



# **CRUACH CLENAMACRIE WIND FARM**

**APPENDIX 6.4 RESIDENTIAL VISUAL AMENITY  
ASSESSMENT**

## Appendix 6.4 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

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### Introduction

1. This Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has been undertaken in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (15 March 2019). The TGN states that:

*"The purpose of carrying out a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) is to form a judgement, to assist decision makers, on whether a proposed development is likely to change the visual amenity of a residential property to such an extent that it becomes a matter of 'Residential Amenity'."*

2. And further that:

*"Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has 'a right to a view.' ..."*

*It is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. In itself this does not necessarily cause particular planning concern. However, there are situations where the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before."*

3. This assessment considers only what the resident may see from a property. Views or 'visual amenity' are just one component of residential amenity and the two should not be confused. The latter is a planning matter and may also include aspects such as noise, air quality, traffic, etc., in addition to residential visual amenity. This RVAA considers the visual amenity aspects of residential amenity. Where necessary, other aspects are considered in the relevant chapters of the EIA Report and it is for decision makers to weigh all these aspects, and documents/assessments relating to them, in determining the acceptability of a proposal.
4. Overall residential amenity is discussed within the planning statement accompanying the application for the Proposed Development.
5. This assessment, and the process of RVAA, seeks to identify where effects on residential visual amenity are of such a nature or magnitude that they may need to be considered in the overall balance of 'Residential Amenity' or 'Living Conditions'. The point at which this happens is referred to as the Residential Visual Amenity (RVA) Threshold.

### Methodology

#### Study Area

6. There are no standard criteria for defining the RVAA study area and this is determined on a case by case basis. The guidance note identifies that for large structures, such as wind turbines, a preliminary study area of 1.5-2km radius may be appropriate to begin identifying properties for inclusion within RVAA, but for other developments the study area would be much reduced in proportion to their size. In this case, a study area of 2km has been used as proposed in the scoping report.
7. Properties are usually assessed individually but may be considered in groups where the outlook or views are essentially the same; for example a row of houses that all share an open outlook towards the site. Where properties are grouped for assessment, this will be clearly identified and reasons for grouping described.

#### Approach

8. TGN 2/19 advocates a four-step process to RVAA with the first three falling broadly within the scope of LVIA where the magnitude and significance of visual effects is assessed. It follows the same general approach as that of the LVIA and may draw on its findings, supplemented by other information (ZTVs, visualisations, fieldwork) as required. The first three steps of the process can be summarised as:

- Preliminary review
  - Evaluation of baseline visual amenity
  - Assessment of the likely change to visual amenity
9. The fourth step involves a further assessment of the change to visual amenity of individual properties identified as *“having the greatest magnitude of change”* (i.e. Large magnitude within this assessment) and identifying whether the RVA threshold is reached. Where a magnitude of change is identified that is less than Large, this final step is not required as the effects would not reach the RVA threshold.

#### *Preliminary Review and Evaluation of Baseline Visual Amenity*

10. The first step considers whether a property requires more detailed assessment or if effects are *“judged unlikely to occur or so insignificant that it is not essential to consider them further”* (GLVIA3, para. 3.19), for example, where properties are outside of the ZTV or would experience such limited views that the change to the outlook would be negligible. These properties are identified, and a brief summary is provided but no further consideration is given to these within the assessment. Properties that are financially involved with the proposed development are also identified at this stage as, typically, it is understood that those with such a vested interest would be content with any consequential change to their living conditions.
11. Where it is identified that notable effects may arise at a property, the existing baseline visual amenity is described. This is done ‘in the round’ and considers both views from the dwelling itself, garden areas and driveways and views experienced when arriving or leaving the property. This step is informed by desk study and field surveys from nearby publicly accessible locations.

#### *Assessment of the Likely Change to Visual Amenity*

12. The change views and visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development is described for each property and a judgement on the magnitude of change and level of effect<sup>1</sup> likely to be experienced is provided. This involves consideration of the following factors:
- Distance between the property and proposed development and their relative locations (e.g. up/down hill);
  - Nature of available views (e.g. panoramic, enclosed) and the effect of daily or seasonal variations;
  - Direction of view or aspect of property affected;
  - Extent to which the proposed development may be visible from various parts of the property (e.g. dwelling, rooms, access, garden);
  - Scale of change to views, including the proportion of view occupied by the proposed development;
  - Compositional changes (e.g. loss/addition of landscape features such as woodland);
  - Contrast or integration of new features with the existing views;
  - Any uncertainties inherent to the design of the proposed development (e.g. micro-siting allowances); and
  - Duration and nature of changes (e.g. temporary/permanent, intermittent/continuous).
13. This stage may be supported by a range of visual aids as required including maps, ZTV studies, photography and visualisations. The choice of visual aids is determined on a case by case basis and may be informed by consultation. In line with best practice guidance<sup>2</sup> the type of visualisation should be proportionate to the nature of the proposed development and assessment stage.

#### *RVA Assessment*

14. This final stage is concerned with identifying *“whether the predicted effects on visual amenity and views at the property are such that it has reached the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold, therefore potentially becoming a matter of Residential Amenity”*. This is the key concern of RVA and judgements on the RVA threshold are set out clearly and unambiguously for those properties where detailed assessment has identified the property or

<sup>1</sup> Note that in considering the level of effect, all residential receptors are treated as being of High sensitivity (high susceptibility and high value) as directed by TGN 02/19 para. 4.23

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals

group of properties as likely to experience the greatest magnitude of change (Large) 'such that the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold may be engaged'<sup>3</sup>.

### Cumulative Developments

15. The RVAA is undertaken against the baseline as set out within the LVIA and includes consideration of any pertinent consented developments unless there is clear reason to believe that they would not be built. Future, unconsented, cumulative development is generally not a RVAA consideration and is not included within this assessment.

### Distances/Directions

16. Where distances and directions are given within the assessment, these are distances between the nearest part of the property (including garden and driveway areas) and the nearest turbine, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Distances given are rounded to the nearest 10m to account for the level of accuracy available in techniques used to measure (usually based on aerial photography within a GIS).

### Assessment

17. **RVAA Figure 1**, included within Annex A, illustrates the location of individual and groups of properties within the 2km RVAA study area. The assessment is provided in the table overpage and is supported by further detailed illustrations and visualisations for individual properties/groups, as required, which are included within **Appendix 6.2 Illustrative Views**.
18. A total of three properties have been located within the 2km study area through OS AddressBase data, analysis of aerial imagery and site visits. Two further properties are located at the edge of the study area and are also included.

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<sup>3</sup> TGN 02/19 – *Figure 1 RVAA Process*

Ref	Property	Distance to nearest turbine	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Assessment
P1-P3	Dorran Cottage, Glenamachrie Farmhouse and nearby bungalow	1.31-1.36km	Negligible  Medium if woodland is felled	Minimal  Major/moderate if woodland is felled.	<p>These homes are located close together in Glen Lonan to the southwest of the site.</p> <p>The ZTV study shown on RVAA Figure 1 indicates that theoretical visibility of up to 2 turbines from these homes but in practice these would be screened by nearby woodland and the scale of changes to views would be Negligible.</p> <p>If all of the intervening woodland were to be felled in future this would open up views towards the turbines and the upper parts of turbines 1 and 2 would be seen above the nearby skyline illustrated by illustrative view I in <b>Appendix 6.2</b>. This would give rise to views of the turbines from the front garden of the bungalow to the north of the road, and from the driveways and parking areas of the two homes to the south of the road. The houses to the south of the road face east and views of the turbines from windows would be very oblique if they arise. Effects would be Large/medium scale for a Localised extent of these properties.</p> <p>At most two of the aviation lights would be visible at night of the woodland were felled.</p>
P4	2 Kilvaree	2.04km	Medium	Moderate	<p>2 Kilvaree is located to the north-west of the Site in a minor glen between the hills. The property is a two storey house with an area of hardstanding to the east and barns to the south-east. There is a small knoll directly to the west of the house with some mature trees. The main aspect of the property faces to the east towards the nearby loch and away from the Proposed Development. There is only one small downstairs window in the gable end facing towards the Site.</p> <p>The property is located within a small dip in the landform and the ZTV on RVAA Figure 1 shows that visibility would be limited in the area immediately around the property, due to screening from the nearby barns and the nearby belt of trees on higher ground. There are unlikely to be views of the turbines from the house, and the main visibility will be from the long access track as shown by illustrative view J in <b>Appendix 6.2</b>. Effects would be of Large/medium scale and would occur across a Limited extent of the property.</p> <p>Two of the aviation lights would be visible at night from the access track towards the house.</p>

Ref	Property	Distance to nearest turbine	Magnitude of Change	Level of Effect	Assessment
P5	Clachadubh	2.08km	Medium	Major/moderate	<p>This property is located to the south of the Proposed Development at the base of Glen Lonan. Clachdubh is a two-storey building with a wraparound garden. There are mature trees to the north, east and west of the building that partially filter views; the side of the glen rises steeply behind the property to the south. The main aspect of the property faces north, towards the south facing slopes of Glen Lonan and the Proposed Development.</p> <p><b>Viewpoint 2</b> is located at the end of the driveway and shows that visibility would be limited to two turbines with one of those seen only as a blade tip. These would be seen above the trees on the opposite side of the glen. The nearest turbine would be screened by the woodland from just below the rotor and the aviation light would be visible at night. Views from the front windows and garden of this home would be similar to those shown by <b>Viewpoint 2</b> with some additional filtering of views provided by the trees around the property. Effects would be of Medium scale and would occur across an Intermediate extent of the property.</p>

## Summary and Conclusions

19. The aim of the RVAA seeks to identify where effects on residential visual amenity are of such a nature or magnitude that *“the effect on the outlook / visual amenity of a residential property is so great that it is not generally considered to be in the public interest to permit such conditions to occur where they did not exist before.”*
20. There are five residential properties located within or at the edge of the 2km RVAA study area that are shown by ZTV studies to have potential visibility of the Proposed Development.
21. The three properties within the study area are located in close proximity to a large area of woodland that covers the hill side between the floor of the glen and the summits on which the turbines are located. For these properties the woodland would prevent visibility unless felled. If the woodland is felled. Two of the turbines would be seen from the front garden of the bungalow to the north of the road and from the driveway and parking areas of Glenamachrie Farmhouse and Dorrán Cottage. Each of these properties is unlikely to have visibility of the turbines from windows.
22. Views from 2 Kilvaree would be limited to visibility of two of the turbines seen over the nearby hill side from the access track.
23. The most open views would be Clachadubh which lies just outside of the VAA study area within Glen Lonan near **Viewpoint 2**. Views of two of the turbines above woodland on the skyline on the far side of the Glen would arise from the front windows and garden, partly filtered by trees within the garden.
24. **The RVAA finds that no property within or at the edge of the study area would reach the highest magnitude of effect and the RVA threshold would not be reached for any property.**

## Annex A – RVAA Figure 1