

The secondary impacts of turbine visibility with tourists choosing to visit Shetland is expected to be of minor significance, although it is acknowledged that a minority of tourists may choose not to visit Shetland.

(c)

Access provision

Impact magnitude

During normal operating conditions, there will be no specific restrictions on access to the Viking Wind Farm development. In the event that major maintenance operations are required, warning signage will be posted advising the public of the locations, scale and duration of maintenance activities, in a similar fashion to the method used during construction and decommissioning.

The Viking Wind Farm development will introduce a network of additional access tracks into the area. The area is not of high landscape/scenic value and is also not a priority area for most tourists interested in visiting locations of cultural or wildlife interest. Therefore the area is not promoted and used routinely by walkers and cyclists at present. Although if planned, managed and promoted through an access management plan, for example as core paths within the Shetland Access Strategy, the increased access could play a role in positively promoting new walking and cycling routes within Shetland.

The site is an important area for rare breeding moorland birds, a number of which are listed as Schedule 1 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Chapter 11). It is therefore of interest to birdwatchers, and increased use of these tracks for access could result in disturbance. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides detailed guidance on the responsibilities of those exercising access rights and of those managing land and water, including care for the environment. Increased access would therefore require to be appropriately managed.

The Marilyn, Scalla Fell, is located within the Viking Wind Farm development area and will attract a small number of hill walkers keen on bagging these hills.

During normal operating conditions, there will be no specific restrictions on access to the fishing lochans within the Viking Wind Farm development. As part of the Viking Wind Farm development a number of improvements have been proposed to the water catchments for these lochans (Chapter 10 and Appendix 10.9). It is anticipated that the habitat management plan including Gossa Water, Gossawater Burn and Laxo Burn will result in an enhanced fisheries management programme and consequent improvements in the fish stock.

Impact significance

The increase in access provision could have a moderate positive effect, providing access is appropriately managed.

The implementation of the habitat management plan for the Gossa Water, Gossa Burn and Laxo Burn are expected to have a beneficial impact on fisheries, although not significant when accounting for the total number of tourists visiting Shetland for fishing.

19.6.5 Construction and operational secondary impacts

(a) Recreational activities and cultural heritage

Impact magnitude

The most important highlight for tourists to Shetland is scenery and the most frequently mentioned recreational activities were general sightseeing and walking (AB Associates, 2006). Landscape is an important component of all these activities and any change in landscape/visual impact will potentially influence tourist behaviour. For example, tourists visiting attractions in the central and north mainland will use the main routes for driving or cycling through the central mainland to reach their chosen locations or activities, assuming that they arrive by ferry at Lerwick or by aeroplane at Sumburgh. Full details of the landscape character are provided in Chapter 8 but in general the landscape of Shetland is of a medium or high scenic quality as a result of the harmonious combinations of land, sea and sky and lack of incongruous features. The Viking Wind Farm development is not located in the areas of highest scenic value in Shetland (as defined by sites of special interest and national scenic areas), or close to any of the key honey pot natural history or heritage tourist sites such as in Unst, Noss, Eshaness, or Sumburgh Head.

Impact significance

The influence of the Viking Wind Farm development on the landscape value of Shetland as a whole with respect to tourists' perceptions of the landscape/scenic character of Shetland is not expected to be significant.

(b) Economic

Impact magnitude

The Viking Wind Farm may act as an attraction on Shetland which could contribute to the local economy by increased tourism. However, some tourists may feel that the wind farm deters from the general landscape/scenic character of Shetland as a whole, and may deter them from visiting the island. The majority of recreation and tourism attractions on Shetland are not located within the boundary of the Viking Wind Farm and therefore the presence of the wind farm during construction and operation will mainly impact visitors perception of landscape character and visual amenity from surrounding attractions and view points.

Impact significance

A recent study of tourists' perceptions of wind farms in Scotland indicated that 75 % of tourists thought that wind farms have a positive or neutral impact on the landscape and 25 % of tourists thought that wind farms have a negative effect of tourist attractions. Of the 25 % who perceived wind farms to have a negative effect, 10 % felt that wind farms have a strongly negative impact (Section 9.6.1.c). The impact of the wind farm on tourists choosing to visit Shetland is expected to be of minor significance, a full assessment of the economic impacts has been carried out in Chapter 17.

19.6.6 Assessment of cumulative impacts

There is one small wind farm, comprising 5 turbines, located at Burradale, about 11 km south of the Viking Wind Farm. As with the Viking Wind Farm, the Burradale Wind Farm is not located in a sensitive location for tourists, being away from major tourist