Galileo 05 Limited

Lynemore Wind Farm

Additional Information Volume 2

Chapter 12: Socio-economics, Land use, Tourism and Recreation

663991 (00)

JANUARY 2026

GALILEO EMPOWER

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Table of Contents

12.1 INTRODUCTION **12-1**
12.2 SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT **12-1**
12.3 METHODOLOGY **12-2**
12.4 CONSULTATION **12-2**
A response to each topic is provided below. 12-2
Socio-economic impacts 12-2
Delivering benefits to the local community 12-3
12.5 STATUTORY AND PLANNING CONTEXT **12-4**
12.6 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT **12-4**
12.7 POTENTIAL EFFECTS **12-4**
Socio-economic 12-4
Recreation 12-8
Community Benefits 12-8
Non-domestic Rates 12-8
12.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS **12-8**

TABLES

Table 12.1 Comparison of net economic benefits during construction between EIA and AI layouts 12-6
Table 12.2 Comparison of net economic benefits during operation between EIA and AI layouts 12-6
Table 12.3Comparison of community benefit and non-domestic rates between EIA and AI layouts 12-7

12 SOCIO-ECONOMICS, LAND USE, TOURISM AND RECREATION

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 This chapter of the AI considers the potential effects of the Revised Proposed Development and associated layout changes upon Socioeconomics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation in comparison with the EIA layout as reported in the **EIA Report, Chapter 12**.

12.1.2 The Applicant is submitting a revised layout as described in **AI Chapter 2 Updated Description of the Proposed Development**. In summary, the changes to the layout which are of principal relevance to the Socioeconomics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation assessment comprise the reduction in the number of proposed turbines of the EIA Layout from 14 to 12 (with the removal of turbines T4 and T5) and the subsequent reduction in energy generation capacity. As a result, the input-output model has been re-calculated for the economic and employment effects of the Revised Proposed Development.

12.1.3 A summary of predicted effects upon Socioeconomics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation on the submitted EIA layout was presented in **EIA Report, Chapter 12**.

It was concluded that:

- Construction Phase - During the construction phase it is estimated that the Proposed Development could generate up to £34.3 million GVA and 533.4 job years across Scotland, with approximately £10.9 million and 183.1 job years' worth of this total directly benefitting the Highlands and £1.9 million GVA and 31.1 job years in Inner Moray Firth.
- Operational Phase - Over the course of the operational phase of the Proposed Development, it is estimated that over the Proposed Development's 50-year lifetime, the operation and maintenance costs could generate up to £122.5 million GVA and 1722.4 job years for Scotland, of which £88.0 million GVA and 1212.1 job years directly benefit the Highlands economy and £32.3 million GVA and 442.4 job years for Inner Moray Firth.

12.1.4 Recreation Effects - While some recreational routes may experience significant visual impacts, these effects are not expected to substantially alter recreational usage. Beyond visual changes to the setting of receptors, no significant impacts on recreational amenities are anticipated.

12.1.5 Community Benefits - Approximately £24.5 million in community benefit funding and £46.5 million in non-domestic rates would also be provided over the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development.

12.2 Scope of Assessment

12.2.1 The Scope remains the same as outlined in **Paragraphs 12.6.1-12.5.26** of **EIA Report, Chapter 12**. Construction and operational socio-economics, land use, tourism and

recreation effects have been considered, however, decommissioning has been scoped out. As decommissioning is likely to constitute a reversal of the activities undertaken during the construction phase, it is considered that the likely effects on land use, recreation and tourism would be the same.

12.2.2 In relation to employment and economic effects, while there have been recent studies, including Zero Waste Scotland's (2021) '*The future of onshore wind decommissioning in Scotland*', there is still an absence of data regarding the likely decommissioning expenditure involved.

12.3 Methodology

12.3.1 The general methodology employed for the assessment of the socio-economic, recreation, tourism and land use impacts for the Proposed Development is outlined in **Paragraphs 12.6.1-12.6.13** of **EIA Report, Chapter 12**.

12.4 Consultation

12.4.1 Following the submission of the EIA Report a number of comments were received relating to socio-economics, land use, tourism and recreation. The following represents the key issues raised:

- Socio-economics impacts.
- Underestimation of current visitor numbers and failure to account for future tourism growth linked to nationally significant visitor attractions.
- Negative effects on hillwalking, Munro bagging, and outdoor pursuits.
- Detrimental impact on road users, commuters, and visitors.
- Cultural and heritage degradation, especially at Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre.
- Delivering benefits to the local community.
- Objections that local communities bear all impacts but receive little benefit, citing property devaluation, tourism loss, and stress on wellbeing.

A response to each topic is provided below.

Socio-economic impacts

12.4.2 The turbine layout has been carefully designed to avoid or mitigate visual, noise and flicker impact as much as possible for nearby residential properties. Additionally, the site access plan has been adjusted in response to concerns voiced by residents. Site traffic will arrive directly from the A9 via a new dedicated access track located at a greater distance from nearby houses at Lynebeg, minimising disruption before, during and after the completion of the A9 dualling work.

12.4.3 There is no evidence that proximity to wind farms has a negative long-term effect on local property values. A 2016 study[1] commissioned by the Scottish Government found no pattern linking proximity to onshore wind developments to negative effects on house price

[1] S. Heblich, D. Olner, G. Pryce and C. Timmins, 'Impact of wind turbines on house prices in Scotland' (2016), https://www.climatexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/cxc_wind_farms_impact_on_house_prices_final_17_oct_2016.pdf

growth, while similar studies in England (2014)[2] and Canada (2014)[3] reached the same conclusion.

12.4.4 Objections to Lynemore Wind Farm have also speculated about possible negative impacts on tourism and recreation, citing the visibility of the proposed wind farm from certain key destinations and the cumulative effect of renewable energy development. It is recognised that tourism is central to the local economy and will play an increasingly important role in years to come. However, the presence of sensitively-designed wind farms is not a significant deterrent to the development of sustainable tourism.

12.4.5 Independent studies conducted on behalf of VisitScotland[4] and the Scottish Government[5] have found that wind farms have no measurable negative impact on tourism.

12.4.6 In fact, comparable areas with significant wind energy development in (for example) Caithness, North Sutherland[6], and the Borders[7] have continued to see steady growth in tourism in recent years.

12.4.7 Other sites of wind energy production have become destinations in their own right, offering opportunities for green tourism and outdoor recreation.

12.4.8 While wind farms might change the character of Scotland's dramatic rural landscapes, the evidence suggests that they do not diminish their appeal to visitors.

12.4.9 It is also important to emphasise that wind farms can serve as a resource for local communities from a tourism and recreation perspective. Access tracks created during project construction can be long-term assets for outdoor recreation, providing improved routes for hillwalking, mountain biking and horse riding. Additionally, community benefit funding can be used to support improvements to tourism infrastructure such as parking areas, interpretation and signage, and toilet and waste facilities.

Delivering benefits to the local community

12.4.10 The Applicant wants to ensure that Lynemore Wind Farm leaves a positive legacy in the area, and highlights their commitment to delivering meaningful and long-lasting benefits to the local community. They are fully invested in working with community councils and residents to create an impactful community benefit package that goes beyond industry standards and aligns with local community development objectives.

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[2] Centre for Economics and Business Research, https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/mar/29/property-house-price-impact-wind-farms-turbines

[3] R. Vyn, R. Mccullough, 'The Effects of Wind Turbines on Property Values in Ontario: Does Public Perceptiono Match Empirical Evidence?' (2014), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cjag.12030

[4] Study claims tourists "not put off" by wind farms in Scotland', BBC reporting on Visit Scotland survey (2012): https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-17827490; summary of Visit Scotland survey: https://ascogfarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RES-CD-TOU-006.pdf

[5] https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2008/03/economic-impacts-wind-farms-scottish-tourism/documents/0057316-pdf/0057316-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/0057316.pdf

[6] Highland Council, Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024 to 2030' (2024), (https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/29523/sustainable_tourism_strategy_2024_to_2030.pdf

[7] Visit Scotland, 'Research and insight on tourism in the Scottish Borders' (2024), https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/scottish-borders

12.4.11 Following the Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles, the Applicant will create a Community Wealth Fund delivering £5,000 per MW of installed capacity annually over the life of the project.

12.4.12 Beyond this, the local community will have the opportunity to acquire up to 10% shared ownership of Lynemore Wind Farm. The Applicant is keen to provide advice and support to community groups interested in taking shared ownership forward.

12.4.13 In the local area and across the Highlands, community benefit funding from wind farms has helped meet local needs and build more resilient rural communities. For example, the Strathnairn Community Benefit Fund (supported by several nearby wind and hydro projects) provides education and training bursaries, home heating grants, and funding for community groups and charities to use for their activities. The Applicant encourages community feedback as to how funds from Lynemore Wind Farm would be best allocated locally.

12.4.14 The Applicant is committed to establishing a Renewable Electricity Discount Scheme (REDS) should that be a preferred use of some or all of the Community Wealth Fund. This was a response to concerns raised during public consultations about high rural cost of living as well as a general feeling that people living near wind farms should see a reduction in their electricity bills. The Lynemore REDS scheme would offer a significant annual discount on electricity bills for households, businesses and community spaces located within a 6km radius of the site.

12.4.15 More widely, the Applicant is interested in working with community councils, stakeholders and businesses to develop an approach that maximises local economic impact and employment.

12.4.16 In order to make sure that local contractors can take advantage of construction and supply chain opportunities, the Applicant has created a Contractor Registration Form (available on the project website) where businesses can lodge their interest and keep updated on the project.

12.5 Statutory and Planning Context

12.5.1 The legislation, policy and guidance followed for the assessment of the socio-economic, recreation, tourism and land-use impact of the Revised Proposed Development is outlined in **Paragraphs 12.3.1** to **12.3.20** of the **EIA Report**.

12.6 Existing Environment

12.6.1 The existing environment followed for the assessment of the socio-economic, recreation, tourism and land-use impact of the Revised Proposed Development is outlined in **Paragraphs 12.7.1** to **12.7.27 of the EIA Report.**

12.7 Potential Effects

Socio-economic

12.7.1 The analysis of net economic benefits from **EIA Report, Chapter 12** has been updated to take account of the changes to the proposed Lynemore Wind Farm (12 turbines rather than 14 turbines as previously proposed).

12.7.2 A comparison of the predicted GVA and Job Years for the wind farm development (BESS would remain the same), community benefits and non-domestic rates with those presented in **EIA Report, Chapter 12** is included in **Table 12.1**, **Table 12.2** and **Table 12.3**.

Table 12.1 Comparison of net economic benefits during construction between EIA and AI layouts

	Inner Moray Firth				The Highlands				Scotland			
	Job Years		GVA (£m)		Job Years		GVA (£m)		Job Years		GVA (£m)	
	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI
Development	0	0	0	0	11.3	9.7	0.7	0.6	35.9	30.8	2.9	2.4
Turbines	0	0	0	0	128.9	110.5	7.7	6.6	343.8	294.7	20.8	17.8
Civil Works	24.9	21.3	1.5	1.3	30.3	26	1.8	1.5	91.3	78.2	91.3	5.3
Electrical Works	6.2	5.3	0.4	0.3	7.5	6.5	0.4	0.4	22.7	19.5	22.7	1.3
Total	**31.1**	**26.7**	**1.9**	**1.6**	**178.1**	**152.6**	**10.6**	**9**	**493.7**	**423.2**	**31.4**	**26.9**

*Totals may not add up exactly due to rounding

Table 12.2 Comparison of net economic benefits during operation between EIA and AI layouts

	Inner Moray Firth				The Highlands				Scotland			
	Job Years		GVA (£m)		Job Years		GVA (£m)		Job Years		GVA (£m)	
	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI	EIA	AI
Operation and Maintenance	8.8	7.7	0.6	0.6	24.2	21.2	1.8	1.5	34.3	30.1	2.4	2.1
Operation and Maintenance for lifetime	442.4	386.9	32.3	28.2	1212.1	1060	88	77	1722.4	1506.3	122.5	107.1

Table 12.3 Comparison of community benefit and non-domestic rates between EIA and AI layouts

	Community Benefits (£m)		Non-domestic Rates (£m)	
	EIA	AI	EIA	AI
Per annum	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.8
Over lifetime	24.5	21	46.5	42.8

12.7.3 Overall, it has been estimated that the Revised Proposed Development could generate:

- Construction Phase – During the construction phase it is estimated that the Revised Proposed Development could generate up to £29.8 million GVA and 462.9 job years across Scotland, with approximately £9.4 million and 157.8 job years worth of this total directly benefitting the Highlands and £1.6 million GVA and 16.7 job years in Inner Moray Firth.
- Operational Phase – Over the course of the operational phase, it is estimated that over the Revised Proposed Development 50-year lifetime, operation and maintenance costs could generate up to £107.1 million GVA and 1506.3 job years for Scotland, of which £77 million GVA and 1060 job years directly benefit the Highlands economy and £28.2 million GVA and 386.9 job years for Inner Moray Firth.

Recreation

12.7.4 As per **AI Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual**, there would be no change or slight reduction in the visual effects of the Revised Proposed Development; therefore, there would be no change or slight reduction in the recreational effects of the Revised Proposed Development, which would remain not significant.

Community Benefits

12.7.5 Following the removal of two turbines, there would be approximately £420,000 in community benefit per annum, equating to £21 million in community benefit funding over the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development.

Non-domestic Rates

12.7.6 Non-domestic rates would be approximately £856,127 per annum and £42.8 million over the operational lifetime.

12.8 Summary and Conclusions

12.8.1 Potential socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreational effects would remain **non-significant**. However, as per **Section 12.12** of **EIA Report Chapter 12**, the Revised Proposed Development would comply with National Policy Framework 4 Policy 11 (c) regarding the maximising of local benefits.