

AGENDA ITEM 6

APPENDIX 5

PA-0272

CNPA LANDSCAPE
ADVISER COMMENTS

River Pattack Hydro Scheme THC I4/02344/FUL :

Landscape Advice

The Development

The proposed River Pattack Hydro Scheme is on the Ardverikie Estate. It consists of a dam and reservoir on the Pattack river, 4 subsidiary intakes, a buried high pressure 2m diameter pipeline, a powerhouse, substation and tailrace on Loch Iaggan, access tracks (both permanent and temporary), site construction compounds, and a grid connection. The indicative construction period is 2 years.

Landscape and Visual Character

The landscape character of this area is described [Pattack - Mashie Landscape Character Area](#). The entry point to the site is very close to the point where the land form narrows into a pronounced gateway, a notable feature as one enters the National Park from the south west. The A86 which runs along the northern edge of the site is a busy trunk road and popular tourist route. The forestry commission car park is a very popular stopping point close to the gateway into the National Park and access and a viewing platform is provided at the lower Pattack Falls. The route to the Falls of Pattack from the A86 is a core path (UBS26) and a continuation of this route along the Pattack is a recognised through route. The river below the Falls of Pattack is popular with canoeists.

Potential Impacts

Most of the built components are located outside the Cairngorms National Park. However, parts of the access route for construction and 3 sites for construction compounds and laydown areas are within the Park. The dam and impoundment reservoir will not be visible from within the Park other than at distances beyond 8 or 9km. Approximately 5km of pipeline construction corridor will be visible from the western edge of the Park. The abstraction of water from the Pattack will have an effect on the waterfalls at Linn of Pattack, Falls of Pattack and Pattack Falls (by A86).

There is a risk of temporary but significant landscape and visual impacts as a consequence of the scheme. There is a risk of temporary and longer term impacts on the experience of special qualities in this part of the Park affecting those walking/cycling on the estate.

Appraisal of Impacts

I. Site entrance off A86



Improvements will need to be made to this entrance to facilitate traffic movements. No detail provided. Given the prominence of this entrance in the experience of the road user and the small scale nature of the landscape character, a permanent large scale entrance would be inappropriate. **The developer should provide details of any upgrades to this entrance and a plan for its restoration post-construction. These proposals should complement and enhance the landscape character of the area(CNP Local Plan policy 6).**

2. Entrance site establishment area (immediately south of the bridge over the Pattack)



It is proposed to clear an area of regenerating woodland for this facility which will be an area for site reception, offices and car parking. The proposed post construction mitigation is to return this site to its previous condition. **In the interest of achieving a long term enhancement for the National park we would encourage the developer in conjunction with the estate, to design part of this area to be retained as a small car-park for those wishing to walk in the area.** Currently there is no facility for public parking and parking at the forestry commission car park means a walk of over 1km along a busy and dangerous road.

3. Site Establishment Area I



Shown on figure 1 as an indicative site establishment area on low-lying ground close to the Pattack. The final siting for this element of the scheme should take into account the landscape and visual impact on views from the A86, access routes and houses within the site, as well as specific measures to protect the area from flooding. **Enhancing the existing riparian tree cover at this point would help to reduce adverse visual impact from the A86.**

4. Site Establishment Area 3 (junction of Gallovie/Pattack track and Kinloch/Pattack track and track upgrades.



The site shown for this establishment area is in a narrow wedge of land that extends southwards from the forestry plantation. The access tracks in this area are also to be upgraded. The access tracks and proposed site for the establishment area are within (or on the boundary of) the National park. The hard edge of the forestry plantation here is an inauspicious entrance to the NP but the views along the Pattack both upstream and down are attractive and contribute to the special landscape qualities that can be experienced from this edge of the Park.



Whilst it is proposed (ES 3.7.1) that the compound be restored to its former use, **we would strongly advise that this area of disturbed ground be restored to native woodland with protection for the woodland extending to the river to secure some riparian regeneration. This element of the proposals would then meet the NP Local Plan policy 6 to complement and enhance landscape character and would have long term beneficial effects for biodiversity and connectivity ,.**



5. Dam and Reservoir

No landscape and visual impacts on the national park within xxxkm

6. Pipeline route and temporary access track

The National park boundary follows the Kinloch/River Pattack forestry track along the edge of a large forestry plantation. The plantation is of variable age with a large recently felled/replanted area of sitka adjacent to the track. The track is wide, constructed from coarse aggregate and there is a deer fence a few metres west of the track. All told this is not an attractive edge to the National Park, however the views westwards across the moor into Ardverikie Forest contribute significantly to the experience of the special landscape qualities of this part of the Park.



Approximately 3km of the main penstock construction corridor and 2km of the construction corridor to the Allt Mhainisteir intakes will be visible from the Kinloch/River Pattack track. This penstock construction corridor is 40m wide within a micro-siting corridor of 250m in width that abuts the National park boundary (REN/0160PAT/PTH/0022/B) . The construction impacts affecting people using this track are identified as moderate adverse (ES 11.5.14).

Though the perception of impacts may be reduced by the nature of the track and immediate surrounds, this judgement in my view fails to recognise the quality of the views which will be affected by the construction disruption and activity, and the vicinity to the viewer. In my view the construction impacts here will be substantial and adverse, and these will affect the experience of the special landscape qualities of this part of the Park for a period of 2 to 5 years depending on the success of reinstatement.

To mitigate the landscape and visual impacts of the scheme during construction and reinstatement, and to provide long term enhancement **we would strongly advise that the applicant, in conjunction with the estate, undertake advance planting of native broadleaf trees along this edge of the National Park. The purpose of this planting would be to enhance the experience of people travelling along the track and screen direct views into the working corridor**, which may (given the width of the micrositing corridor), be immediately adjacent to the deer fence. CNPA would be happy to work with the applicant and estate to facilitate a condition to this effect.

7. The Allt Mhainisteir intakes

At approximately 2km from the Park, the two Allt Mhainisteir intakes are described as small with operational impacts of slight adverse. I concur with this assessment.

8. Waterfalls on the River Pattack

There are 3 significant sets of falls on the River Pattack within the National Park. Rivers and waterfalls contribute to the special landscape qualities of the NP particularly in association with pine and birch woodland. However there are not that many falls in the Park and relatively few that are readily accessible. We acknowledge the visual assessment that has been undertaken for the Falls of Pattack (appendix 4.3) but we are concerned about the

reliability of the adopted methodology. Given the importance of these falls as visitor destinations in the National Park we request evidence on the accuracy of this methodology, and preferably examples of where it has been applied and verified on already constructed schemes.

9. The Turbine House



The turbine house will be sited on the eastern shore of Loch Laggan between Kinloch and Ardverikie Castle and is outside the National Park. The building is approx 25m x 15m and 10m to ridge. The finishes are yet to be agreed with THC (ES chapter 3). It will be sited slightly back from the shore behind retained trees. The works will involve the removal of some trees, creation of low earthwork mounds and native woodland planting.

From the A86 there will be potential occasional glimpsed views of the powerhouse construction including the site establishment and the lower section of the of pipeline installation through the forest (ES appendix 11.1). From within the Park views of the turbine house will be oblique and limited by retained tree cover. Landscape and visual impacts during and immediately post construction are likely to be very localised, moderate and adverse during construction and neutral during operation. To mitigate impacts on the Park and the A86 more generally, trees identified for retention should be protected within an exclusion zone, and the finishes on the building (cladding and roofing) should reflect that of other buildings on the estate.

Impacts on the National Park

Chapter 10 of the ES covers issues to do with the National Park and Landscape Character, and concludes that the sensitivity to change of the type proposed, for the national Park as a whole, is medium, and that the proposal would result in 'No change' for the National Park as a whole. It is concluded therefore that the overall integrity of the designation would not be affected.

It is the view of CNPA that the Park is so large and its landscapes so diverse that it is not appropriate to give an overall assessment of sensitivity/magnitude and a judgement on the effects on overall integrity of the designation in this way. What is relevant here are the

landscape and visual effects on this part of the Park and on the special qualities for which it has been designated.

Conclusions

The ES considers the landscape sensitivity of the Pattack Glen /Strath Mashie landscape character area (to this kind of development) to be medium. At 10.6.49 the ES concludes that there will be a localised moderate adverse impacts during construction on the Glen Pattack/Strath Mashie LCA, reducing to neutral during operation. Chapter 11 Visual Impacts also concludes that at some locations there will be moderate adverse visual impacts on locations and receptors in the National Park. Whilst I generally concur with the level of assessed impact I am of the view that the sensitivity of the Pattack Glen / Strath Mashie LCA (to this kind of development) is higher than assessed ([CNP Small Hydro landscape sensitivity map](#)) and that the visual impacts experienced from the Kinloch/Pattack track in particular are underestimated.

In the light of the sensitivity of this landscape, the need for elements of the development within the Park to meet the requirements of CNP Local Plan Policy 6, and to mitigate adverse effects on special landscape qualities experienced from within the Park, CNPA strongly advises that THC apply conditions in respect of the above issues highlighted in red.

CNPA would be happy to provide further advice to THC if required.