2. Site Description

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2.1. Site Context

2.1.1. The Site is located to the north of the A832 at Lochluichart, approximately 5 km northwest of Garve in the Highlands, National Grid Reference (NGR) NH 34380 63840. Figure 2.1 shows the Site Boundary and Figure 2.2 shows the location and wider context of the Site.

2.1.2. The Site is situated within a predominantly upland Highland landscape, characterised by undulating topography comprising grasslands, semi-natural woodland, and areas of both planted and commercial forestry. The terrain surrounding the Site features a mix of remote moorland and forested areas, consistent with the region's natural character.

2.1.3. Lochluichart Wind Farm and Corriemoillie Wind Farm are situated approximately 2 km north of the Site. Both wind farms connect into Corriemoillie Substation, located approximately 250 m east of the Site, which also forms the proposed grid connection point for the Proposed Development. The recently consented Lochluichart Energy Storage Facility is located approximately 2.5 km west of the Site at Grudie. Additionally, the Corriemoillie BESS application, situated approximately 600 m northeast of the Proposed Development, is currently awaiting determination.

2.1.4. The Site is located on a pronounced hill, with the topography falling from north to south, resulting in an elevation change of approximately 67 m down towards the A832. The BESS compound is situated on a relatively level section of the Site at approximately 167 m AOD. There are five unnamed mapped watercourses onsite, which all discharge into Loch Luichart. There are also several unmapped forest drains around the Site area. Further details regarding watercourse locations, potential impacts, and proposed mitigation measures are provided in Chapter 10: Hydrology and Hydrogeology.

2.1.5. There is an existing access junction to the Site from the A832, which is approximately 5.3 km northwest of the A835 and is currently used for agricultural and forestry purposes. From this junction, an existing internal access track extends north through the Site, passing through a chicane before continuing in a north-northeasterly direction, providing access to various areas of the estate.

2.1.6. There are a number of electricity transmission lines that feed into Corriemoillie Substation, which lies adjacent to the Site boundary. To the south of the Substation, a 132 kV electricity transmission line runs directly south before heading eastwards parallel to the A832.

2.1.7. The nearest residential properties from the Proposed Development are summarised below in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Nearest Residential Properties within close proximity

Property Name	Distance and Direction from the nearest edge of the BESS compound
Glenview	0.8 km (South East)
Lochluichart Lodge	0.9 km (South West)
North of Lochluichart Lodge	0.9 km (South West)
Corriemoillie Farm	1.0 km (East)

Designations in the Wider Locality

2.1.8. The Site is not located within or near any national or local landscape designations. The closest designation to the Site is the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie Special Landscape Area (SLA) which lies circa 5 km to the west of the Site at its closest point.

2.1.9. The Ben Wyvis SLA lies over 7 km to the east. Given the distance between these designations and the Site, it is considered that there are no effects on the special qualities of these designations.

2.1.10. The Site does not include any international, national or local nature conservation designations nor are there any located adjacent to the Site boundary.

2.1.11. The closest international site is the Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA) which is designated for its breeding population of golden eagle and is located circa 1.6 km to the south of the Site at its closest point.

2.1.12. There are no Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Inventory Battlefields or World Heritage sites within the Site.

2.1.13. The nearest designated heritage assets are four Listed Buildings associated with the Kinlochluichart Church of Scotland and Burial Ground and Kinlochluichart Old Manse and Steading at the western end of Lochluichart over 1.8 km to the west of the Site.

2.1.14. It is also recognised that there are 18 non-designated heritage assets recorded by the Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) within 2 km of the Site boundary, however none of these are within the Site boundary itself.

Landscape Character

2.1.15. The Application Site is located within the 'Rounded Hills and Moorland Slopes' – Ross and Cromarty Landscape Character Type (LCT) 330 as identified by NatureScot's 2019 classification document. Some of the key characteristics of this landscape type set out in the accompanying description are as follows:

- Broad, rounded hills rounded hills and upland moorlands with smooth, gentle slopes down to broad straths, creating an undulating skyline;
- Occurs in a large tract which weaves around and between the adjoining Rounded Mountain Massif and Rugged Mountain Massif – Ross &Cromarty and unifies the mountain groups;
- Large areas of uniform moorland vegetation with occasional surface detail of rivers, lochs, riparian woodland, woodland patches, and regenerating trees;
- Large coniferous forests on accessible lower slopes;
- Broad straths with natural, meandering rivers and occasionally highlighted by green, unenclosed, improved pastures and riparian trees;
- Occasional major trunk roads curve through the lowest major straths, with very little associated service development;
- Small groups of mainly traditional buildings around road junctions and at rail stations;
- Man-made structures of pylons, wind farms and reservoirs occur as occasional features within a large scale landscape;
- Many archaeological features on lower ground from prehistoric, medieval and later periods; and
- Large, remote interior areas of vast scale with wildness characteristics.

2.1.16. It is also recognised that the proposed Site access junction between the Site and the A832 lies within the Strath – Ross and Cromarty LCT 340. Some of the key characteristics of this landscape type set out in the accompanying description are as follows:

- Sinuous or curved channels with steep sides channelling through upland and mountainous landscapes;
- Wide flat strath floor at the coast or terminating water body, where the presence of water dominates;

- Narrowing channel inland, with a rising strath floor, terminating at a narrow glen or mountain pass;
- Meandering central river, becoming broad and braided at the lower end, terminating in wetlands and pebbly beaches;
- Abrupt change in topography from strath to slope emphasised by change from regular field patterns to forest, woodland and moorland;
- Riparian woodland and patches of native woodlands on the strath floor and lower slopes;
- Limited settlement, usually located at inland bridging points at the entrance to straths;
- Rural estate landscapes including broad, green, regular fields of pasture, large estate houses and associated features such as farm buildings, stone walls and policy woodlands;
- Occasional small linear crofting townships and small holdings on slopes adjoining the road access;
- Through-road along the strath length located on the edge of the strath floor; Historic land use evidence in abandoned 19th and early 20th Century settlements; and
- Restricted views in upper reaches, channelled along the strath, contrasting with openness of the wide strath at the lower end, the latter enhanced by reflection of light on the sea or terminal loch.
- Intriguing views along curved straths which are enhanced on un-improved roads which closely follow the curving landform of the strath sides.

2.2. The Site

2.2.1. The Site as shown on Figure 2.1, is located on a pronounced slope, with elevations ranging from approximately 123 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the Site entrance in the south to around 190 m AOD in the north. The BESS compound is situated at an elevation of approximately 167 m AOD. Corriemoillie Substation lies circa 250 m to the east at 142 m AOD, while Loch Luichart is located approximately 300 m to the south of the Site at an elevation of 87 m AOD.

2.2.2. The Site covers a total area of approximately 19.5 hectares (ha).

Land Use

2.2.3. The Site features a varied landscape including planted forestry, semi-natural woodland, and open ground. As previously mentioned, there is an existing access track to the western edge of the Site that supports forestry operations, and this will be utilised for the Proposed Development access.

2.2.4. Near the Site entrance are a few warehouse buildings along the existing access track used by the nearby shooting estate, and some of the land close by is used for game shooting, target practice and the rearing of pheasants.

2.2.5. The Site is well screened by existing forestry; and views into the Site are therefore limited. It is also evident that there are areas within the Site that comprise peat soils, which are carbon rich and deep lying. The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid areas of deep peat where possible and minimise impact on the environment.

Drainage

2.2.6. The Site is not at risk of fluvial, coastal, or groundwater flooding, according to SEPA's flood maps. While some areas of the Site show low to high risk of surface water (pluvial) flooding, the location of the BESS lies outside these zones. The only part of the Proposed Development that intersects a pluvial flood risk area is the proposed watercourse crossing on the proposed access track. See figure 'Typical Culvert' and **Chapter 10 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** for more information. This crossing will be designed to accommodate a 1-in-200-year flood event plus climate change event, ensuring no increase in off-site flood risk. Appropriate attenuation and treatment will also be provided through a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS), incorporating an attenuation basin located to the south of the BESS compound.

Geology and Soils

2.2.7. British Geological Survey (BGS) bedrock geology mapping indicates that the Site is underlain by the Crom Psammite Formation, part of the ancient metamorphic Morar Group. This bedrock comprises mainly psammite (derived from sandstone) and interbedded pelite (from finer sediments), and is classed as a low productivity aquifer. A narrow band of Carn Chuinneag and Inchbae Augen Gneiss (amphibolite) also extends into the Site. Superficial deposits consist mainly of glacial materials such as diamicton, sand, silt, and gravel.

2.2.8. No peat deposits are mapped within the Site however BGS mapping typically only shows peat greater than 1 m in depth. The nearest BGS mapped peat deposits are south and east of Corremoillie Substation.

2.2.9. On Site peat probing indicated that most peat across the Site is shallow (less than 0.5 m), though some areas contain deeper peat (exceeding 1 m). These deeper deposits are broadly localised to four main areas. For further details, refer to **Chapter 9: Geology and Peat.**