

## **APPENDIX A9.3**

# **RESPONSE TO SNH COMMENTS ON THE VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE 2009 ES**

## **ADDENDUM APPENDIX A9.3**

### **AMENDMENTS TO 2009 ES CHAPTER 9 (VISUAL IMPACT) RESULTING FROM SNH POST-ES QUERIES**

EXTRACTS FROM VEP RESPONSE LETTER TO SNH OBJECTION LETTER  
OF16.7.09

“...unlike many landscape architects, our consultants, ASH design+assessment (ASH) do not use the identified and agreed Viewpoints as the sole basis for a combined and potentially cursory assessment. Instead, based on their thirty years specialist expertise in this field, whilst acknowledging that the two topics are closely related, ASH choose to review impacts upon Landscape Character and Visual Amenity in two separate Chapters and survey all the landscape and visual receptors within the study area that are likely to receive an impact (as identified by the ZTV and desk based study and initial reconnaissance). They adopt this methodology as in their experience its more comprehensive and detailed approach results in a more rigorous and accurate assessment.

#### **1– Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)**

We agree that the A3 size drawing is small. However, it is included in the ES to give readers an overview of the extent of potential visibility. ASH did not use the A3 sized drawing as the basis of assessment, but reviewed the information on site during the survey with larger scale drawings and then verified it in the office on computer.

*(N.B., This drawing has now been enlarged at A3 size; see fig.A9.1)*

We would be happy to provide the ZTV at a larger scale to aid your consideration of the assessment. Due to the large scale of the development, this dictated an unusually large area to be covered by the 35km study zone, as measured from the periphery of the development in accordance with best practice. Consequently, a hardcopy ZTV at 1:50,000 is not practical for this project (it would consist of 4 no. A0 size drawings). A ZTV at 1:100,000 would fit on 1no. A0 size drawing; this would still be very unwieldy for practical purposes and all these options are clearly inappropriate for fitting within an A3 report and if segmented at a larger scale into a series of A3 drawings as suggested, this would only serve to confuse the reader. The number of turbines visible from visual receptors are in any case clearly listed in the visual assessment table and noted on the photomontages if this degree of detail is required by the reader.

For your purposes, however, it may be preferred to reduce the scale to 1:200,000 to fit on an A1 sheet or alternatively the ZTV could be produced at 1:100,000 split across two A1 size drawings...”

*(N.B. This drawing is available on request from SSE across two sheets in A1 format, as issued to SNH; Figure A9.1a and A9.1b)*

#### **2– Extent of Wirelines and Photomontages**

“...The photomontages are included within the ES to give an impression of how the wind farm would appear in certain key viewpoints which were agreed in advance with SNH and SIC. A 90 degree view has been used for each wireline and photomontage as it is representative of the extent visible by the human eye from a static point in a

fixed direction. These focus on the centre point of the proposals from each of the 43 viewpoints. Although a useful tool, the photomontages are not relied upon for assessment. As stated above, the viewpoints only form a part of the overall assessment which considers all receptors within the study area and is carried out in the field with reference to enlarged copies of the ZTV and is founded upon a detailed knowledge of the scheme gained from the layout drawings and engineering information. The photomontages and/ or wirelines are used as an aid in the field while carrying out the assessment.

ASH have reviewed the viewpoint illustrations and it is only in 12 out of the 43 cases that the 90 degree view shown in the ES does not cover the full extent of visible turbines (the total number visible from each location is, however, quoted within the key associated with each visualisation). As discussed we would be happy to provide additional wirelines (and where possible the photography showing the existing view) to cover the full extent of the visible turbines from these viewpoints. These would be in the form of additional 90 degree sections, with the viewing direction indicated as per the figures in the ES.

*(N.B., these were provided to SNH in August 2009; the new drawing numbers were; Figures 9.3.1c; 9.3.6 c; 9.3.11c; 9.3.12 c; 9.3.14 c & d; 9.3.15 c; 9.3.22 c & d; 9.3.28 e & f; 9.3.29 b; 9.3.39 c& d; 9.3.40 c; 9.3.41c)*

Please note:

- *figure 9.3.6 c has since been superseded by A9.3.6 c showing the new layout, and;*
- *these figures were prepared just subsequent to the issue of the 2009 ES and hence illustrate views of the layout current at that time rather than the revised layout illustrated in the Addendum.*

### **3 – Viewing Distance**

In order to make the photomontages easier to read (and within the optimal viewing distance range of between 400mm and 500mm, as per best practice) ASH increased the size of the images. However, in doing so the information relating to viewing distance was not correctly updated on 15 (just less than half) of the photomontage figures. We can, however, confirm that the viewing distance for the wirelines and existing views are correctly stated at 300mm and the photomontages should be viewed at 410mm.

### **4 – Turbine Numbering in Wirelines**

It is agreed that best practice guidance suggests that turbines are numbered in wirelines. It was considered as an option for this ES but rejected, as, due to the very large scale of the development and therefore the difficulty in clearly identifying individual turbines (especially in more distant views where the entire wind farm is visible as a single entity) it was felt that numbering the turbines would be neither practical nor beneficial. ...It is interesting to note that turbines were not numbered in the wirelines included within the ES either for Clyde Wind Farm, or Whitelee Wind Farm, both of which are of a similar scale to the proposed Viking Wind Farm, presumably for the same reasons.

*(N.B., at SNH's request, wirelines illustrating turbine numbers were subsequently provided to SNH; but only for those viewpoints likely to experience significant impacts)*