

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 The following chapter sets out the proposed scope of assessment of likely significant effects from the Proposed Development in relation to landscape character and visual amenity and potential impacts arising from construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning. It also sets out the proposed methodology for the assessment.
- 10.1.2 The purpose of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is to determine, in a transparent way, the likely significant effects on landscape character and visual receptors.

10.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 10.2.1 The proposed scope of assessment in relation to LVIA has been developed with reference to the legislation, policy and guidance as set out in the following section.

Legislation

- 10.2.2 The LVIA will be carried out in the context of the statutory planning and consenting framework for infrastructure projects, and in accordance with Environmental Impact Assessment requirements. In particular, the assessment will take account of:
- The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997;
 - The Electricity Act 1989 and any associated consenting requirements for substation development and under-grounding works; and
 - The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended) which set out requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of developments likely to have significant environmental effects.

Policy

National Policy

- 10.2.3 The LVIA will be informed by the following policies in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4):
- Policy 4 Natural Places;
 - Policy 6 Forestry, Woodland and Trees; and
 - Policy 11 Energy.

Local Policy

- 10.2.4 At the local level, the assessment will consider policies and guidance in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2023 and associated supplementary guidance. Policies of relevance include:
- Policy E2 Landscape;
 - Policy E3 Forestry and Woodland;
 - Policy HE2 Protecting Historic, Cultural and Conservation Areas;
 - Policy PR1 Protecting Important Resources;
 - Policy R1 Special Rural Areas;
 - Appendix 4 Boundaries of the Green Belt;
 - Appendix 5 Coastal Zone; and
 - Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas.
- 10.2.5 The following Aberdeenshire Council planning advice best practice guidance will also be considered:

- Planning Advice PA2023-01 Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy;
- Planning Advice PA2023-03 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – Onshore Wind Energy Development in Aberdeenshire;
- Planning Advice PA2023-07 and 7a-d Landscape Character Advice for Small Scale Development;
- Planning Advice PA2023-08 Landscaping Design; and
- Planning Advice PA2023-10 (revised) Biodiversity Enhancement on Development Sites.

Guidance

10.2.6 The LVIA will follow current best practice guidance and technical advice to ensure a robust and transparent assessment. The principal guidance documents that inform the LVIA methodology are:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3);
- Landscape Institute. (2024) Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01. Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition;
- Landscape Institute. (2019) Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19;
- Landscape Institute. (2021) Technical Guidance Note 02-21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations;
- Landscape Institute. (2019) Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)
- Scottish Natural Heritage. (2019) Landscape Character Assessment;
- Scottish Natural Heritage. (2017) Visual Representation of Wind Farms: Good Practice Guidance, Version 2.2; and
- Scottish Natural Heritage. (2021) Guidance: Assessing the Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impacts of Onshore Wind Energy Developments.

10.3 Consultation

Future Consultation

10.3.1 Further consultation will be undertaken with Aberdeenshire Council and NatureScot to confirm the scope of the LVIA including agreement on the viewpoints to be included in the assessment and the type of visualisations that will be set out in the EIA Report.

10.4 Study Areas

10.4.1 GLVIA3 recommends that the Study Area for the consideration of landscape effects should include, "...the Site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it which the Proposed Development may influence in a significant manner."¹ It also recommends that the LVIA should consider the area from which the Proposed Development would potentially be visible but that the emphasis, "...must be on a reasonable approach which is proportional to the scale and nature of the Proposed Development."

10.4.2 Preliminary landscape and visual desktop research and analysis was conducted to identify the following:

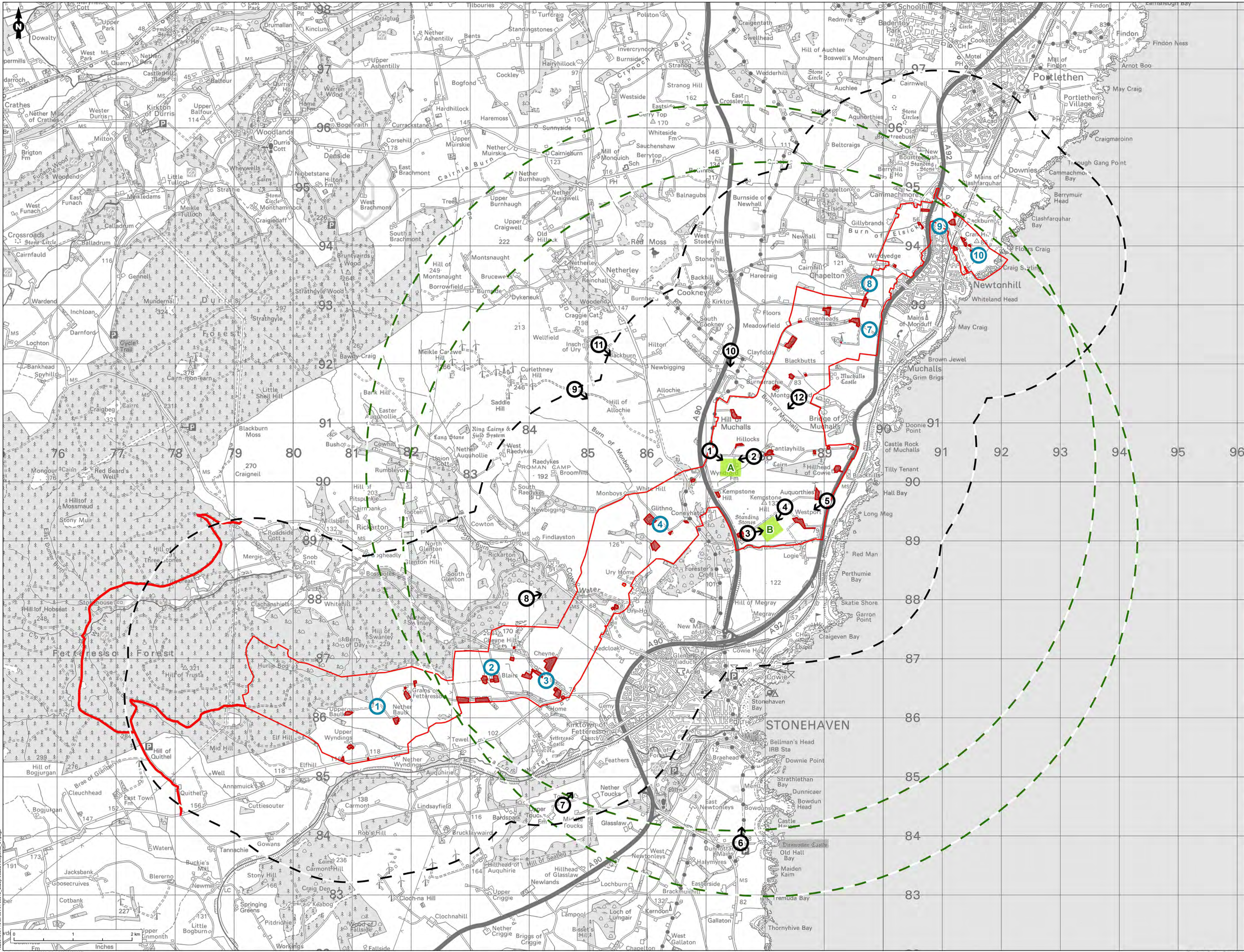
- Landscape receptors from which there may be visibility of the Proposed Development;

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental management and Assessment. (2013) ¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition paragraph 5.2.

- Visual receptors that may experience permanent views of the Proposed Development based on the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) analysis shown on **Figure 10.2a-b** and **Figure 10.3a-b**²; and
- Landscape and visual receptors that are sensitive to the type of development proposed.

- 10.4.3 The Study Area can be viewed on **Figure 10.1**. The ZTVs shown on **Figure 10.2a-b** and **Figure 10.3a-b** are based on Ordnance Survey (OS) digital terrain mapping (DTM) data supplied at a gridded height at 5 m interval resolution. This data does not reflect the screening effect of vegetation or built structures on views and so the geographical extent of visibility shown represents a 'worst case scenario'. The ZTV provides a starting point in the assessment process and highlights areas with potential visibility of the Substation. This will be verified as part of fieldwork prior to the completion of the EIA Report.
- 10.4.4 The Substation ZTVs for Substation Site Options A and B indicate theoretical visibility of the Substation mainly within 4 km. Beyond 4 km visibility would be restricted to elevated locations in the north and southwest.
- 10.4.5 The Onshore Transmission Cables would be buried and the main effects would occur during construction. Effects would arise from visibility of construction activities such as removal of hedges and trees, excavation of the cable trench, installation of the Onshore Transmission Cables and reinstatement and restoration of the land associated with the installation of the Onshore Transmission Cables e.g. planting and seeding of disturbed ground. Consequently, a ZTV has not been prepared for the Onshore Transmission Cable due the temporary nature of effects. However, it is very unlikely that significant effects would arise beyond 2 km due to the main impacts arising during construction.
- 10.4.6 The LVIA Study Areas (set out within **Figure 10.1**) are proposed as follows:
- The Substation - a 6 km radius from each Substation Site Option; and
 - Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor and Landfall Area - a 2 km offset from the Scoping Boundary.

² For the purposes of EIA Scoping submission, Figures 10.2a-b and Figures 10.3a-b have been uploaded separately to this chapter and can be found in Chapter 11 Part 2 and Part 3.



Legend

- Scoping Boundary
- Exclusion Zone (Residential Property)
- Scoping Boundary (6 km Buffer)
- Representative Substation Platform Areas
- Scoping Substation Options (6 km Buffer)
- Cable Viewpoint
- Viewpoint

Cable Viewpoint

VP No.	VP Name
1	Minor Road west of Grains of Fetteresso
2	Minor Road north of Blair
3	Minor Road southeast of Nether Chayne
4	Minor Road Southeast of Giltino
5	See Substation VP 1
6	See Substation VP 12
7	Minor Road near St Teren's Church
8	Footpath east of Chapelton
9	Newtonhill
10	Cran Hill

Representative Substation Platform Areas Viewpoint

VP No.	VP Name
1	National Cycle Network 1
2	Minor Road east of Wyndford Farm
3	Minor Road east of A90 at Kempstone Hill
4	Minor Road near Westport Farm
5	A92 near Auquorthies
6	NCN 1 near Durnnotar Castle
7	Minor Road near Upper Touks Farm
8	Cheyne Hill
9	Curlethney Hill
10	NCN 1 at A90 Overbridge
11	Minor Road near Craggie Cat hill
12	Minor Road west of Bridge of Muchalls

Figure Title
Landscape and Visual Study Areas and Viewpoints

Project Name
Aspen Offshore Wind Farm - Onshore Transmission Connection

Project No./Filey ID
 1620018491 / REH2025N00733

Date: May 2026 Figure No.: 10.1 Revision: 1.0

Prepared By: FN Scale: 1:28,000 @A1

Client:
Cerulean Winds Aspen Project Limited



10.5 Data Sources

10.5.1 The LVIA will use the following data sources:

- NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment 2019;
- Public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0;
- Commercially available aerial photography;
- Ordnance Survey 1:25,000, 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 mapping; and
- ZTVs calculated using 5 m OS Terrain data.

10.5.2 In addition information will be gathered and analysed based on:

- Site surveys;
- 3D Modelling of the Substation as wirelines and/or massing; and
- Consultation with the relevant statutory consultees.

10.6 Baseline Environment

Existing Baseline Conditions

10.6.1 A small part of the Proposed Development would be situated adjacent to the sea. However, most of the Proposed Development would be located inland and away from the coast with no or very limited intervisibility with coastal areas. The focus of the assessment will therefore be on landscape and visual receptors. Where seascape contributes to the character of an area or views this will also be considered as part of the analysis of landscape character and visual amenity.

Landscape Fabric

10.6.2 From the Landfall Area to the Grid Connection Point, the Scoping Boundary encompasses a varied landscape from the low cliffs on the coast to the northeast of Newtonhill to the forested uplands of Fetteresso Forest in the west. Between these two points the land use is mainly agricultural. In the east, drystone wall field boundaries are more common than in the west where post and wire fences are prevalent.

10.6.3 Deciduous woodland is more frequent in the central part of the Scoping Boundary between Glen Ury and the A90 with conifer plantation present at Fetteresso Forest. There are areas of heath and moorland in the area surrounding the Substation Site Options.

10.6.4 The landscape is more incised in the west of the Scoping Boundary and at Glen Ury where the steep v-shaped valley of the Ury Burn is a notable feature with deciduous woodland and grassland areas. Glen Ury is a notable flat-bottomed valley with steep wooded slopes on either side.

10.6.5 Substation Site Option A is situated in an area of undulating arable and pasture fields. Field boundaries include dry stone walls with some post and wire fences. There is a ditched watercourse (Green Burn) crossing the Substation Site Option A from west to east and remnants of a copse of woodland. Buildings of Wyndford Farm are situated within Substation Site Option A and accessed via a track that connects with the minor road to the north.

10.6.6 Substation Site Option B is situated on the north side of the valley of the Limpet Burn on gradual south facing slopes. Substation Site Option B occupies parts of two large fields separated by a drystone wall boundary and a gappy gorse hedge.

Landscape Character

10.6.7 **Figure 10.2** shows Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Landscape and Visual Study Areas. LCTs of relevance to the LVIA with potential for significant effects on landscape character are set out in **Table 10.1**.

Table 10.1: Landscape Character Types

LCT	Key Characteristics
LCT 27 Farmed Moorland Edge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Low rolling hills and valleys with some rocky ridges on higher slopes. • Dark heather-clad and forested hills often form the backdrop to these upland fringe areas. • Areas of moorland are interspersed with farmland on higher slopes. • Marginal upland farming, sheep grazing and patches of gorse scrub, birch and willow occurs at the transition with the uplands. • More intensive farmland is present on softly rolling ground. • Areas of waterlogged ground and small bogs in places, particularly at the transition with moorland or in wetter valley bottoms. • Scrubby patches of birch, willow and Scots pine occur in more marginal areas. • Clumps of broadleaf trees and shelterbelts pattern farmed lower slopes. • Mixed policy-influenced plantings more common in some areas. • Farm buildings of grey/brown stone are often marked by clumps of trees. • Derelict buildings are particularly evident on marginal upland areas. • Prehistoric monuments and artefacts, including stone circles, carved stone balls and souterrains. • Strong sense of history and culture, giving the landscape a timeless character.”
LCT 24 Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A large scale and open landscape of smoothly rolling ridges and shallow valleys. • Narrow ravines cutting through the ridges towards the coast. • Large fields of arable land and pasture with red-pink soils present a rich tapestry of colours with the strong patchwork pattern influenced by different crops and ploughed fields. • Few hedges or dykes. • Sparse woodland with coniferous shelterbelts planted on some ridges. Broadleaf woodlands, although small, commonly emphasise the landform, tracing water courses or planted on knolls. • Scattered settlement pattern with varied architectural styles including some large stately homes, farms and traditional cottages, often built of local red sandstone. • Comprehensive network of minor roads, as well as the main A90 which provides glimpses of the sea. • A concentration of Bronze Age burial cairns often focussed on hilltops with views to the sea. • Telecommunication masts located on the highest hills. • Frequent single and small groups of large wind turbines. • Strong coastal influence particularly where more open slopes fall gently to the top of cliffs or raised beach allowing views of the sea. • Sea views to the east and views westwards across the Howe of the Mearns.”
LCT 11 Fragmented Rocky Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fragmented rocky coastline. • Dramatic coastal features, including rugged cliffs, caves, arches, stacks and numerous broken islets.

LCT	Key Characteristics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy beach and sand dunes at Cruden Bay which interrupt the cliffs. • Grazed fields extending close to the top of the cliffs. • Coastal settlements limited to small fishing villages and occasional larger towns. • Isolated castles and lighthouses occur infrequently along the coast and form landmark features seen from roads and coastal footpaths. • Strong sense of naturalness, heightened by wheeling and nesting birds, together with exposure to the elements, giving a pronounced sense of wild character, particularly in more remote areas."
LCT 29 Summits and Plateaux	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "An expansive upland plateau with a smooth rolling landform and rounded hill summits. Landform is more complex along the Highland Boundary Fault. • Foreground to the Cairngorm massif and Cairngorms National Park. • Backdrop in views from the north from Lower Deeside and the fringes of Aberdeen city. • Extensive central and western ridges covered with expansive heather and grass moorland. • Regionally prominent hills. • Coniferous forested lower hills, particularly extensive in the northeast. Wind farm development also present in this area. • A patchwork of green pasture extends high into narrow valleys on the fringes of these uplands. • Unexpected pockets of farmland and isolated farms and estate buildings associated lower ground in part of the core of these uplands. • Derelict grey stone cottages are occasional features amidst open moorland. • Numerous old routeways popular with walkers and these, and the B974 Cairn o'Mount road, offer commanding views to the Howe of Mearns and the coast, and to Deeside. • Wild character experienced in the less modified central and western parts of this landscape. • Dramatic juxtaposition of the steep scarp slopes of these rugged uplands with the expansive low-lying farmed and settled Howe of the Mearns."

Visual Amenity

10.6.8 Visual receptors in the Landscape and Visual Study Areas comprise settlements and settled areas, residents of scattered dwellings, road users and recreational receptors (including hill walkers and users of core paths and cycle routes).

SETTLEMENTS AND SETTLED AREAS

10.6.9 The main settlements in the Substation Study Areas are:

- Stonehaven;
- Newtonhill;
- Chapelton; and
- Muchalls.

10.6.10 Smaller settlements and settled areas include:

- Bridge of Muchalls;
- Cookney;
- Netherley; and
- Glithno.

RESIDENTIAL

10.6.11 There are three residential properties within 250 m of Substation Site Option A:

- Howieshill;
- Hillcocks Farmhouse; and
- Kempstone Hill.

10.6.12 In addition, a new dwelling is under construction at Hillcocks Farmhouse and within 250 m of Substation Site Option A.

10.6.13 There are six residential properties within 250 m of Substation Site Option B:

- St Swithins;
- Bromstone;
- Westport;
- Westport Cottage;
- Logic House; and
- Steading House.

TRANSPORT ROUTES

10.6.14 There are four key routes within the Study Area from which there would potentially be views of the Proposed Development:

- The A90;
- The A92;
- The A957; and
- The B979.

RECREATIONAL ROUTES, CORE PATHS AND SUMMITS

10.6.15 The following recreational routes and summits are within the substation ZTV shown on **Figure 10.3**:

- National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1 130 m to the west;
- Core Path 7LD.01R 3.2 km to the northeast;
- Core Path 7LD.01.37 3.7 km to the northeast;
- Curlethney Hill (AOD 246 m) 3.5 km to the northwest;
- Cheyne Hill (AOD 170 m) 4.5 km to the southwest;
- Meikle Carewe Hill (AOD 266 m) 4.7 km to the west; and
- Glenton Hill (AOD 174 m) 5.1 km to the southwest.

Landscape Designations and Wild Land

10.6.16 There are no nationally designated landscapes or Wild Land Areas within 6 km of the Substation Site Options.

10.6.17 Substation Site Options A and B are located approximately 300 m and 1.5 km west of the Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast Special Landscape Area (SLA) (also called Local Landscape Area

(LLA)) respectively. The ZTVs shown on **Figure 10.2a-b** indicate very limited theoretical visibility of development at Substation Site Options A and B from the SLA. Due to the intervening distance, elevation difference, and the coastal focus of the SLA there will be no direct effects resulting from the development at this location. The Substation Site Options are therefore unlikely to affect the qualifying features of the SLA as set out in Appendix 13 Aberdeenshire Special Landscape Areas of Aberdeenshire LDP (2023).

Future Baseline Conditions

- 10.6.18 The environmental baseline is not static and will evolve throughout the lifetime of the Proposed Development; accordingly, the EIA will compare any potential impacts against a defined future baseline that reflects the reasonable potential change likely to occur. This includes the consideration of the potential future baseline as part of a scenario in which the Proposed Development is not brought forward.

10.7 Embedded Mitigation

- 10.7.1 The following section outlines the embedded mitigation anticipated to be implemented prior to undertaking the Landscape and Visual assessment. The requirement for and feasibility of mitigation measures will be dependent upon the significance of effects and will be consulted upon with relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees throughout the EIA process.
- 10.7.2 Throughout continued development to the Proposed Development, the design will evolve through iterative updates informed by baseline assessments and field surveys. These refinements will target identified constraints and seek to avoid or reduce potential impacts on environment and other receptors through site specific measures and design adjustments.
- 10.7.3 The following embedded mitigation, relevant to LVIA would be implemented:
- Site design and layout of infrastructure associated with the landfall site to reduce impact on important features of the landscape character e.g. avoidance of above ground infrastructure, where practicable;
 - Location of construction compounds associated with Proposed Development elements (Landfall, Onshore Transmission Cables and Substation) to be located away from sensitive receptors to reduce visual impact, where practicable;
 - Site design, layout and screen planting/landscape earthworks (mitigation) associated with the Substation to reduce and/or reduce the impact on landscape character and visual receptors, where practicable; and
 - The Onshore Transmission Cables to be routed to avoid/reduce impacts on physical elements of the landscape such as hedgerows and woodland areas, or important habitats, where practicable.

10.8 Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development

- 10.8.1 Following the implementation of embedded mitigation, a series of potential impacts as a result of the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development have been identified in relation to landscape and visual related receptors. In the event the potential for likely significant impacts is identified in the EIA Report chapter, the assessment will address additional design or management measures that would be implemented.
- 10.8.2 Considering the baseline described above, it is anticipated that the potentially significant effects described below could occur as a result of the Proposed Development, with the aforementioned inherent and embedded mitigation assumed as implemented, under a worst-case scenario.

Construction Phase

Impacts on Landscape Fabric

- 10.8.3 Construction of the Substation would result in the loss of field boundaries of drystone walls and gorse hedges. There would also be the loss of areas of agricultural fields and alteration of landform to accommodate the Substation platform and associated temporary construction compound.
- 10.8.4 Along the span of the area within which the Onshore Transmission Cables would be installed, there would be the potential for loss or alteration of field boundaries which may include drystone walls, hedges and trees. Where open cut cable installation methods would be implemented, there would be the potential for temporary alteration of agricultural fields to accommodate associated trenches.
- 10.8.5 Effects in relation to the installation of the Onshore Transmission Cables and Landfall Area on landscape fabric are considered to have the potential be significant in localised areas. Routeing of the Onshore Transmission Cables would seek to reduce impacts on landscape fabric. Construction would be managed using an outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to reduce any unavoidable impacts on landscape fabric as far as reasonably practicable.

Impacts on Landscape Character

- 10.8.6 Construction impacts of the Substation on landscape character would be associated mainly with changes arising from visibility of construction activities at the Substation and consequently changes to the way landscape character is perceived. There is considered to be the potential for significant effects on landscape character as a result of the construction of the Substation, though these are anticipated to be localised and would be temporary and reversible.
- 10.8.7 Construction and installation of the Onshore Transmission Cables is considered to have the potential to result in localised significant effects in relation to landscape character as a result of the removal of hedges, trees and drystone walls and the alteration of landform. Some of these impacts would be reversible such as replacing drystone walls and re-seeding areas of grassland.
- 10.8.8 Permanent loss of hedgerow and woodland has the potential to result in localised significant effects on landscape character.
- 10.8.9 The presence of construction activities such as the movement of plant and machinery, excavation of the cable trench, erection of temporary construction compounds and laydown areas is considered to have the potential to result in localised significant effects on landscape character. These effects would be of short duration and reversible.

Impacts on Visual Amenity

SETTLEMENTS AND SETTLED AREAS

- 10.8.10 Given the distance to the nearest settlements, construction of the Substation is unlikely to result in significant effects on visual amenity of people in settlements. From settled rural areas construction of the Substation would be noticeable and may result in significant effects on nearby residential receptors (discussed below). However, significant effects on larger settled areas with many scattered rural properties is unlikely due to intervening distance and the temporary and reversible nature of the change.

IMPACTS ON VISUAL AMENITY OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

- 10.8.11 During construction there would potentially be significant effects on some residential properties within approximately 250 m of the Substation and within the area in which the Onshore Transmission Cables would be installed.

IMPACTS ON VISUAL AMENITY FROM ROADS

- 10.8.12 There is considered to be the potential for significant effects on the A90 where it passes to the west of Substation Site Options A and B. Impacts would be temporary and of short duration. Motorists on the A90 would be travelling quickly and construction activities would be visible only along a short stretch of the route.
- 10.8.13 There would potentially be significant impacts on minor roads within settled areas where these roads pass close to the substation site Option.
- 10.8.14 There is the potential for significant effects during cable construction on the local minor road network where roads pass through the cable corridor or where views would be obtained from roads outwith the corridor. Impacts on the local road network would be temporary and of short duration during cable construction.

IMPACTS ON VISUAL AMENITY FROM RECREATIONAL ROUTES

- 10.8.15 Significant construction effects are likely on NCN 1 which passes 130 m to the west of Substation Site Option A and runs across the cable corridor to the west of the A90 and along the western edge of the corridor to the north of Substation Site Option A.
- 10.8.16 Construction of the substation would potentially be discernible from core paths and summits. Given intervening distance and the temporary and reversible nature of the change significant effects on core paths and summits are unlikely.
- 10.8.17 Significant effects are likely on core paths where these cross the cable corridor or where they pass close to the cable corridor. This is likely to affect core paths at Newtonhill in the north of the cable corridor and at New Mains of Ury to the north of the A90 at Stonehaven.

Operational Phase

Impacts on Landscape Fabric

- 10.8.18 There would be no likely significant impacts on landscape fabric during the operational phase of the substation or buried cable.

Impacts on Landscape Character

- 10.8.19 The proposed substation would introduce a new feature uncharacteristic of the baseline into the landscape. This would result in localised significant effects on landscape character. Effects would not be wholly mitigable but mitigation planting could potentially reduce effects slightly once established.
- 10.8.20 During operation, the cables would be installed below ground and, following reinstatement, the land would be returned to its previous use, with minimal above-ground infrastructure present along the Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor.
- 10.8.21 As mentioned above hedges and trees potentially would not be planted over the below ground transmission infrastructure, including the Onshore Transmission Cables. Where these form field boundaries, there would be a change to the appearance of field boundaries although the field pattern is likely to remain unchanged. There may be a change to the pattern of hedges and trees in the cable corridor, and this may be discernible as a change to landscape character in very localised areas particularly where trees and hedges cannot be replaced or where landform is permanently altered. These effects may not be significant in isolation but could potentially result in localised significant effects on landscape character across a wider area.

Impacts on Visual Amenity of Settlements and Settled Areas

- 10.8.22 The substation ZTV indicates limited visibility from the main settlements of Stonehaven, Chapelton, and Newtonhill. Given intervening distance significant effects are unlikely on these settlements. Significant effects are unlikely at Muchalls due to intervening distance.
- 10.8.23 Given the pattern of visibility shown on **Figure 10.2a-b** there is the potential for significant effects on settled rural areas within 2 – 3 km of Substation Site Options A and B dependent on elevation and degree of visibility.
- 10.8.24 There are unlikely to be significant effects on visual amenity at settlements and settled areas arising from the buried cable. The cable would be below ground with minimal surface infrastructure. While there may be loss and alteration to hedges and trees this is unlikely to constitute a substantial change to visual amenity.

Impacts on Visual Amenity of Residential Properties

- 10.8.25 The Substation would introduce a very noticeable new feature into the baseline which could result in substantial change to available views from residential properties within 250 m. At year 1 of operation mitigation planting would be low in height and yet to establish. Therefore, potential impacts would be greatest at year 1 decreasing in years 10-15 as mitigation planting matures. While impacts on individual residential properties within 250 m could be significant, given intervening distance and available views in other directions, it is unlikely that impacts would be so great as to be considered overbearing. Residential visual amenity will be assessed in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA).
- 10.8.26 Significant effects arising from the Onshore Transmission Cables are unlikely during operation. However, the effects of hedge and tree loss on visual amenity and the potential for that to increase visibility of the proposed substation or adversely affect views will be a consideration.

Impacts on Visual Amenity from Roads

- 10.8.27 During operation, the Substation would potentially result in significant effects on motorists using the A90. However, motorists would be travelling quickly and the Substation would be visible only along a short stretch of the route.
- 10.8.28 There would be significant impacts on the minor roads that run along the northern boundary of Substation Site Option A or B.

Impacts on Visual Amenity from Recreational Routes

- 10.8.29 During operation the Substation would result in significant effects on a short section of NCN 1 where it passes to the west of Substation Site Option A. Significant effects may also arise as a result of visibility of Site B although intervening vegetation and landform would provide screening.
- 10.8.30 The Substation would be unlikely to result in significant effects on core paths due to intervening distance and screening by landform, trees, hedges and woodland.
- 10.8.31 The Substation would be a noticeable feature from nearby hilltops such as Curlethney Hill and Cheyne Hill. There could potentially be significant impacts on views in the direction of the Substation from nearby hills.
- 10.8.32 Significant effects arising from the Onshore Transmission Cables are unlikely during operation.
- 10.8.33 **Table 10.2** summarises the impacts that are scoped into the LVIA with a description of any additional data collection (e.g. site-specific surveys) and supporting analyses that will be required to enable a full assessment of the impacts.
- 10.8.34 Potential impacts scoped out of the assessment are presented in **Table 10.3**, with justification.

10.8.35 To aid the assessment of effects on landscape and visual receptors the viewpoints listed in **Table 10.4** will be used. **Table 10.4** lists the type of visualisations that will be included with the LVIA as follows:

- Substation Photomontage LI Type 3 – for selected viewpoints photomontages showing the general massing of the proposed substation will be shown;
- Substation LI Type 1 Visualisation – for substation viewpoints not used as photomontages, annotated baseline photography will be used. The annotation will show a marker indicating the location of the Proposed Development and key existing features mentioned in the LVIA text; and
- Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor LI Type 1 Visualisation – annotated baseline photography will be used to show typical views of the landscape and visual baseline along the proposed Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor.

10.8.36 The proposed viewpoint locations are shown on **Figure 10.2a-b**.

Table 10.2: Summary of Potential LVIA Related Impacts Proposed to be Scoped In

Potential Impact	Phase of Proposed Development*			Justification	Summary of the Proposed Approach to Assessment
	C	O&M	D		
Landscape Fabric Impacts - Substation	✓	✗	✗	Alteration or removal of components of the landscape to accommodate the Substation.	Survey of landscape features, their quality and condition and potential to be replaced following construction. Evaluation of the contribution of features to landscape character to inform mitigation.
Landscape Fabric Impacts – Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor	✓	✗	✗	Alteration or removal of components of the landscape to accommodate the installation of the Onshore Transmission Cables.	Survey of landscape features, their quality and condition and potential to be replaced following construction. Evaluation of the contribution of features to landscape character to inform mitigation.
Landscape Character Impacts - Substation	✓	✓	✓	Physical impacts on the components of the Landscape Character area where the Substation would be located. Impacts on landscape that is caused by the new built form during the operation and maintenance phase. Construction and decommissioning operations may lead to short-term alteration or temporary loss of localised landscape character; however, these effects are expected to be reversible and can be reduced through targeted mitigation and reinstatement measures.	Landscape impact assessment to be undertaken in accordance with current guidance. Assessment to be based on indicative Substation design layout and associated embedded mitigation measures.
Landscape Character Impacts – Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor	✓	✓	✗	Physical Impacts on the components of the Landscape Character area where Onshore Transmission Cables pass. Construction and decommissioning operations may lead to short-term alteration or temporary loss of localised landscape character; however, these effects are expected to be reversible and can be minimised through targeted mitigation and reinstatement measures	Landscape impact assessment to be undertaken in accordance with GLVIA3 guidance. Assessments of the landfall site location and potential cable route and consider location of temporary construction compound(s).

Potential Impact	Phase of Proposed Development*			Justification	Summary of the Proposed Approach to Assessment
	C	O&M	D		
Impacts on Visual Amenity (Residential, Transport and recreational routes and Summits) - Substation	✓	✓	✓	Potential visual effects include those resulting from plant, machinery and earthworks during the construction and decommissioning phases, together with effects arising from the introduction of new built form within the landscape.	A visual impact assessment, prepared in accordance with current guidance, will present baseline photographs for representative selected viewpoints. Photomontages will be produced from selected viewpoints to illustrate the operational appearance of the Proposed Development, with embedded mitigation.
Impacts on Visual Amenity (Residential, Transport and recreational routes and Summits) – Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor	✓	✗	✗	Potential visual effects are anticipated during the construction and decommissioning phases due to the presence of plant, machinery and temporary works within the landscape. Operational visual impacts have been scoped out given that the cables will be underground and significant permanent visual effects are not expected.	A visual impact assessment will be prepared in line with current guidance. Baseline photographs from representative, selected viewpoints will be provided to support the assessment.
Impacts on Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast SLA - Substation	✓	✓	✓	The substation has a greater potential for lasting landscape and visual effects than the Onshore Transmission Cable. Its scale, massing and location make a comprehensive LVIA necessary, including a ZTV to identify potentially affected receptors across a wider area and to inform viewpoint selection and design mitigation.	Undertake a full LVIA in accordance with GLVIA3. Produce ZTV mapping to identify zones of potential visibility and to guide selection of representative, publicly accessible viewpoints. For selected viewpoints provide baseline imagery and photomontages, consider cumulative interactions with other vertical infrastructure.
Impacts on Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast SLA – Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cable Corridor	✓	✗	X	The Onshore Transmission Cables would be installed underground with the northeast of the Scoping Boundary passing through the Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast SLA. Assessment is required to capture localised construction phase effects and to inform route-specific mitigation.	Undertake a targeted assessment that combines desk review of SLA documentation with field surveys. Identify and describe sensitivity of special qualities of the SLA.

Potential Impact	Phase of Proposed Development*			Justification	Summary of the Proposed Approach to Assessment
	C	O&M	D		
*Phase of Proposed Development refers to construction (C), operation and maintenance (O&M), and decommissioning (D).					

Table 10.3: Summary of Potential LVIA Related Impacts Proposed to be Scoped Out

Potential Impact	Justification
Operational Impacts on Landscape and Visual Receptors – Onshore Transmission Cables	<p>As the Onshore Transmission Cables would be buried, routine operational maintenance is expected to be limited in extent and any vegetation removed during construction will be fully reinstated; consequently, no landscape impacts are anticipated during the operation and maintenance phase.</p> <p>Visual impacts as a result of the Onshore Transmission Cables during the operation and maintenance are not expected: the buried cables, limited maintenance activity and full reinstatement of vegetation mean baseline views would remain substantially unchanged.</p>
Operational Impacts on Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast SLA - Onshore Transmission Cables	<p>Although the SLA is a sensitive receptor, the nature and magnitude of the operational-stage elements associated with the buried Onshore Transmission Cables are minimal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cables are fully buried and would not alter shoreline landform or long term coastal character; • Routine maintenance activities would likely be infrequent, short in duration and limited in footprint; and • All disturbed areas will be reinstated and subject to a landscape reinstatement and monitoring regime to ensure recovery. <p>Taken together, these factors mean that any operational effects would be negligible, localised and reversible; therefore operational impacts on the SLA are not considered to merit detailed assessment.</p>
Decommissioning impacts in relation to the Onshore Transmission Cables	The Onshore Transmission Cables are expected to be left in situ to reduce potential environmental disturbance during the decommissioning phase

Table 10.4: Proposed Viewpoints

VP Ref	VP Name	Easting	Northing	Type of Visualisations
S1 & C5	National Cycle Network (NCN) 1	387064	790525	Substation A – Photomontage LI Type 3 Cable Route – LI Type 1
S2	Minor Road east of Wyndford Farm	387811	790430	Substation A – Photomontage LI Type 3
S3	Minor Road east of A90 at Kempstone Hill	387706	789127	Substation B – Photomontage LI Type 3
S4	Minor Road near Westport Farm	388338	789575	Substation B – Photomontage LI Type 3
S5	A92 near Auquorthies	389050	789678	Substation B – LI Type 1
S6	NCN 1 near Dunnotar Castle	387585	783882	Substation B – LI Type 1
S7	Minor Road near Upper Touks Farm	384573	784522	Substation B – LI Type 1

VP Ref	VP Name	Easting	Northing	Type of Visualisations
S8	Cheyne Hill	383955	788021	Substation A & B – LI Type 1
S9	Curlethney Hill	384775	791569	Substation A & B – LI Type 1
S10	NCN 1 at A90 Overbridge	387417	792218	Substation A – LI Type 1
S11	Minor Road near Craggie Cat hill	385183	792324	Substation A – LI Type 1
S12 & C6	Minor Road west of Bridge of Muchalls	388573	791434	Substation A – LI Type 1 Cable Route – LI Type 1
C1	Minor Road west of Grains of Fetteresso	381428	786193	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C2	Minor Road north of Blairs	383362	786853	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C3	Minor Road southeast of Nether Cheyne	384289	786630	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C4	Minor Road Southeast of Glithno	386223	789282	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C5	See S1			
C6	See S12			
C7	Minor Road near St Ternan's Church	389768	792580	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C8	Footpath east of Chapelton	389769	793357	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C9	Newtonhill	390959	794331	Cable Route – LI Type 1
C10	Cran Hill	391617	793841	Cable Route – LI Type 1

10.9 Proposed Assessment Methodology

- 10.9.1 The methodology and approach to the LVIA will be carried out in accordance with best practice guidance listed in paragraph 10.2.6. The steps are summarised below.

Baseline Data Collection

Desk Study

- 10.9.2 A desk study will establish the baseline landscape and visual context for the Proposed Development, including the physical components of the landscape resource (i.e. the landscape fabric) as well as the distinctive and recognisable pattern of features that establish the landscape character of the area, and the special qualities of designated landscapes within the Study Area. Sensitive visual receptors and receptor locations will be identified, including the residents of settlements, and scattered residential properties, road users, recreational receptors at tourist locations and on promoted trails or core paths, and hill walkers at summits.

Field Work

- 10.9.3 Field work will be undertaken to:

- To verify the findings of the desktop study and to capture assessment viewpoint photography;
- Augment and verify published descriptions of landscape character with field observations;

- Undertake an assessment of the quality or condition of baseline landscape and visual resources;
- Identify any notable features and elements in the landscape such as major blocks of vegetation or built form that would potentially screen or filter views of the Proposed Development and thereby updating assumptions based on the ZTV;
- Visit each viewpoint location to microsite each position in accordance with good practice guidance and to obtain accurate grid coordinates;
- Undertake photography at each agreed viewpoint locations. The selected viewpoints were visited and evaluated using draft wirelines, web mapping, GIS and GPS data collection systems; and
- Identify landscape features and elements that may be altered or removed with an adverse or beneficial effect because of the Proposed Development.

Illustrative Materials

- 10.9.4 The LVIA will be informed and illustrated by a range of materials such as ZTV plans, photographs, wireline images and photomontages. All outputs have will be prepared and verified in line with current best practice.

Assessment Criteria

- 10.9.5 The effects of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual receptors will be assessed based on their type (direct effects, indirect effects, and effects on setting (including cumulative effects)) and nature (adverse or beneficial). Effects can be permanent (lasting for a long time or forever), temporary (not lasting for very long) and/or reversible (can be changed back to what it was before).
- 10.9.6 The assessment will take into account the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors and the magnitude of the predicted impact.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 10.9.7 The sensitivity of the landscape will be defined as 'high', 'medium' or 'low' based on professional interpretation of a combination of its susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and the value attributed to the landscape.

Visual Sensitivity

- 10.9.8 Visual receptor sensitivity will be defined as 'high', 'medium' or 'low' based on an interpretation of a combination of parameters and relates to the susceptibility and value ascribed to visual receptors or receptor location.

Magnitude of Change

- 10.9.9 The magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development may be described as 'substantial', 'moderate', 'slight', 'negligible', or 'none' based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters, as follows:
- The distance of receptors from the Proposed Development;
 - The duration of the predicted impacts and whether they are reversible;
 - The size and scale of the impact anticipated;
 - The geographical extent of the Study Area, landscape character unit, designation or route that would be affected;
 - The angle of view in relation to main receptor activity;
 - The degree of contrast;
 - The background context to the Proposed Development; and
 - The extent and nature of other built development visible.

Significance of Residual Effect

- 10.9.10 Residual effects will be determined by combining the sensitivity of receptors with the anticipated magnitude of change. Major or Major/Moderate effects will be considered as significant. Where 'Moderate' effects are predicted, professional judgement will be used to assess whether the effect is Significant or Not Significant thereby ensuring that the potential for significant effects is robustly considered. Justification will be provided for the judgement reached.

Limitations and Assumptions

- 10.9.11 The key assumptions and limitations applied to the preparation of this EIA Scoping Report are set out below. Assumptions and limitations specific to certain topics are identified in the appropriate technical chapter:
- Baseline conditions have been established from a variety of sources, including historical data but, due to the dynamic nature of certain aspects of the environment, conditions will change during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development;
 - Information received by third parties is complete and up to date; and
 - The design, construction and completed stages of the Proposed Development would satisfy minimum environmental standards, consistent with contemporary legislation, practice and knowledge.

10.10 Potential Cumulative Effects

Inter-Related Effects

- 10.10.1 Potential inter-project cumulative effects will be considered as part of the LVIA assessment with details presented within the EIA Report. This will include the consideration of both project lifetime effects and receptor-led effects in accordance with the approach set out within **Chapter 4: Approach to Scoping and EIA**.

Cumulative Effects

- 10.10.2 Cumulative effects with the Proposed Offshore Development will be considered, together with cumulative effects with other developments, where relevant.
- 10.10.3 There is the potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects arising from the Proposed Development in combination with other existing and/or approved projects within the Landscape and Visual Study Areas. This includes other energy development projects within the area of Fetteresso Forest also proposed to utilise the proposed Hurlie 400 kV Substation (as well as the Fetteresso 400 kV Substation) as respective connections to the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS). The siting of the Substation has sought to avoid the area in and around the Grid Connection Point to provide separation from other existing and/or approved projects and therefore reduce the potential for cumulative landscape and visual related effects. Further details will be set out within the EIA Report.
- 10.10.4 The cumulative effects assessment will follow the approach set out within **Chapter 4: Approach to Scoping and EIA**.

10.11 Summary of Proposed Scope

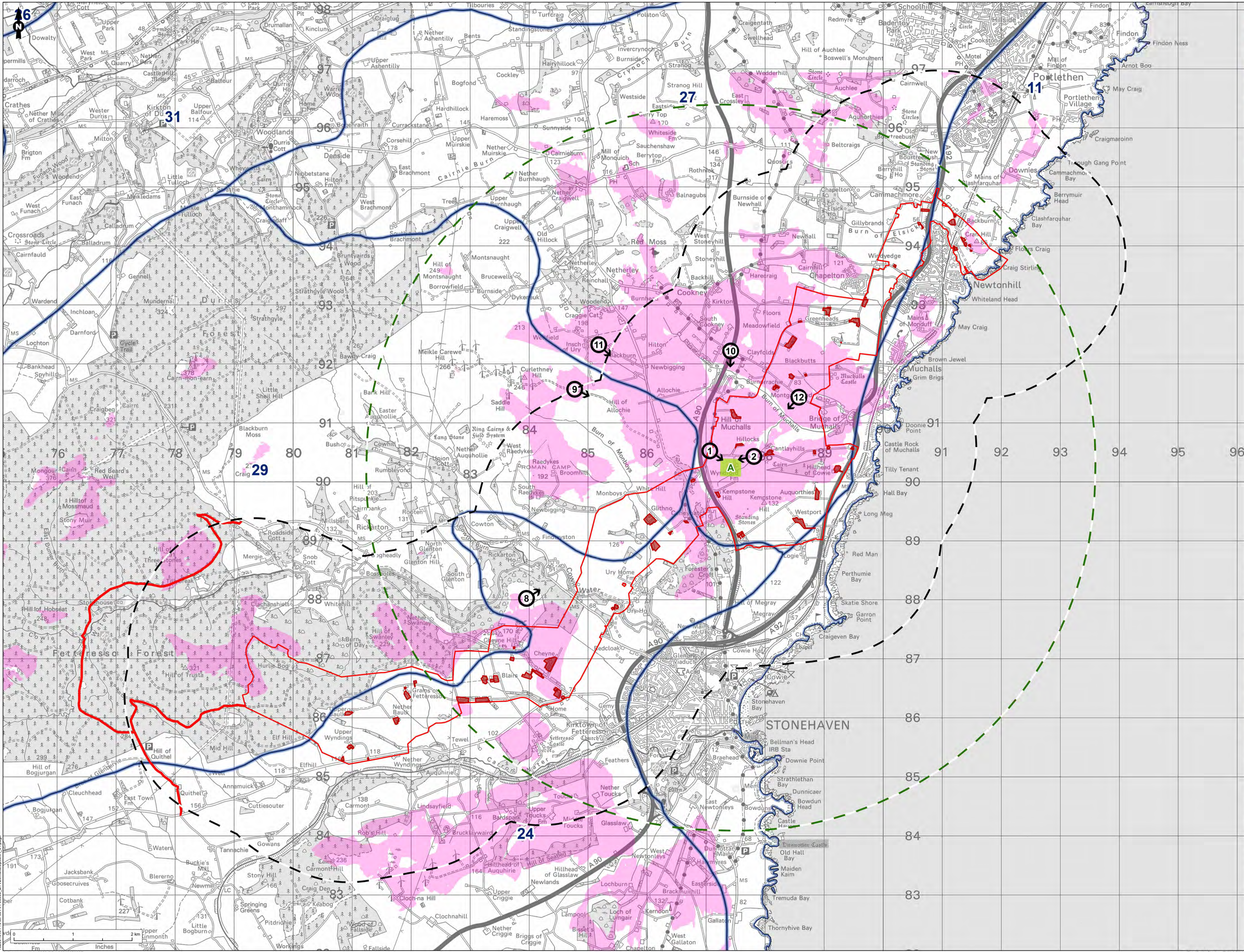
- 10.11.1 A desk-based review will be carried out to describe the landscape character within which the Proposed Development is located. This will be supplemented by targeted field surveys to identify and confirm landscape and visual receptors, undertake assessment surveys and capture photography from agreed, representative viewpoints. The LVIA will be prepared in accordance with GLVIA3 and other best practice guidance and will include illustrative photomontages (and

where appropriate wirelines) from selected viewpoints to support the visual appraisal and to depict the baseline and Substation.

10.11.2 Potential impacts to be considered include:

- Impacts on landscape fabric during construction and decommissioning of the Landfall, Onshore Transmission Cables and Substation;
- Impacts on landscape character arising from construction of the Landfall, Onshore Transmission Cables and Substation;
- Impacts on landscape character during operation arising mainly from the Substation with potentially limited impacts from the Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cables;
- Impacts on Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast SLA associated with the Substation across all project phases;
- Impacts on Southeast Aberdeenshire Coast SLA associated with the Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cables mainly during construction and decommissioning;
- Visual impacts from the Landfall and Onshore Transmission Cables mainly during construction and decommissioning; and
- Visual impacts as a result of the Substation across all phases.

10.11.3 The assessment will reflect embedded mitigation incorporated into the design, and will identify additional site-specific measures where required to avoid or reduce significant adverse effects to acceptable levels. On the basis of the scoping exercise and the potential for landscape and visual effects during construction, operation and decommissioning, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment chapter will be included in the Onshore EIA Report.



Legend

- Scoping Boundary
- Exclusion Zone (Residential Property)
- Scoping Boundary (6 km Buffer)
- Representative Substation Platform Areas
- Scoping Substation Options (6 km Buffer)
- Landscape Character Assessment (LCT)
- Viewpoint

Zones of Theoretical Visibility

- Site Option A Substation Visible (Assumed Substation Height 20m)

Representative Substation Platform Areas Viewpoint

VP No.	VP Name
1	National Cycle Network 1
2	Minor Road east of Wyndford Farm
8	Cheyne Hill
9	Curtlethney Hill
10	NCN 1 at A90 Overbridge
11	Minor Road near Craggie Cat Hill
12	Minor Road west of Bridge of Muchalls

Landscape Character Assessment (LCT)

LCT No.	LCT
11	Fragmented Rocky Coast
24	Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills - Aberdeenshire
26	Wooded Estates - Aberdeenshire
27	Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire
29	Summits and Plateaux - Aberdeenshire
31	Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley
33	Broad Wooded Valley with Estates

DISCLAIMER

- The ZTV analysis does not take into account the screening effect of vegetation, buildings and other surface features.
- Predicted visibility based on a viewer eye height 2 m above ground.
- Visibility calculated using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 DTM on a 5 m Grid.
- Effect of earth curvature and light refraction is included.

Figure Title
Landscape Character and Substation ZTV (Option A) with Viewpoints

Project Name
Aspen Offshore Wind Farm - Onshore Transmission Connection

Project No./Filey ID
1620018491 / REH2025N00733

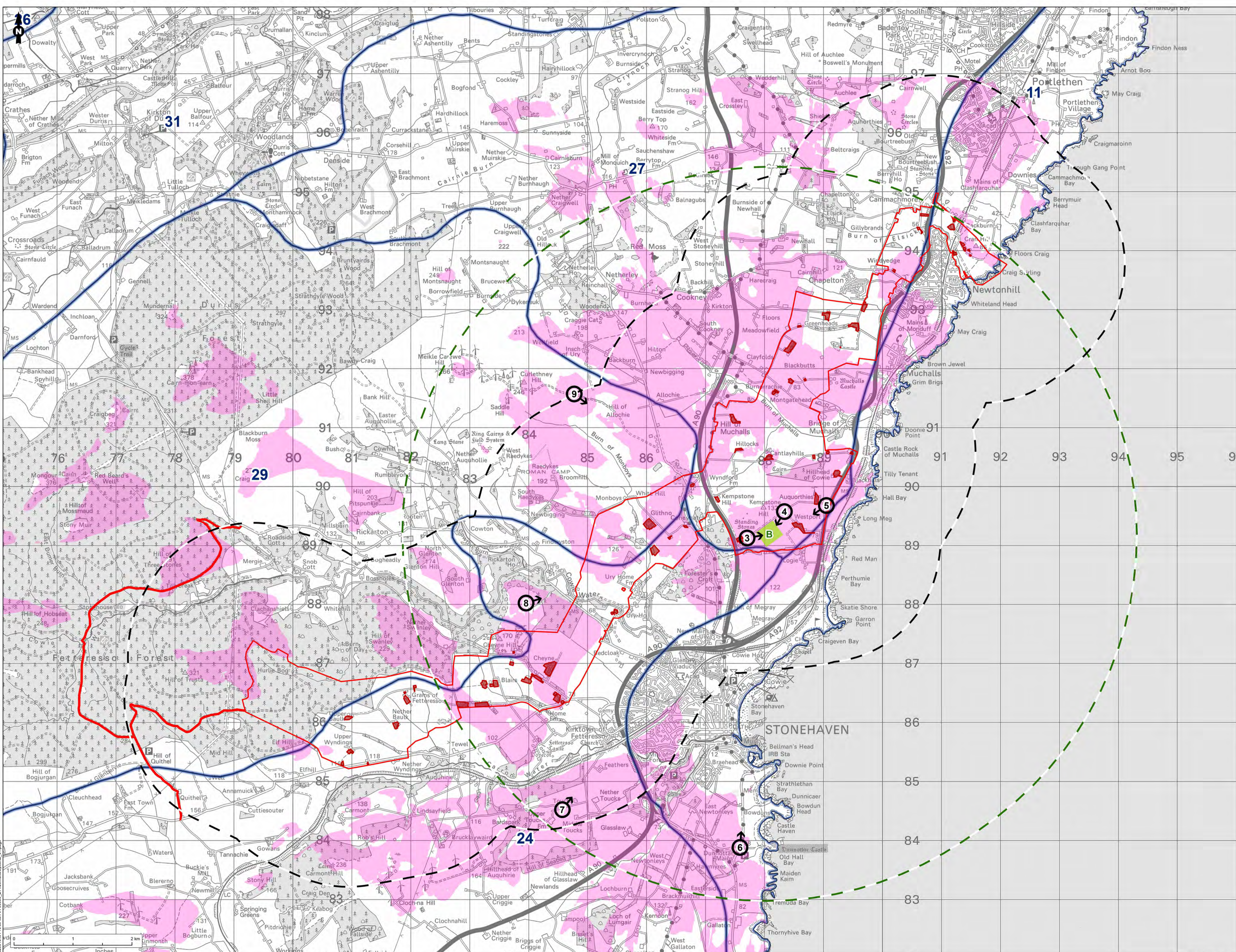
Date	Figure No.	Revision
May 2026	10.2a	1.0

Prepared By
FN

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Client
Cerulean Winds Aspen Project Limited

RAMBOLL



Legend

- Scoping Boundary
- Exclusion Zone (Residential Property)
- Scoping Boundary (6 km Buffer)
- Representative Substation Platform Areas
- Scoping Substation Options (6 km Buffer)
- Landscape Character Assessment (LCT)
- Viewpoint

Zones of Theoretical Visibility

- Site Option B Substation Visible (Assumed Substation Height 20m)

Representative Substation Platform Areas Viewpoint

VP No.	VP Name
3	Minor Road east of A90 at Kempstone Hill
4	Minor Road near Westport Farm
5	A92 near Auquorhies
6	NCN 1 near Dunnotar Castle
7	Minor Road near Upper Touks Farm
8	Cheyne Hill
9	Curlethney Hill

Landscape Character Assessment (LCT)

LCT No.	LCT
11	Fragmented Rocky Coast
24	Coastal Farmed Ridges and Hills - Aberdeenshire
26	Wooded Estates - Aberdeenshire
27	Farmed Moorland Edge - Aberdeenshire
29	Summits and Plateaux - Aberdeenshire
31	Broad Wooded and Farmed Valley
33	Broad Wooded Valley with Estates

DISCLAIMER

1. The ZTV analysis does not take into account the screening effect of vegetation, buildings and other surface features.
2. Predicted visibility based on a viewer eye height 2 m above ground.
3. Visibility calculated using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 DTM on a 5 m Grid.
4. Effect of earth curvature and light refraction is included.

Figure Title
Landscape Character and Substation ZTV (Option B) with Viewpoints

Project Name
Aspen Offshore Wind Farm - Onshore Transmission Connection

Project No./Filey ID
1620018491 / REH2025N00733

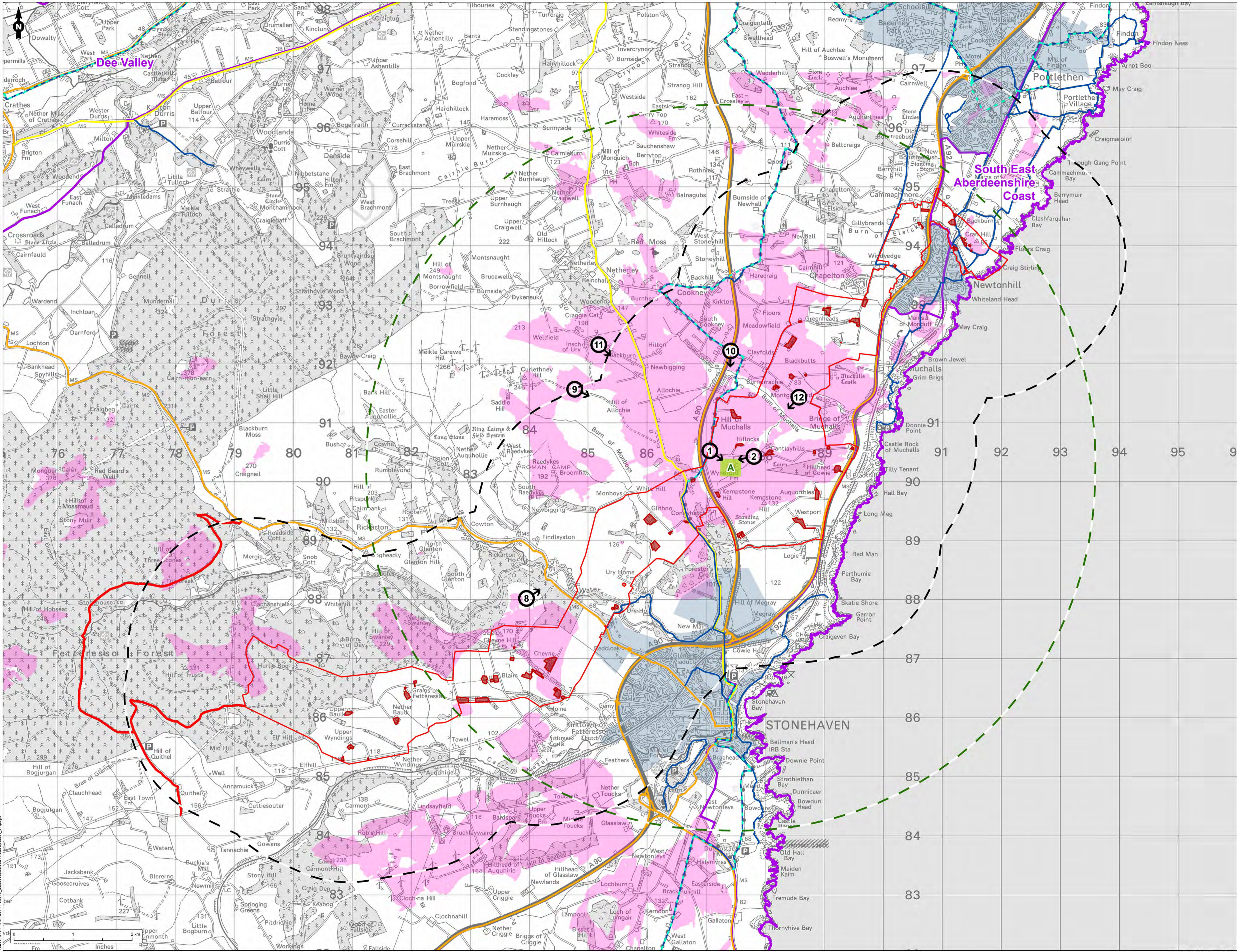
Date	Figure No.	Revision
May 2026	10.2b	1.0

Prepared By
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Legend

- Scoping Boundary
- Exclusion Zone (Residential Property)
- Scoping Boundary (6 km Buffer)
- Representative Substation Platform Areas
- Scoping Substation Options (6 km Buffer)
- Viewpoint

Landscape and Visual Constraints

- National Cycle Network
- Core Paths
- A Road
- B Road
- Settlements
- Special Landscape Areas

Zones of Theoretical Visibility

- Site Option A Substation Visible (Assumed Substation Height 20m)

Representative Substation Platform Areas Viewpoint

VP No.	VP Name
1	National Cycle Network 1
2	Minor Road east of Wyndford Farm
8	Cheyne Hill
9	Curtlethey Hill
10	NCN 1 at A90 Overbridge
11	Minor Road near Craggie Cat Hill
12	Minor Road west of Bridge of Muchalls

DISCLAIMER
 1. The ZTV analysis does not take into account the screening effect of vegetation, buildings and other surface features.
 2. Predicted visibility based on a viewer eye height 2 m above ground.
 3. Visibility calculated using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 DTM on a 6 m Grid.
 4. Effect of earth curvature and light refraction is included.

Figure Title
 Landscape Designations and Visual Receptors with Substation ZTV (Option A)

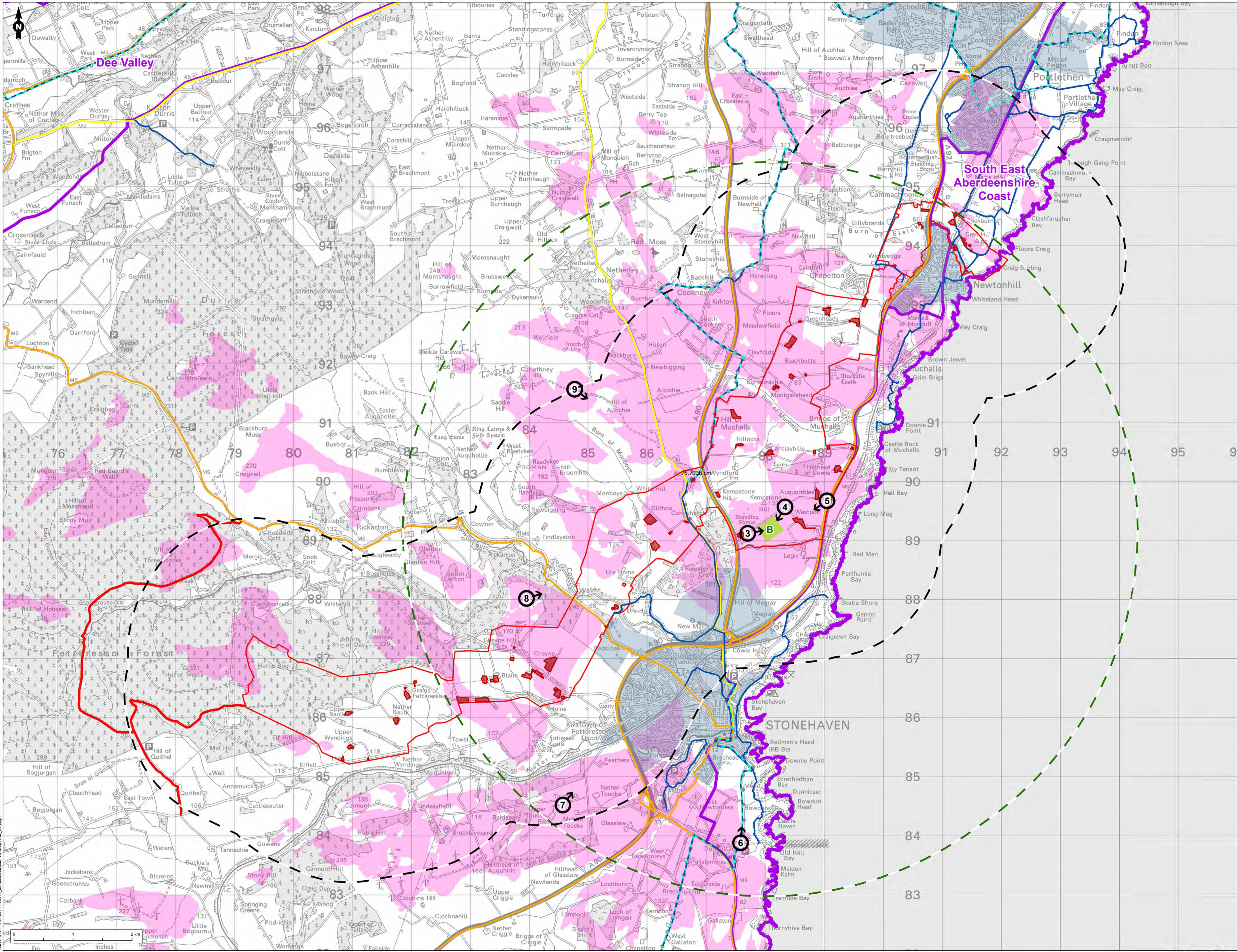
Project Name
 Aspen Offshore Wind Farm - Onshore Transmission Connection

Project No./Filey ID
 1620018491 / REH2025N00733

Date	Figure No.	Revision
May 2026	10.3a	1.0
Prepared By	Scale	
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Legend

- Scoping Boundary
- Exclusion Zone (Residential Property)
- Scoping Boundary (6 km Buffer)
- Representative Substation Platform Areas
- Scoping Substation Options (6 km Buffer)
- Viewpoint

Landscape and Visual Constraints

- National Cycle Network
- Core Paths
- A Road
- B Road
- Settlements
- Special Landscape Areas

Zones of Theoretical Visibility

- Site Option B Substation Visible (Assumed Substation Height 20m)

Representative Substation Platform Areas Viewpoint

VP No.	VP Name
3	Minor Road east of A90 at Kempstone Hill
4	Minor Road near Westport Farm
5	A92 near Auquorthies
6	NCN 1 near Dumfries Castle
7	Minor Road near Upper Touks Farm
8	Cheyne Hill
9	Culterthney Hill

DISCLAIMER

1. The ZTV analysis does not take into account the screening effect of vegetation, buildings and other surface features.
2. Predicted visibility based on a viewer eye height 2 m above ground.
3. Visibility calculated using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 DTM on a 5 m Grid.
4. Effect of earth curvature and light refraction is included.

Figure Title
Landscape Designations and Visual Receptors with Substation ZTV (Option B)

Project Name
Aspen Offshore Wind Farm - Onshore Transmission Connection

Project No./Filey ID
 1620018491 / REH2025N00733

Date	Figure No.	Revision
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Prepared By	Scale
FN	1:28,000 @A1

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