



Appendix 5.5 Special Landscape Qualities Assessment – Shetland National Scenic Area



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Appendix 5.5

Special Landscape Qualities Assessment – Assessment of Effects on the Shetland National Scenic Area

5.5 Introduction

This detailed assessment of effects on the Special Landscape Qualities based on emerging guidance prepared by NatureScot on assessing how special landscape qualities may be affected by development proposals.

The location of the South West Mainland sub unit of the Shetland National Scenic Area and its relationship to the Proposed Development Site is illustrated in **Figure 5.1.2**.

Policy Context

5.5.1 National Scenic Area (NSA) is a conservation designation used in Scotland and administered by NatureScot (NS). The designation's purpose is to identify areas of exceptional scenery and to protect them from inappropriate development. NSAs were first established in 1980, under planning legislation, by order of the Secretary of State. Part 10 of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 gave NSAs a statutory basis. The Town and Country Planning (National Scenic Areas) (Scotland) Designation Directions 2010 then brought this into force. In December 2010, NSAs were designated under this new legislation.

5.5.2 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is a statement of Scottish Government policy on how nationally important land use planning matters should be addressed. With regard to National Designations, SPP states that:

“Development that affects a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve should only be permitted where:

- *the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; or any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.”*

(Paragraph 212, emphasis added).

Methodology

5.5.3 The assessment is based on the following draft NS methodology: Working Draft 11 – Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (November 2018), including the parameters for levels of effect.

5.5.4 The guidance advocates a narrative approach, to provide transparency when drawing conclusions and making judgements of effect on experiential and perceptual qualities, taking four steps as summarised in the following bullets.

- Step 1: The Proposal – Gain as full an understanding of the proposal as possible.
- Step 2: Define the Study Area and Scope of the Assessment identifying the area likely to be affected.
- Step 3: The Analysis of Impacts and Effects on SLQs.
- Step 4: Summary of Impacts on the SLQs, implications for the NSA/NP and possible future effects on SLQs and recommendations for mitigation.

5.5.5 The aim of the assessment is to understand the effects of proposed development on the NSA's defined special landscape qualities, and to determine whether these effects will compromise the overall integrity of the National Scenic Area, or undermine the objectives of designation.

Shetland NSA, South West Main Sub Unit – identification of relevant special landscape qualities

5.5.6 The Shetland NSA includes seven designated areas. Of these the South West Mainland sub-areas fall into the zone of theoretical visibility within 20km of the Proposed Development. The overall special qualities of the Shetland NSA are described within The Special Qualities of the National Scenic Areas, NatureScot commissioned report, 2010, as:

- *The stunning variety of the extensive coastline*
- *Coastal views both close and distant*
- *Coastal settlement and fertility within a large hinterland of unsettled moorland and coast*
- *The hidden coasts*
- *The effects and co-existence of wind and shelter*
- *A sense of remoteness, solitude and tranquillity*
- *The notable and memorable coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs*
- *The distinctive cultural landmarks*
- *Northern light*

5.5.7 Some special qualities are generic to all the whole Shetland NSA, whereas others are specific to sub units of the NSA. The following additional notes relevant to the special qualities for the South West Mainland NSA sub-unit are set out in the report:

The stunning variety of the extensive coastline

- *South West Mainland, stretching from Fitful Head (Old Norse hvitfugla, white birds) to the Deeps, displays greatly contrasting coastlines:*
 - *Cliffed coastline of open aspect in the south to long voes at Weisdale and Whiteness.*
 - *Numerous small islands and stacks, notably in the area west of Scalloway.*
 - *St. Ninian's Isle with its fine tombolo.*

Coastal views both close and distant

- *views of St Ninian's Isle from South West Mainland.*

Coastal settlement and fertility within a large hinterland of unsettled moorland and coast

- *Within South West Mainland the larger islands of Burra and Trondra show the underlying crofting settlement pattern, although this is now tending to be lost through modern development. The areas adjacent to Bigton and the Loch of Spiggie show crofting farmland, and are a more fertile, enclosed and humanised landscape. Bigton Farm is recorded in the early 18th century, and was noted for its productivity even then. St Ninian's Isle is renowned for its early medieval chapel and silver hoard found on the island.*

5.5.8 **Figures 5.2.1 – 5.2.8** illustrate the extent of theoretical visibility to the Proposed Development, indicating partial visibility over distances greater than c.13 km from east facing slopes and hills along the coast of South West Mainland. Viewpoint 19, Reawick, **Figure 5.3.19** and Viewpoint 20, Skeld, **Figure 5.3.20**, illustrate the nature of views from the east facing slopes within the NSA.

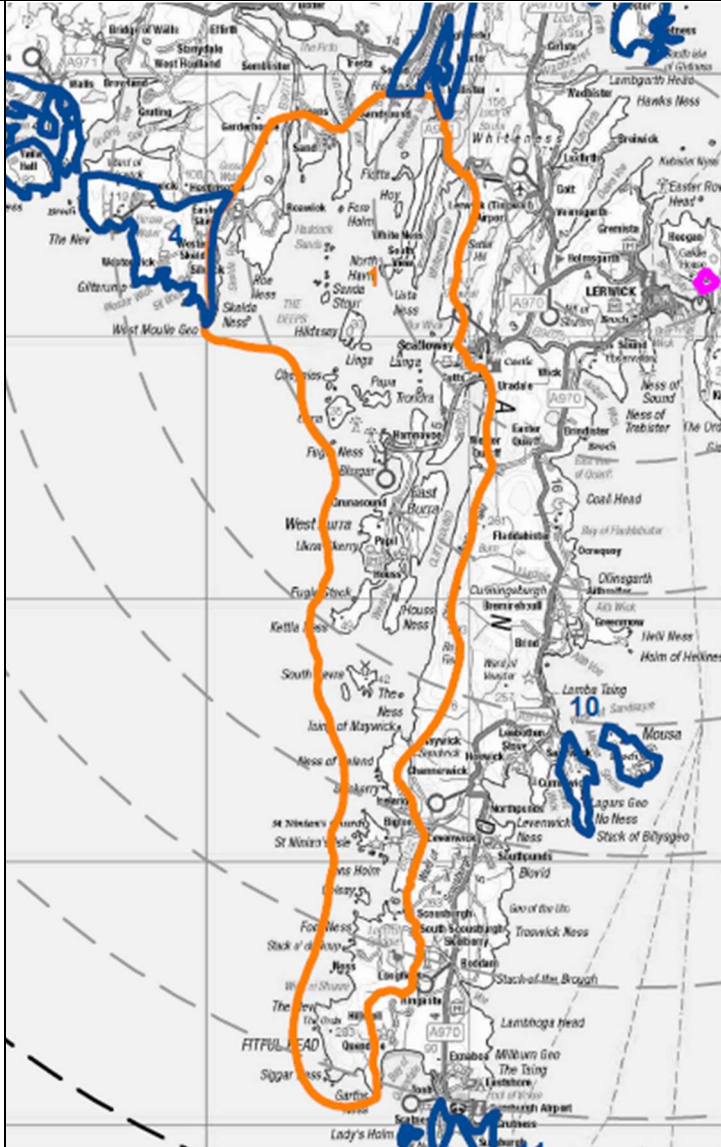
5.5.9 Parts of the following landscape and seascape character areas fall within greater visual influence of the Proposed Development within the NSA at the coastal peninsulas at the south of West Mainland around Skeld and Reawick: LCT 350 Major Uplands, LCT 353 Farmed and Settled Lowlands and Coast, LCT 355 Coastal Edge, CCA 40 Skeld.

Assessment of Effects on the Shetland National Scenic Area

5.5.10 The following staged assessment follows the draft NatureScot guidance set out in the following document: Working Draft 11 – Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities (November 2018).

Step 1: The Proposal

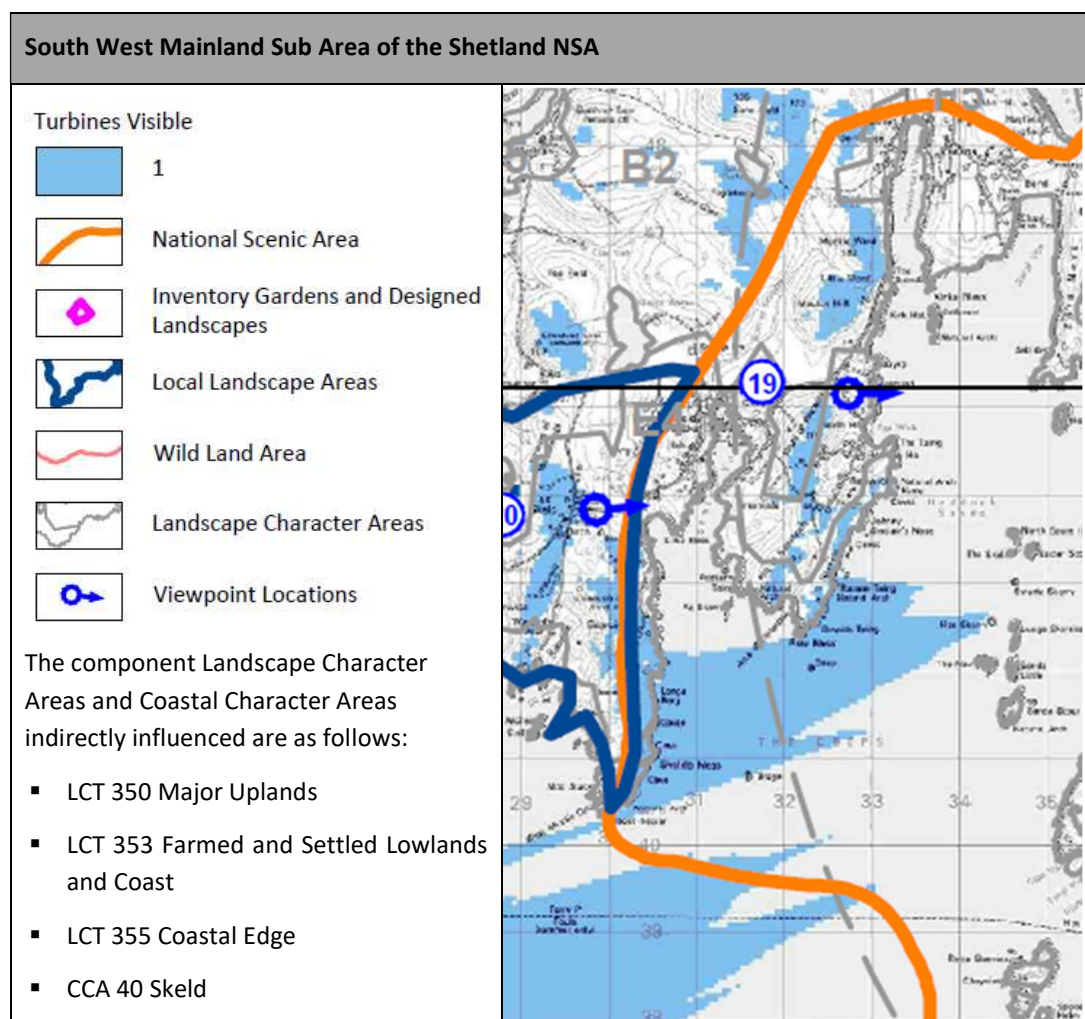
Table 5.1.1 – Assessment of Effects on the Shetland National Scenic Area – Step 1: The Proposal

The Proposed Development	
<p>The Luggie’s Knowe Wind Turbine is a proposal for one wind turbine, at 149.9 m to blade tip, with a tower of 81.9 m high (136 m rotor diameter) and one Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with a total installed capacity of 19.9 MW. The Site is located within Dales Voe to the north of Lerwick, closely sited to the south of the existing large commercial turbine at Luggie’s Knowe, 121 m to blade tip, with a tower of 80 m (82 m rotor diameter). The Shetland NSA includes seven designated areas. Of these the South West Mainland sub-unit falls into the zone of theoretical visibility within 20km of the Proposed Development. The adjacent plan extract from Figure 5.1.2 illustrates the position of the proposed turbine within Dales Voe and the South West Mainland sub unit of the NSA to the south west, denoted with the orange boundary line. The turbine is located 6km to the east of South West Mainland sub unit.</p>	

Step 2: Define the Study Area and Scope of the Assessment identifying the area likely to be affected.

- 5.5.11 The following extracts from **Figure 5.2.8** illustrate the hub height ZTV overlaid with the South West Mainland NSA sub unit. Limited areas of the NSA, as described below, indicate theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development to hub height.
- 5.5.12 The boundaries of the component landscape character units/coastal character units are indicated on these plan extracts, alongside the locations of relevant viewpoints included in the landscape and visual impact assessment.
- 5.5.13 Areas affected by visibility to hub height occur along the north eastern edge of Strath Naver and around the east facing flank of the coastal headlands at Druim Chuibhe, Airdtorrisdale and at Am Breac-leathad above Lamigo Bay at distances of c.3.1 km, 6 km and 8.3 km respectively. Further visibility is recorded from the eastern flank of the inshore islands at Neave Island over 8.5 km and Eilean Nan Ron over 11.5 km. There will be more limited areas of visibility, over a distance of 9.9 km from the coastline at Strathan, from the east facing slopes of the headland to the north of Tongue at Càrn an Fheidh over 11 km, and above Talmine over 16 km. Areas of distant visibility are recorded across the north eastern flanks of the lone mountain landscape character type including, Cnoc Craggie (14.5 km), Ben Hiel (16.5 km), Ben Loyal (18 km), and distant visibility from Meallan Liath (23 km) and Ben Hope (27 km).

Table 5.1.2 – South West Mainland Sub Area of the Shetland NSA




5.5.14 Whilst theoretical visibility to hub height extends across patches of the elevated east facing flanks and small sections of the coastline, visibility is restricted or absent from the sheltered bays and inlets. There is no visibility from the core of the designated landscape in and around East and West Burra, and the Whiteness and Strom Ness peninsulas. The majority of the designated landscape, including those area which are easily accessible, and are settled are either in visual shadow or experience negligible visibility.

Table 5.1.3 – Assessment of Effects on the Shetland National Scenic Area: how the area is used by people

How the area is used and experienced by people
<p>South West Mainland Sub Area</p> <p>Crofting settlement with associated pastures are located around the sheltered areas of coastline at East and West Burra and in the southern areas of South West Mainland. Houses are concentrated at the heads of voes or in sheltered bays, well placed to make use of the sea and coastal resources. The settled sheltered pastoral landscape with green fields contrasts with the large hinterland of largely unsettled tan moorland, often used as common grazings.</p> <p>The main fishing port at Scalloway is located just beyond the mid eastern section of the NSA and provides access to the waters to the west of Shetland which is dotted by numerous small islands and sea stacks. The sheltered waters are often used for fish farming and mussel farming and the associated infrastructure can be locally dominant in otherwise wild coastlines. There are also long lengths of remote and uninhabited coast, a haven for thousands of populations of seabirds during the breeding season.</p> <p>More recently with improved roads the landscape is increasingly a focus for settlement for those areas within easy commuting distance of Lerwick, with a wide variety of new houses along the sheltered voes.</p>

Table 5.1.4 – South West Mainland Sub Unit – Typical Views

South West Mainland Sub Unit
 <p>View north across West Burra and Hamnavoe to the inshore islands of Hilda , Oxna and Hildsay, seen against the backdrop of the West Mainland uplands, grid reference 436921, 113456.</p>



View west across the South West Mainland sub unit of the NSA from Nebister Hill, grid reference 440412, 114594.



View west across the inland sector of the NSA from Skeld, grid reference 429770, 1143831.



View south across the The Deeps to the spine of the Mainland from Reawick, grid reference 432653, 1145154.

Step 3: Effects on the Special Landscape Qualities

5.5.15 The following table sets out the special landscape qualities (SLQs) relevant to the NSA and considers the effect of the Proposed Development on the key characteristics and SLQs.

- 5.5.16 It should be noted that the Proposed Development is not located within the NSA and effects will be indirect, with only a visual influence, and no direct physical effects. The north eastern extent of the NSA is located at c.6 km from the Proposed Development with visibility restricted to small fragmented areas of the southern extent of West Mainland over distance greater than c.12.5 km.
- 5.5.17 The Proposed Development will be experienced against a baseline which is already influenced by human activity and development, for example the existing settlement pattern and road network, the existing wind farm development and Burradale, the large scale Viking Wind Farm to the north which is currently being constructed, and the permitted wind farm at Mossy Hill will intensify the influences on the NSA.

Table 5.1.5 – Assessment of Effects on the Shetland National Scenic Area – Step 4: The Assessment

Assessment of effect and risk	
SLQs identified at scoping and refined during subsequent study, including detailed SLQ descriptions / underpinning landscape characteristics	Effects of the Proposed Development on key characteristics and effects on SLQs
<p>Generic Special Landscape Quality: “The stunning variety of the extensive coastline”</p> <p><i>“Shetland’s long, extensive coastline is highly varied: from fissured and fragmented hard rock coasts, to gentler formations of accumulated gravels, sands, spits and bars; from remarkably steep cliffs to sloping bays; from long, sheltered voes to cliffs exposed to the full fury of the Atlantic ocean.”</i></p> <p><i>“The landscape is an intimate mix of sea and land. The sea reaches far inland by way of voes, firths and sounds, an inland coast in marked contrast to the dynamic outer coast of wild Atlantic ‘oceanscapes’. Here the land reaches into the open sea on many points and promontories.”</i></p> <p><i>“This huge variety has arisen from the interaction between geology, glaciation and sea level changes, and results in the dramatic coastal scenery as encapsulated within the seven areas of the NSA.”</i></p> <p>South West Mainland Specific Special Qualities: <i>“South West Mainland, stretching from Fitful Head (Old Norse hvitfugla, white birds) to the Deeps, displays greatly contrasting coastlines:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Cliffed coastline of open aspect in the south to long voes at Weisdale and Whiteness.</i> ▪ <i>Numerous small islands and stacks, notably in the area west of Scalloway.</i> ▪ <i>St. Ninian’s Isle with its fine tombolo.”</i> 	<p>The proposed development would not have had a direct effect on the “stunning variety of the extensive coastline” of the NSA because the proposed development is not located in the NSA, being located at a distance beyond 6 km from the closest NSA boundary.</p> <p>The limited areas with visibility within the South West Mainland sub unit of the NSA include: small areas of the sheltered coastline around Skeld and Reawick where the Proposed Development would appear as a distant minor object beyond the spine of Mainland ridgeline, within a field of view already influenced by wind energy development.</p> <p>The influence of the proposed development will be well separated from the foreground intensity of the coastal experience and the special qualities of the sub areas of the NSA would not be affected.</p> <p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>Low</p>

<p>Generic Special Landscape Quality: “Coastal views both close and distant”</p> <p><i>“Such a variety of coastal scenery allows for a magnificent range of coastal views. In places distant islands lie low on the horizon, in others there is a near view to an inshore island, or to a neighbouring shore of this articulated coast.</i></p> <p><i>The striking form of distant Foula, with its great height of 418m and the Kame cliffs rising to 366m, catches the eye along many stretches of the South West Mainland.”</i></p> <p>South West Mainland Specific Special Qualities:</p> <p><i>“Other notable views within the scenic areas... are views of St Ninian’s Isle from South West Mainland.”</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is located away from coastal views to the north east, associated with the uplands and the ridge of the Mainland spine.</p> <p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>No Change to SLQ</p>
<p>Generic Special Landscape Quality: “Coastal settlement and fertility within a large hinterland of unsettled moorland and coast”</p> <p><i>“Thousands of years of human occupation has given the landscape a rich archaeological heritage, including ancient brochs and modern crofts.”</i></p> <p><i>“Settlement has always been constrained by the nature of the land, largely confined to strips of ground rarely out of sight of the sea. Houses are concentrated at the heads of voes or in sheltered bays, well placed to make use of the sea and coastal resources.”</i></p> <p><i>“The green, inbye land of the crofts and farms contrasts with the common grazings of wild, unimproved and uninhabited moorland and bog. There are also long lengths of remote and uninhabited coast.”</i></p>	<p>Visibility to the Proposed Development from the settled areas of the NSA will be over distances greater than 12.5 km with the extent of views restricted by the ridge of the Mainland spine.</p> <p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>No Change to SLQ</p>
<p>Generic Special Landscape Quality: “The hidden coasts”</p> <p><i>“Because the land is undulating, markedly so in the western mainland, the actual brink of the coastal edge may be hidden or difficult of access. This brings an element of surprise when caves, geos and gloups are suddenly encountered, inviting further exploration.”</i></p>	<p>The SLQ relates to the immediate coastline of the NSA and the proposed development would only have indirect effects on wider views and visibility is distant and extremely limited.</p> <p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>No Change to SLQ</p>
<p>Generic Special Quality: “The effects and co-existence of wind and shelter”</p> <p><i>“The wind appears ever-present and the absence of trees, or even shrubs, gives an open and exposed feel to much of the landscape. The frequent gales can be</i></p>	<p>The proposed development would not have a significant influence on “the effects and co-existence of wind and shelter”, though it is possible that the distant movement of wind turbine</p>

<p><i>awe-inspiring, and in high seas fröde (sea-foam) can fleck the coastal grasslands, well-inland from the coastal edge.”</i></p> <p><i>“Weather, skies and light are rarely static, with continual movement of clouds, waves, sea-spray and grasses. The interplay of light and shade moving across the sea, the coastal grasslands or the interior moorland adds a special dynamism.”</i></p> <p><i>“With wind a determining force, so the presence of shelter is acutely perceived. Hence, an awareness of both wind and shelter is a particular quality of these areas. There may be the distant sound of stormy seas pounding the mouth of a bay or voe, while inland waters or a sheltered hollow remain still and calm.”</i></p>	<p>blades may increase the perception of movement, wind and exposure.</p> <p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>No Change to SLQ</p>
<p>Generic Special Landscape Quality: <i>“A sense of remoteness, solitude and tranquillity”</i></p> <p><i>“The feeling of being at the northern limits of the British Isles is marked. The Shetland Isles are remote in themselves, and within the archipelago there are also degrees of remoteness.”</i></p> <p><i>“Most of the coastline is undeveloped and natural, and long-stretches can be traversed without seeing anyone or any human influence.”</i></p> <p><i>“Hence solitude and tranquillity underpin much of the NSA coast, and it is easy to wander with only the seabirds for company. However, tranquillity can give way to alarm as the wind picks up, the rain begins and an Atlantic storm sets in.”</i></p> <p><i>“Muckle Flugga, within the Hermaness section of the NSA, is further from the Scottish/English border than Lands End.”</i></p>	<p>The proposed development would not have a direct effect on <i>“A sense of remoteness, solitude and tranquillity”</i>. However, the presence of the Proposed Development in distant views would have an indirect effect owing to the very slight (occasional) increase presence of man-made artefacts in views.</p> <p>The landscape remains very exposed, wild and dynamic and the <i>“sense of remoteness, solitude and tranquillity”</i> will remain intact.</p> <p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>Negligible, limited to indirect effects.</p>
<p>Generic Special Landscape Quality: <i>“The notable and memorable coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs.”</i></p> <p><i>“Where open to the full fury of the Atlantic Ocean, the sea has carved impressive cliffs, forming spectacular, towering, vertical scenery, varying greatly in colour according to the complex geology.”</i></p> <p>South West Mainland Specific Special Qualities: <i>“Fitful Head, a reference point in many views within South West Mainland, and from the northwest Mainland at Eshaness and Hillswick.”</i></p>	<p>The proposed development will not have a direct effect on <i>“the notable and memorable coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs.”</i> as it is located in a geographically separate area.</p> <p>The proposed development is set back from the distinctive <i>“coastal stacks, promontories and cliffs”</i> of the NSA and would not interrupt direct views to these features.</p>

<p><i>The coast also contains many distinctive stacks, promontories and other features that form memorable images. Within the NSA these include:</i></p> <p><i>The Clift Hills area of Southwest Mainland.”</i></p>	<p>Risk of damage / loss to SLQ:</p> <p>Negligible, limited to indirect effects.</p>
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Step 4: Summary of Effects on the SLQs

Table 5.1.5 – Assessment of Effects on the Shetland National Scenic Area - Step 4: Summary

Assessment of effect and risk
<p>The Proposed Development is located beyond the South West Mainland sub unit of the Shetland NSA. The proposed development has a minor indirect influence on the sub unit around Skeld and Reawick.</p> <p>The proposed development will be visible from the elevated moorland interior of West Mainland at the north western extent of the NSA, seen in the context of the dominating influence of Burradale Wind Farm. Many of the SLQs relate to the physical attributes of the NSA and the experience of these from within the NSA and the proposed development will only affect the wider setting of the NSA. As such the Special Landscape Qualities of the South West Mainland sub unit of the Shetland NSA will not be at risk or compromised by the proposed development and the overall integrity and objectives of the Shetland NSA will be maintained.</p>

References

Papers

NatureScot, (November 2018). Working Draft 11 – *Guidance for Assessing the Effects on Special Landscape Qualities of National Scenic Areas.*