

Technical Appendix 4.3: Landscape Character Areas

- 4.68 Detailed descriptions of the LCAs are contained within the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA) and the SPG to PPS 18. The NILCA classifies the landscape into areas of distinct and separate character called Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and defines overall Landscape Value. The SPG provides further broad guidance on the LCAs that are defined in the NILCA, including their overall Sensitivity, specifically in relation to wind energy developments. The detailed descriptions of the LCAs that are contained in the NILCA and SPG are not reproduced in this LVIA but Table 4.3.1 summarises the Value and Sensitivity of these areas in relation to the Proposed Development. The location of all LCAs is shown on Figure 4.2.
- 4.69 There are twenty-four Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the Study Area. The Proposed Development is located within LCA 29 Sperrin Mountains. A detailed description of this LCA is contained within the Baseline Assessment of the LVIA, Chapter 4. There are four other LCAs in close proximity to the Proposed Development or containing shortlisted viewpoints which have also been analysed.

Technical Appendix Table 4.3.1: Summary of Landscape Value and Sensitivity

Landscape Character Area	Value	Overall sensitivity to wind energy development noted in SPG	Sensitivity to the Proposed Development
LCA 26 Bessy Bell and Gortin	High	High	Medium
LCA 28 Glenelly Valley	Outstanding	High	High
LCA 30 Sperrin Foothills	High	High	High
LCA 36 Binevenagh	Outstanding	High	Low- limited and indirect effects on baseline landscape character which is influenced by several other wind farm clusters within and surrounding this LCA at closer proximity than the Proposed Development

- 4.70 The following 19 LCAs have not been assessed in detail because the Baseline Assessment, including site assessment and analysis of provisional viewpoint locations, indicates that they are on the periphery of the Study Area and the ZTV, and/or because they do not contain shortlisted Viewpoints. Such LCAs would not be significantly affected by the Proposed Development and have therefore not been subject to further detailed assessment.

Technical Appendix Table 4.3.2: LCAs not assessed in this LVIA

Landscape Character Area
LCA 14 Lough Bradan
LCA 20 Derg Valley
LCA 21 Fairy Water Valley
LCA 22 Omagh Farmland
LCA 23 Camowen Valley
LCA 24 South Sperrin
LCA 25 Beaghmore Moors and Marsh
LCA 27 Foyle Valley
LCA 31 Burngibbagh and Drumahoe
LCA 32 Derry Slopes
LCA 33 Lough Foyle Alluvial Plains
LCA 34 Loughermore Hills
LCA 37 Roe Basin
LCA 39 Glenshane Slopes
LCA 40 Upper Moyola Valley
LCA 41 Slieve Gallion
LCA 43 Carrickmore Hills
LCA 44 Slievemore

Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.71 A Regional Landscape Character Assessment has also been prepared for Northern Ireland (NIRLCA) and is intended to provide a strategic overview of landscape character that can be used to inform future detailed local studies and that will be updated on a more regular basis than the NILCA. It divides the province into 26 regional landscape character areas (RLCAs) that update the previous 130 LCAs. However, the NIRLCA has yet to be reflected in the development of detailed studies via the Local Development Plan process and, therefore, the NILCA still provides a greater level of detail and is used as a direct reference point for the SPG.
- 4.72 Sperrins is Regional LCA 7 and is described in the NIRLCA as covering the uplands and valleys focussed on the spine of the Sperrin Mountains which are the principal mountain range in the north west of the country. The various hills within the range include outlying hills Bessy Bell in the west and Slieve Gallion in the east; a main

spine of mountains in the centre running from east to west with Mount Sawel and Mullaghneany forming the highest peaks at 678 m and 627 m respectively. Many of the other mountains in this range exceed 500 m, including Mullaghclogher which is 572 m; and Benbradagh and Carntogher in the north (outwith this Study Area). The North Sperrin Hills and Roe Valley (RLCA 8) is to the north where the lower foothills of the Sperrins are interspersed with valleys which become progressively shallow and less steep towards the coast.

- 4.73 The Proposed Development would be located to the north western side of the RLCA and towards the western end of the main mountain spine (terminating at Owenreagh which is slightly further to the west. To the south west, Bessy Bell is a lower outlying mountain (420 m) which is noted as forming a prominent projection in the landscape and a gateway feature marking entry into the AONB from south western approaches when combined with the uplands around Gortin Glen and the Strule river valley.
- 4.74 The boundary of this RLCA is indicated on Figure 4.2. It does not cover the entire Sperrin AONB and it extends into LCA 40 Upper Moyola Valley which is out-with the AONB. It reflects a broadly similar area to that covered by the southern parts of LCA 36 Binevenagh and LCA 39 Glenshane Slopes which fall within the Sperrin AONB boundary, LCA 29 Sperrin Mountains which includes the central and highest part of the mountain range as well as peripheral areas at the head of the Roe Valley, other upland parts covered by LCA 24 South Sperrin and LCA 26 Bessy Bell and Gortin which combine to enclose LCA 28 Glenelly Valley. The RLCA also covers the north and eastern parts of LCA 41 Slieve Gallion but not the south western to south eastern parts. The description of RLCA 7 is broadly similar to these LCAs. It refers to the heart of the Sperrins having more dispersed settlement patterns than the outer edges with the former being “*the wildest and most remote of Northern Ireland’s landscapes*”. That does not however mean that the Sperrins are wild - the RLCA also notes the concentration prehistoric sites and historic field patterns, ongoing pastoral farming practices, extensive forestry, quarrying activities which indicate long standing man-made influence on all parts of the landscape. Views are noted as being expansive in all directions from the highest points in the Sperrins but these are also described as being inaccessible.
- 4.75 Renewable energy is described as one of the ‘Past, present and future forces for change’ in this RLCA but only one operational wind farm at Owenreagh Hill is listed alongside a large-scale proposed wind farm in the central Sperrins (assumed to be referring to Doraville Wind Farm which has since been withdrawn). The cumulative effects of wind turbines around the edges of the RLCA is noted as an issue that should be given consideration in relation to the scale, openness and tranquillity of the area. These elements are considered in the assessment of effects in this LVIA. In addition, the LVIA identifies a number of existing and consented wind farm clusters around the edges of the AONB that are not mentioned in the RLCA but

which contribute to the existing character of the landscape that is assessed by the RLCA. There are also existing wind farms on Bessy Bell, a cluster of wind farms to the south west of Slieve Gallion, and another in the far north east around Carntogher (Evishagaran is located within this Study Area but there are a further two operational wind farms at Brockaghboy and a consented wind farm on Corlacky Hill). These are illustrated and described in the LVIA Chapter (starting at paragraph 4.187), Figure 4.4 and Technical Appendix 4.5. Other forces for change in this RLCA include commercial mining, forestry, peat extraction and the lack of an AONB Management Plan to guide such change.

- 4.76 In addition to landscape character as a largely aesthetic quality, the NIRLCA defines several ‘Ecosystem Services’⁹. Whilst wind farms are recognised as being a past, present and future force for change they are also recognised as ‘provisioning’ and ‘climate regulating’ ecosystem services that are of benefit to us terms of energy production and their contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change.

⁹ The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK-NEA, 2011) defines ecosystem services as *"the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living"*.