefore visitor accommodation is considered to have a low sensitivity to change. The magnitude of the construction impacts is medium for visitor accommodation on the east side of Loch Ness owing to the visibility of the Lower Control Works and perception of construction activities. For other locations the impact on visitor accommodation is low.
- 16.6.97 The significance is therefore considered to be up to Negligible to Minor Adverse.

## Operational Phase

### Potential Effects on Economy (Employment)

- 16.6.98 The Proposed Development will generate long-term jobs once it is operational. It should be noted that pumped storage hydro projects have very long operational lifetimes and hence these impacts are different from those arising during the earlier phases due to their longevity.
- 16.6.99 The Operational Phase activities associated with the Proposed Development will generate employment both directly and indirectly in the supply chain. The calculation of each is set out below, to arrive at net operational employment. It is estimated that there will be a gross number of 42 direct permanent jobs generated by the Proposed Development, all of which will be within The Highland Council area. The model of operational staff required is shown in **Figure 16-3 GEPSH Operational Staff Model** below, which has been scaled up to reflect the size and Operational Phase requirements of the Proposed Development.

**Figure 16-3 GEPSH Operational Staff Model**

- 16.6.100 As per the previous methodology, after applying a leakage of 50%, displacement of 25% and a multiplier of 1.33 (a 50% discount applied to the national multiplier of 1.5 for 'other professional services'), it is estimated that the Proposed Development will result in an estimated 41 total net direct FTE jobs created. This is presented in **Table 16-17 Total Net Employment during Operation of the Proposed Development** below.

**Table 16-17. Total Net Employment (FTE) during Operation of the Proposed Development**

The Highland Council area	
Gross Direct Employment	42
Displacement	-11
Net Direct Employment	31
Indirect & Induced Employment	10
Net Average Additional Employment <sup>59</sup>	41

Source: AECOM calculations (2025)

- 16.6.101 As per the rationale applied to the sensitivity assessments for Pre-Construction and Construction impacts, the sensitivity of the local workforce to employment changes during the Operational Phase has been assessed as medium. This is due to the capacity of the local workforce to benefit from additional full-time employment in different sectors, particularly given the long-term nature of the employment opportunities which would be available as a result of the Proposed Development, which are typically lacking in rural areas.
- 16.6.102 The magnitude of impact is assessed to be medium due to the permanent direct and indirect job creation from the Proposed Development's Operational activities, creating at least 41 jobs within The Highland Council area; this is considered to be a small but long-term beneficial contribution to the local economy in The Highland Council area.
- 16.6.103 Considering a medium sensitivity and medium magnitude of impact, the impact of operational employment generation is assessed as Moderate Beneficial effect.

### Potential Effects on Economy (Gross Value Added)

- 16.6.104 A number of specialist studies and surveys have been undertaken to consider the economic extent of impact of pumped storage hydro developments. In particular, The Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro (BiGGAR Renewables, 2023)<sup>60</sup>, produced in early 2023 by BiGGAR Economics and commissioned by the members of the UK Pumped Storage Hydro Working Group, estimated the potential economic impact of investment in the pumped storage hydro sector. The study includes analysis of six projects being developed by the UK Pumped Storage

<sup>59</sup> Sum of Net Direct Employment and Indirect and Induced Employment

<sup>60</sup> BiGGAR Economics (2023). The Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro. A report to Scottish Renewables. [Online] Available: Microsoft Word - Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro in the UK 5May23.docx (scottishrenewables.com)

Hydro Working Group. The combined investment in the six projects is expected to be £6 - 8 billion, the projects will also support employment in operations and maintenance for decades after their construction.

- 16.6.105 The report estimates that by adding up direct, indirect and induced impacts, during annual operations and maintenance, the projects could generate an average of £13 million GVA in the local areas, £30 million GVA in the region/nation, and £68 million GVA across the UK. The report further considers the total potential impact generated by the operations of the six pumped storage hydro projects to 2060, it was estimated that they could generate £389 million GVA in the local areas, £901 million GVA in the region/nation and £2.0 billion GVA across the UK. These are useful benchmarking statistics, as the operational GVA calculations for this Proposed Development are estimated based on GVA data from the electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning industry, meaning these conclusions must be considered as a best-practice estimation.
- 16.6.106 Applying the average gross direct value added per worker (professional, scientific and technical activities)<sup>61</sup> to the total number of operational workers generated from the Proposed Development can give the total GVA arising from the Operational Phase on a per annum basis. In The Highland Council area, this is £55,418. By applying these figures to the total direct operational workers generated by the Proposed Development, it is estimated that the Operation Phase will contribute approximately £2.3m million to The Highland Council area economy per annum. This is shown in **Table 16 18. Gross Direct Value Added per annum from the Proposed Development During the Operational Phase.**

**Table 16-18. Gross Value Added per annum from the Proposed Development During the Operational Phase**

	<b>The Highland Council Area</b>
GVA per worker	£55,418
Average Net Employment	42
GVA	£2.3m

Source: Scottish Government (2023) Scottish Annual Business Statistics 2021

- 16.6.107 The sensitivity of the economy within The Highland Council area has been assessed as medium on the basis that it is not an exact comparable economy to Scotland's overall, and the GVA per head here is approximately 37% lower than the national average.
- 16.6.108 Considering the size of GVA generation associated with the Proposed Development relative to The Highland Council area GVA, this impact has been assessed as being of low magnitude.
- 16.6.109 This results in a temporary Minor Beneficial effect.

### **Potential Effects on the Community**

- 16.6.110 Operational Phase activities will be located away from existing settlements. The Operational Phase of the Proposed Development is therefore not anticipated to have a significant adverse impact on the way of life of the community or the daily operations of the local community.
- 16.6.111 The Proposed Development will create 41 (net) long terms jobs. These jobs will help retain existing residents of working age and/or attract new residents to both the local area and the wider Highlands. Both workers that live in the local community and commute from the wider Highland area will contribute to maintaining local services challenged by an ageing population and will support the long-term vitality of the area.
- 16.6.112 The new jobs are not considered to lead to a significant increase in demand for housing or primary health care services, given the number of jobs and as employees may be spread between the local area and the wider Highlands area.
- 16.6.113 In recognition of the demographics of the area the sensitivity is considered to be moderate. The magnitude of change for the local community is considered to be medium, given the long-term nature of the jobs.
- 16.6.114 The significance is assessed as Moderate Beneficial effect

<sup>61</sup> Scottish Government (2024) Scottish Annual Business Statistics 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-annual-business-statistics-2021/documents/>

## Potential Effects on Access

- 16.6.115 Operational Phase traffic levels will be low as set out in **Chapter 13: Access, Traffic and Transport (Volume 2: Main Report)**. The volume of traffic is therefore not anticipated to impact on the ability of the community to access local services.
- 16.6.116 The community has a low capacity to absorb change, given the current level of access deprivation, and as such has a high sensitivity to impacts. The magnitude of the change to access is considered negligible.
- 16.6.117 The significance is assessed as Negligible.
- 16.6.118 The main access to the site will be via Balnain Main Access, an existing commercial forestry road at Balnain and the Operational traffic has been discussed with FLS. The Operational traffic will be undertaken in a managed way to avoid significant impacts on the commercial forestry use of the road.

## Potential Effects on Recreation

### Recreational Routes

- 16.6.119 During the Operational Stage, impacts on Affric Kintail Way and sections of Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 will be limited to impacts associated with the low levels of operation and maintenance traffic associated with the Proposed Development. The level of traffic is anticipated to be low and will not impact upon the use of these routes for walking and other recreational activities.
- 16.6.120 Access will not be impacted on the Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit route during the Operational Phase. There will be some impacted views (as detailed in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Assessment (Volume 2: Main Report)**) from the present natural views of Loch nam Breac Dearga to the Headpond; however, the more extensive views of Loch Ness will still be visible to walkers and the Headpond will become a feature of the route.
- 16.6.121 Given that these recreational routes are up to regionally important, the sensitivity is assessed to be up to medium. The magnitude of change on the routes is considered to be negligible.
- 16.6.122 The impact of the Proposed Development on the recreational routes during operation is therefore assessed to be Negligible.
- 16.6.123 Following the Construction, access from the Alltigh Track and around the Headpond will be retained to provide Operational access to the Valve House in addition to access from the Balnain Main Access to the wider Proposed Development components. These will also be made available for recreational access with educational signage proposed to provide information on the Proposed Development (a feature of the new access routes). Given the local significance of the new access routes the sensitivity is low, and the magnitude of change is medium resulting in a Minor Beneficial impact.

### Recreational Fishing

- 16.6.124 Loch nam Breac Dearga will become the Headpond of the Proposed Development, and fishing will not be reinstated. Impacts have therefore been assessed for the Operational Phase.

## Potential Effects on Tourism

- 16.6.125 During the Operational Phase visitors to Loch Ness will be able to see the Lower Control Works from the loch and the eastern loch shore. This may impact the experience of visitors, particularly where the purpose of the visit is to appreciate the scenic landscape. To minimise this impact the Lower Control Works will be designed sensitively to limit its prominence using materials that are in keeping with the more natural loch shore. Visitors will also still be able to appreciate the wider landscape around Loch Ness.
- 16.6.126 Loch Ness is a scenic attraction for visitors with cultural significance at a local, regional and national level. Loch Ness is used for a variety of water based recreational uses, including fishing and boating. The Great Glen Canoe Trail is located on Loch Ness and a number of leisure cruises operate on the loch. Therefore, Loch Ness as a scenic tourism asset is considered to be of high sensitivity due to its importance at a national scale.

For the majority of tourism receptors identified in **Appendix 16.2: Recreation and Tourism Features within 5 km of the Proposed Development Site (Volume 5: Appendices)** there would be no significant impacts during the Operation of the Proposed Development.

- 16.6.127 Impacts on the water environment have been assessed in **Chapter 10 Water Environment (Volume 2: Main Report)**, and it is considered that operation of the Proposed Development is unlikely to significantly impact leisure cruises or access to mooring etc on Loch Ness.

16.6.128 Overall, the potential effects on tourism are considered to be Negligible.

## 16.7 Additional Mitigation

16.7.1 This section details the proposed mitigation measures for socio-economic effects which could be implemented to reduce the potential adverse impacts of the Proposed Development upon the local socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors discussed above.

### Embedded Mitigation

16.7.2 The implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is considered to be embedded mitigation. The CEMP will:

- Outline the complaint procedure and the channels for the community to make complaints regarding construction activities.
- Provide details of the communication channels for information on the construction activities to be shared with the community.

16.7.3 An outline CEMP (oCEMP) is contained in **Volume 5: Appendix 3.1**.

16.7.4 The provision of on-site workers accommodation with recreational and health facilities and dedicated staff transport are embedded features of the Proposed Development.

16.7.5 The CTMP will aim to minimise traffic congestion on the local road network during Construction of the Proposed Development and will be employed to ensure construction traffic movements occur at set times, avoiding peak periods and minimising impacts on community facilities and visitor attractions. The measures will be identified following consultation with The Highland Council and the local community council.

## Pre-Construction and Enabling, and Construction Phases

### Local Community and Tourism

16.7.6 A Community Liaison Group should be established to allow clear communication between the project team and local stakeholders, enabling transparent information sharing about construction activities, collecting community feedback, building mutual trust, and collaboratively addressing concerns throughout the project lifecycle.

16.7.7 For the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase the representatives below will be invited to participate in the Community Liaison Group:

- Members of the Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston and Glen Urquhart Community Councils; and
- Representatives of local business, visitor attractions, visitor accommodation and community facilities within 5 km of the Proposed Development on the west side of Loch Ness.

16.7.8 For the Construction Phase the invited representatives should be expanded from the list above, and also include:

- Members of the Stratherrick & Foyers Community Council;
- Commercial and recreational users of Loch Ness; and
- Representatives of local businesses, visitor attractions, visitor accommodation and community facilities within 5 km of the Proposed Development on the east side of Loch Ness.

16.7.9 The Community Liaison Group can provide opportunities for:

- The community to highlight key community and tourist events or business requirements so that these can be taken into consideration by the Applicant, prior to finalising the programme of construction activities. Where changes cannot occur, as they are not practicable, these would be explained to the Community Liaison Group.
- The Applicant to respond to feedback and issues raised at Community Liaison Group meetings, and outline how issues have been resolved or to explain why further action is not practicable due to the nature, location and scale of the construction works.

## Recreation Routes and Lochs

- 16.7.10 Recreational users of the Affric Kintail Way, Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 will be impacted at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase and construction stage. Meall Fuar–mhonaidh summit route, the Great Glen Canoe Trail and the core paths on the east side of Loch Ness will be impacted at the Construction Phase. The construction activities may impact on the enjoyment that recreational users experience whilst on the routes during the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase and/or Construction Phase.
- 16.7.11 Impacts on and access to recreation routes during construction will be managed through an Outline Access Management Plan (OAMP) (**Appendix 16.1: Outline Access Management Plan (Volume 5: Appendices)**).
- 16.7.12 To mitigate this, information on construction activities and access management measures should be displayed for recreational users on the project website and local community information boards. Information on alternative recreational routes and activities within the local area should also be displayed to allow users to make an informed choice on whether to select the route. Information should also be shared with The Highland Council, FLS and Scottish Canals.
- 16.7.13 Engagement should occur with the local fishing community prior to Construction works commencing. Information on the Construction works and alternative fishing location may be shared with the local fishing community and on the project website when available.
- 16.7.14 During Construction works at the Lower Control Works on Loch Ness, a suite of safety measures will be implemented to ensure public safety, this is expected to include temporary booms and markers to give a safe working zone around the work.

## Operational Phase

- 16.7.15 During the Operational Phase, the Community Liaison Group may continue for the first 12 months of full operation of the Proposed Development to allow any potential issues to be raised and information shared.
- 16.7.16 Post 12 months clear channels and methods will be established to enable:
- Representatives of the Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston, Glen Urquhart, and Stratherrick and Foyers Community Councils;
  - Commercial and recreational users of the Loch Ness; and

Local businesses, visitor attractions, accommodation providers, and community facilities within 5 km of the Proposed Development, to raise issues and provide feedback.

- 16.7.17 The Applicant will respond to the feedback received, via these channels, outlining how issues have been addressed or, explaining where further action is not practicable.
- 16.7.18 Input will be sought from the Community Liaison Group on the long-term channels and methods for ongoing engagement with the community.
- 16.7.19 Information should be shared with The Highland Council, FLS and Scottish Canals in advance of significant maintenance works that will occur on recreational routes, namely the Affric Kintail Way, Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03, and the Great Glen Canoe Trail.

## 16.8 Residual Effects

- 16.8.1 Only where residual effects are different from potential effects following the application of mitigation measures have they been discussed in this section. Summary of effects tables for each stage are also set out below.

### Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase

- 16.8.2 Impacts on the way of life or daily operations of the community receptors are anticipated to reduce from Minor to Negligible, and so **Not Significant**, through the implementation of the Community Liaison Group and associated measures which will provide the community with information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, the opportunity to raise issues and input into the construction programme, as far as is practicable.
- 16.8.3 The implementation of the access management measures to maintain access on the Affric Kintail Way and Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03, alongside the provision of information on the potential construction impacts alongside information on alternative recreational activities in the local area, reduce the impacts for recreational users of



Affric Kintail Way from Moderate to Minor and Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 from Minor to Negligible, which are both **Not Significant**.

16.8.4 The Community Liaison Group can provide opportunities for the operators of visitor attractions and visitor accommodation to provide feedback on construction activities and to highlight key tourist events so that these can be considered, as far as reasonably practicable, before the programme of construction activities is finalised. This reduces the impacts from Moderate to Minor, and so **Not Significant**.

16.8.5 **Table 16.19 Summary of Effects: Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase** below provides a summary of all Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase effects.

**Table 16-19 Summary of Effects: Pre-Construction and Enabling Works**

Receptor	Description of Effect	Effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance of Effect
Economy (Employment)	Temporal job creation within The Highland Council Area	Minor Beneficial		Minor Beneficial	Not Significant
Economy (GVA)	GVA generation within The Highland Council Area	Moderate Beneficial		Moderate Beneficial	<b>Significant Beneficial</b>
Local Community	Influx of construction workers and impacts on housing and services, including primary health care and community facilities.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to raise issues and input into the construction programme, as far as is practicable.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant
Local Community	Construction activities impacting on the way of life or daily operations of the community receptors.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to raise issues and input into the construction programme, as far as is practicable.	Negligible	Not Significant
Local Community	Construction activities and transport impact on the community's ability to access services and areas within the community.	Moderate Adverse	CTMP, including site specific measures, such as signage and local upgrades to crossing points.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant
Recreational Receptors	Impacts on Affric Kintail Way.	Moderate Adverse	OAMP, measures to maintain access on the recreational routes.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant
	All other recreational routes.	Minor / Negligible Adverse		Negligible Adverse	Not Significant
Tourism Receptors	Impacts on visitor accommodation and visitor attractions, including the enjoyment of visitors/guests.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to provide feedback on the programme of construction activities, as far as is practicable.  Community Liaison members will be invited to share details of key tourism events so that these can be considered within the construction programme, as far as is practicable.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant

## Construction Phase

16.8.6 Impacts on the way of life or daily operations of the community receptors are anticipated to reduce from Minor to Negligible, and so Not Significant, through the implementation of the Community Liaison Group and associated

measures which will provide the community with information on the Proposed Development and construction activities and the opportunity to raise issues.

- 16.8.7 The implementation of the access management measures to maintain access on the Affric Kintail Way and Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03, alongside the provision of information on the potential construction impacts and information on alternative recreational activities in the local area, reduce the impacts for recreational users of Affric Kintail Way from Moderate to Minor and Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03 from Minor to Negligible, which are both **Not Significant**.

- 16.8.8 **Table 16.20 Summary of Effects: Construction** provides a summary of all Construction Phase effects.

**Table 16-20 Summary of Effects: Construction**

Receptor	Description of Effect	Effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance of Effect
Economy (Employment)	Temporal job creation within the Highlands Council Area	Moderate Beneficial	-	Moderate Beneficial	<b>Significant Beneficial</b>
Economy (GVA)	GVA generation within The Highland Council Area	Moderate Beneficial	-	Moderate Beneficial	<b>Significant Beneficial</b>
Local Community	Influx of construction workers and impacts on housing and services, including primary health care and community facilities.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to raise issues and input into the construction programme, as far as is practicable.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant
Local Community	Construction activities impacting on the way of life or daily operations of the community receptors.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to raise issues and input into the construction programme, as far as is practicable.	Negligible	Not Significant
Local Community	Construction activities and traffic impact on the community's ability to access services and areas within the community.	Minor Adverse		Minor Adverse	Not Significant
Recreational Receptors	Impacts recreational routes and the enjoyment of route users: Affric Kintail Way.	Moderate Adverse	OAMP, measures to maintain access on the recreational routes.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant
	All other recreational routes, including Core Paths 02.02; 02.03.	Minor / Negligible Adverse	Information on construction activities and alternatives routes and activities within the local area.	Negligible Adverse	Not Significant
Recreational Receptors	Impacts on recreational fishing at Loch nam Breac Dearga.	Negligible Adverse	The provision of information on alternative fishing locations to the local fishing community.	Negligible Adverse	Not Significant
Tourism Receptors	Impacts on visitor attractions, and the enjoyment of visitors.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to provide	Minor Adverse	Not Significant



Receptor	Description of Effect	Effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance of Effect
			feedback on the programme of construction activities and also to highlight key tourist events so that these can be considered, as far as is practicable.		
Tourism Receptors	Impacts on visitor accommodation, including the enjoyment of guests.	Negligible/ Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to provide feedback on the programme of construction activities and also to highlight key tourist events so that these can be considered, as far as is practicable.	Negligible/ Minor Adverse	Not Significant
Tourism Receptors	Impact on the enjoyment of Loch Ness as a tourism asset.	Minor Adverse	Community Liaison Group, including the provision of information on the Proposed Development and construction activities, and the opportunity to provide feedback on the programme of construction activities and also to highlight key water-based events in proximity to the Lower Control Works so that these can be considered, as far as is practicable. Temporary booms to be floated in Loch Ness around Construction Phase works to maintain public safety.	Minor Adverse	Not Significant

## Operational Phase

- 16.8.9 Impacts at the Operational Stage are considered to be **Not Significant**, and the key mitigation for the impacts will be communication. During Operation, the Community Liaison Group may continue for the first 12 months of full operation of the Proposed Development to allow any potential issues to be raised and information shared. Thereafter, clear channels and methods for the community to raise issues, provide feedback and for community engagement will be established. Input will be sought from the Community Liaison Group on the long-term channels and methods for ongoing engagement with the community.
- 16.8.10 Information should be shared with The Highland Council, FLS and Scottish Canals in advance of significant maintenance works that will occur on recreational routes, namely the Affric Kintail Way, Core Paths 02.02 and 02.03, and the Great Glen Canoe Trail.
- 16.8.11 **Table 16.21 Summary of Effects: Operational Phase** below provides a summary of all Operational Phase effects.

**Table 16-21 Summary of Effects: Operational Phase**

Receptor	Description of Effect	Effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance of Effect
Economy (Employment)	Full time job creation within The Highland Council Area	Moderate Beneficial	-	Moderate Beneficial	<b>Significant Beneficial</b>
Economy (GVA)	GVA generation within The Highland Council Area	Minor Beneficial	-	Minor Beneficial	Not Significant
Local Community	Operational workers supporting services and the vitality of the area.	Moderate Beneficial	-	Moderate Beneficial	<b>Significant Beneficial</b>

Receptor	Description of Effect	Effect	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Significance of Effect
Local Community	Operational activities and traffic impacting on the community's ability to access services and areas within the community.	Negligible	Community Liaison Group to continue for first 12 months of full operation.  Long-term channels and methods for ongoing engagement with the community will be established.	Negligible	Not Significant
Recreational Routes	All recreational routes.	Negligible	OAMP, measures to maintain access on the recreational routes.  Information on significant maintenance activities should be shared with The Highland Council, FLS and Scottish Canals.	Negligible	Not Significant
Recreational Routes	Recreational opportunities from new access tracks around the Proposed Development.	Minor Beneficial	-	Minor Beneficial	Not Significant
Tourism Receptors	Impacts on visitor accommodation and attractions, and the enjoyment of visitors/guest.	Negligible	-	Negligible	Not Significant
Tourism Receptors	Impact on the enjoyment of Loch Ness as a tourism asset.	Negligible	Information on significant maintenance activities to the Lower Control Works should be shared with The Highland Council and Scottish Canals.  Community Liaison Group to continue for first 12 months of full operation.  Long-term channels and methods for ongoing engagement with the community will be established	Negligible	Not Significant

## 16.9 Cumulative Effects

### Inter-Cumulative Effects

- 16.9.1 The assessment of likely cumulative effects is based on the cumulative schemes identified in **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)**. Best practice guidance<sup>62</sup> states that assessments should focus on the most significant cumulative effects and conclude with a clear assessment of those which are likely to influence decision making. Therefore, only the relevant cumulative schemes have been considered within this assessment.
- 16.9.2 **Table 4.8 Cumulative Developments** within **Chapter 4: Approach to EIA (Volume 2: Main Report)** identifies a number of cumulative energy developments. Each of these developments will collectively support the diversification of the Highland economy, provide employment opportunities, support the upskilling of the workforce and provide worker spend opportunities in the Highland economy and wider Scottish economy.
- 16.9.3 A number of the cumulative developments are at either the pre-construction or under construction stages. The Proposed Development will avoid cumulative adverse impacts, such as impacts on housing availability, visitor accommodation, or on services, including primary health services, associated with the influx of construction

<sup>62</sup> IEMA (2020) Impact Assessment Outlook Journal: Demystifying Cumulative Effects (Online). Available at: <https://www.iema.net/media/nbsdjhlf/ia-outlook-journal-vol-7.pdf>

workers to The Highland Council area by providing on-site Temporary Workers Accommodation with recreational and health facilities and dedicated staff transport for the Pre-Construction and Enabling and Construction Phases of the Proposed Development.

- 16.9.4 Concern was raised at the pre-application consultation events about the impact of multiple pumped storage hydro schemes around Loch Ness impacting on the water levels of the loch. As outlined under the assessment of the Operational Phase no abstraction for the Proposed Development will occur below a minimum water level or above a maximum water level as detailed in **Chapter 10 Water Environment (Volume 2: Main Report)**.
- 16.9.5 If concerns persist during the Operational Phase, loch users will be able to raise issues in the first 12 months via the Community Liaison Group or, in the longer term, via established communication channels. The Applicant will outline how these concerns have been considered and, where appropriate, addressed or remediated.
- 16.9.6 Following the implementation of the mitigation measures and embedded mitigation, no significant combined adverse impacts on the socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors are expected as a result of the Proposed Development and the cumulative developments.

## Intra-Cumulative Effects

- 16.9.7 The potential for intra-cumulative effects emerges through the following chapters:
- **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (Volume 2: Main Report)** – combined effects would be experienced by recreational users of the designated routes and core paths within the Study Area where there would be intervisibility of the Proposed Development and where diversions are proposed.
  - **Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage (Volume 2: Main Report)** – there would be combined effects on the visual amenity experienced at various cultural heritage sites within the Study Area which may impact upon the visitors' enjoyment of these features and the local area.
  - **Chapter 13: Access, Traffic and Transport (Volume 2: Main Report)** – combined effects would be experienced by visitors to the area and users of the road network during the Construction Phase with increased construction traffic upon the local road network.
  - **Chapter 14: Noise and Vibration (Volume 2: Main Report)** – combined effects would be experienced by visitors to the local area, particularly in close proximity to the construction area where the perception of noise and sense of activity would increase during the Construction Phase.
- 16.9.8 The impacts identified in the above chapters have been considered and informed this socio-economic, recreation and tourist assessment, therefore no additional significant effects have been identified.

## 16.10 Measures to Maximise the Net Economic Impact, including Local and Community Socio-Economic Benefits

- 16.10.1 MKA Economics has prepared a socio-economic statement, which demonstrates how the Proposed Development will maximise the net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits of the Proposed Development, as per NPF4 Policy 11 c). This also demonstrates how the Proposed Development will benefit the local community and contribute to the wellbeing of the Highlands, as per HwLDP Policy 67 Renewable Energy Developments.
- 16.10.2 The Socio-Economic Statement has been informed by engagement with The Highland Council (Economic Development), Community Councils and local residents, and seeks to align the Proposed Development with principles of The Highland Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy 2024 - 2027<sup>63</sup> and Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment (2024)<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment, The Highland Council, 2024 [Online] Available at: [Community Wealth Building Strategy | Community Wealth Building Strategy 2024](#)

<sup>64</sup> Highland Council's Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment (2024). [Online] Available at: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83522/item\\_10\\_social\\_values\\_charter\\_for\\_renewables\\_investment](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83522/item_10_social_values_charter_for_renewables_investment)

- 16.10.3 Discussions are also ongoing with The Highland Council (Economic Development), separate to the planning process and additional to the socio-economic benefits outlined in Table 16-22, in relation to a long-term community benefits package.
- 16.10.4 The key socio-economic benefits are outlined in **Table 16-22 Socio-economic Benefits** below.

**Table 16-23 Socio-Economic Benefits**

Benefit	Details
<b>Employment Benefits</b>	
Economy	<p>The Proposed Development will support the diversification of the economy, support the upskilling of the workforce and provide worker spend opportunities in the Highland economy and wider Scottish economy.</p> <p>It estimates the Proposed Development will contribute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>approximately £49.5 million (GVA) to the national economy, of which £21.4 million would likely be within The Highland Council Area at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase.</li> <li>approximately £306.8 million (GVA) to the national economy, of which £132.7 million would likely be within The Highland Council area at the Construction Phase.</li> <li>approximately £2.3m million (GVA) to The Highland Council area economy per annum during the Operational Phase.</li> </ul>
Job Creation	<p>The Proposed Development will result in the creation of 285 person-years of employment (PYE) net additional Pre-Construction and Enabling jobs, 1,765 PYE net additional Construction jobs and 41 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) renewable energy jobs at the Operation Phase.</p> <p>The Construction Contractor will organise local recruitment initiatives to maximise the number of employees from the local area and from with The Highlands Council area.</p>
<b>Local Economy Benefits</b>	
Increased Local Spend	<p>Workers employed during all stages of the Proposed Development would use local shops, cafes, and services. Given that construction workers will be accommodated in on-site Temporary Workers Accommodation, these opportunities will be provided in a managed way, via the proposed shuttle bus connections to Inverness and local settlements.</p>
Supply Chain Benefits	<p>The Proposed Development will create opportunities for local businesses, as well as businesses within the wider Highland region and the rest of Scotland, through the procurement process.</p> <p>The Applicant and the Construction Contractor will undertake local supply chain initiatives to maximise the potential opportunities for local businesses. Examples include 'Meet the Buyer' events and suitably qualified local firms being invited to bid for different aspects of construction</p> <p>Construction materials, such as aggregates, has the potential to be sourced locally when it is not possible to use material won on site, and local transport and plant hire companies used wherever possible.</p> <p>Early engagement with local businesses and stakeholders will be undertaken to ensure they are aware of the opportunities and specific requirements.</p>
<b>Training and Development Benefits</b>	
Training and Development	<p>The Applicant expects the Construction Contractor to work with skills and training providers, such as UHI and Skills Development Scotland, to profile the skills required to deliver this and other projects, to assist in skills planning for both the Construction Phase and Operational lifespan.</p> <p>The Applicant and Construction Contractor will engage with education and training providers, as well as with local and strategic stakeholders, to support the skills supply response and to maximise local labour market buy-in.</p> <p>The Applicant and Construction Contractor will work with training providers to provide an information exchange and maximise the opportunities for local people to gain the right skills, work experience and new employment as a result of the proposed development.</p>
STEM Events	<p>The Applicant and Construction Contractor will seek to promote construction site tours and operational station visits for schools to inspire future engineers. Likewise, both will help facilitate Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) events to schools, colleges and universities to share knowledge on PSH and engineering and energy more generally.</p>
<b>Environmental Benefits</b>	
Outdoor Access	<p>New access paths, including paths adjacent to the Headpond. The paths will include seating and educational signage to provide information on the Proposed Development. Signage will be displayed in both English and Gaelic.</p> <p>These will also be made available for recreational access with</p>
Biodiversity Enhancement	<p>Biodiversity enhancement opportunities would improve essential ecosystem services such as pollination, water purification and soil fertility which are crucial for rural businesses, such as forestry. Biodiverse areas attract tourists, which can boost local economies through spending on accommodation, food, and activities.</p>

Benefit	Details
Reduced Air Pollution and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Reducing reliance on fossil fuels decreases air pollution and GHG emissions. This leads to improved public health and lower healthcare costs, which can have positive economic impacts

## 16.11 Summary

- 16.11.1 This Chapter has assessed the effects of the Proposed Development on socio-economic, recreational and tourism the at Pre-Construction and Enabling, Construction and Operational Phases and these are summarised below.
- 16.11.2 Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase – Beneficial effects have been identified in terms of the contribution that the Proposed Development will make to job creation (minor, **Not Significant**) and GVA generation (moderate, **Significant**) in The Highland Council area. Up to minor adverse effects have been identified on the local community, recreational receptors and tourism receptors. All residual adverse effects at the Pre-Construction and Enabling Phase are **Not Significant**.
- 16.11.3 Construction Phase - Moderate beneficial effects have been identified in terms of the contribution that the Proposed Development will make to job creation and GVA generation in The Highland Council Area. These effects are **Significant**. Up to minor adverse effects have been identified on the local community, recreational receptors and tourism receptors. All residual adverse effects at the Construction Phase are **Not Significant**.
- 16.11.4 Operational Phase - Beneficial effects have been identified in terms of the contribution that the Proposed Development will make to job creation (moderate, **Significant**) and GVA generation (minor, **Not Significant**) in The Highland Council area. Beneficial effects will also result from Operational Phase workers supporting local services and the vitality of the local area (moderate, **Significant**), and through the provision of new recreational access tracks (minor, **Not Significant**). Up to negligible adverse effects have also been identified on the local community (access related), recreational receptors and tourism receptors. All residual adverse effects at the Operational Phase are **Not Significant**.
- 16.11.5 Cumulative Impacts - The Proposed Development alongside cumulative renewable energy and energy related developments will support the diversification of the Highlands economy, provide employment opportunities, support the upskilling of the workforce and provide worker spend opportunities in the Highland economy and wider Scottish economy. No significant adverse impacts on the socio-economic, recreation and tourism receptors are expected as a result of the Proposed Development and cumulative developments.

