

Nisthill Wind Farm – St Magnus Way, Sequential Cumulative Impact Assessment

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Introduction

This note has been prepared in response to a request by Orkney Islands Council (OIC) for Nisthill Wind Farm Ltd to provide additional information on the potential effects of the proposed Nisthill Wind Farm (22/320/TPPMAJ) (the Proposed Development) on the St Magnus Way as it crosses West Mainland.

The St Magnus Way is a pilgrimage route that was developed between 2015 and 2017 by Orkney Pilgrimage, a small Scottish charity¹, to mark the passage of the body of St. Magnus from the island of his death, Egilsay, to the place of its initial burial at the important Viking centre of Birsay, and then on to its final internment in St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall. The opening of the route was programmed for 2017 in order to mark what is believed to have been the 900th anniversary of the saint's murder and given its recent origin it cannot, in itself, be considered to be a heritage asset. However, it should be acknowledged from the outset that the route has been designed so as to include a wide range of individual designated heritage assets, many of which have been considered individually in **Chapter 9** Sections 9.9 and 9.12 and **Appendix 9.3** of the submitted EIA Report.

The purpose of this document is not to repeat the conclusions of the EIA Report with respect to the settings of these assets but rather to provide a sequential cumulative assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the 'cultural elements' of the St. Magnus Way. This is in line with the comment by the Orkney Islands Archaeologist in his consultation response of the 14th of June 2023 which noted that the St. Magnus Way is '*more of a recreational cultural heritage trail than a historic environment asset*' although he stated that as it has '*cultural elements*', a '*sequential cumulative impact assessment*' is required².

The St. Magnus Way is discussed in the Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism chapter of the EIA Report (**Chapter 14**) which states in Paragraph 14.9.84 that:

"St Magnus Way is a long-distance trail through Mainland Orkney, which follows the path taken by Orkney's patron saint, beginning at the Broch of Gurness, following the coast to Birsay then passing through Twatt, Dounby, Finstown and Orphir, before finishing at Kirkwall. The trail is 93 km in length and, at its closest point, passes approximately 2 km from the Proposed Development. The trail features coastal, forest and hill landscapes and in general motivations for using the trail along its 58 mile length are unlikely to be affected. For a small stretch near

¹ Scottish Charity No. SC047008

² Orkney Islands Archaeologist, Consultation Response, 14th June 2023 https://planningandwarrant.orkney.gov.uk/online-applications/files/5911247F2CE91A58AD7A3FCA9D2BE2AC/pdf/22_320_TPPMAJ-Islands_archaeologist-448730.pdf

*the Proposed Development, it is possible that the Proposed Development may affect motivations (low magnitude). Therefore, the effect of the Proposed Development on tourism has been assessed as **negligible**.*"

AOC understand that the consultants who prepared **Chapter 14** have been reconsulted in relation to the present request from OIC and stand by their conclusions that the placement of the Proposed Development in relation to the St. Magnus Way will have a negligible effect upon Orkney's recreation and tourism sectors. However, it should be acknowledged that with respect to recreational trails paragraph 14.9.71 of the EIA Report notes that *"included in this section is consideration of whether the Proposed Development is likely to affect the use of recreational trails. The primary concern of local residents in relation to these trails is whether the routes will continue to be available in light of the Proposed Development"*.

Historical Context

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)³ sets out the basics of what is known of St. Magnus' life, he was born Magnus Erlendsson, the son of Erlend Thorfinnsson around 1075/6 and was raised within a powerful and prosperous aristocratic family descended from his grandfather Thorfinn, Earl of Orkney who had died by 1066⁴. Upon his father's death, Erlend shared the earldom with his brother Paul. However, although the two siblings got on well their sons did not, leading to a rivalry that was ultimately to lead to Magnus' death on the orders of his cousin, Hakon Paulsson on Egilsay around 1116. Following Magnus' death, Hakon and then, in turn, his sons ruled Orkney. In 1137 Rognvald, the son of Magnus came across from Norway to lay claim to his uncle's share of the earldom. Rognvald soon deposed Hakon's surviving son Paul and consequently the line of Erlend Thorfinnsson was returned to power some 20 years after the death of Magnus.

As Thomson notes Rognvald's claim to the earldom was complex, there were other heirs and not only did his claim descend from the female line, but he was Norwegian and therefore unknown to Orcadians⁵. However, Rognvald appears to have been a talented political operator and he appears to have founded his powerbase on Orkney at least in part on a pledge to dedicate a 'stone minster', to his martyred uncle.⁶ Such a move not only legitimised his claim, as the kinsman of the martyred earl, but would have also delegitimised that of his second cousin, Paul. More cynically, a shrine to a martyred king, would also help bring prosperity to the archipelago as well as being the physical expression of the united earldom that Rognvald intended to create. Indeed, Thomson comments that:

"It is easy to see that Magnus fits precisely into a pattern of Scandinavian patron saints, St. Olaf of Norway, St. Cnut of Denmark and St. Erik of Sweden, all of whom came to represent a

³Crawford, 2004, *Magnús Erlendsson, earl of Orkney [St Magnus]*

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37728?rskey=m4u01Z&result=1>

⁴ Thomson, 'St Magnus: An exploration of his sainthood' in Waugh, 2003, *'The faces of Orkney: Stones, Skalds and Saints'* pp.446-64 https://www.ssns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/04_Thomson_Orkney_2003_pp_46-64.pdf

⁵ Ibid p52

⁶ Ibid p52

growing sense of national identity... have four characteristics in common: (1) they were royal (2) they met violent death (3) their deaths were at the hands of rival factions of their own people and (4) they date from the eleventh/twelfth centuries. The creation of an Orkney saint in the fashionable mould of the Scandinavian patron saints can be seen as an assertion of the quasi-royal status of the earls of Orkney. Perhaps it tells us more about the nature of the earldom and Rognvald's aspiration than about the actual life and character of Magnus"⁷.

Thomson then goes on to take this further arguing that:

"Magnus's role as Orkney's patron saint was envisaged from the very beginning. In the same way that St. Olaf was 'perpetual king of Norway'. The martyred Magnus was described by Rognvald's father as 'the true owner of the realm' who would bestow it upon his successor, namely Rognvald. The earls no doubt found it useful to base their rule on a feudal grant which emanated directly from heaven; it provided a legitimacy which was difficult to dispute."⁸

The modern 'St. Magnus Way' therefore reflects a sequence of interconnected events in Orcadian history rather than a single passage; the initial death of the Earl on Egilsay and presumably his internment on the island (Part 1), the subsequent transportation of his body to Birsay on the northwest tip of West Mainland that is believed to have been the site of the initial cathedral, the Christ Church⁹ (Part 2) and then finally the exhumation of his remains and their transportation to Rognvald's great stone minster at Kirkwall (Part 3). The latter was built in the style of the great Norman cathedral at Durham, possibly by either the same masons or their close descendants^{10 11 12}.

Magnus was initially buried on Egilsay however, the *Orkneyinga Saga* records that not long after the death his mother, Thora, approached Hakon at a feast and told him:

"I was expecting two of you... but only you have come. Will you do something to please me in the eyes of God and men? be a son to me and I shall be a mother to you. I'm sorely in need of your mercy so let me have my son taken to church. Hear my prayers now, just as you yourself would wish to be heard by God on the Day of Judgement.

The Earl fell silent and started to think it over. She had made her request with such gentle tears to be allowed to bring her son to church that now he began to feel the burden of his crime"¹³.

Two separate translations of the *Orkneyinga Saga* were checked during the preparation of this note: the Pálsson and Edwards 1978 translation which was published by Penguin in 1981 from where the quote above is taken; and an earlier 1873 translation by Hjaltalin and Goudie that was edited by Joseph

⁷ Ibid, p56-7

⁸ Ibid p57

⁹ Callaghan and Wilson, 2001, The Unknown Cathedral: Lesser known aspects of St. Magnus Cathedral in Orkney, Kirkwall, p13

¹⁰ Ibid p57

¹¹ Historic Environment Scotland, LB36668 Listing Description <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB36668>

¹² Callaghan and Wilson, 2001, p17

¹³ Pálsson and Edwards, 1981, *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney* (Penguin Classics, translation)

Anderson¹⁴. Neither give a detailed account as to how Magnus' body was transported to Birsay from Egilsay. The 1873 translation notes that '*Earl Hakon did not permit his body to be brought to the church (for burial)*'¹⁵, and notes that following Thora's request '*the Earl's body was brought to Hrossey [Mainland], and buried at Christ's Kirk (in Birsay), which had been built by Earl Thorfinn*'¹⁶. The 1978 translation similarly notes Hakon's refusal to allow Magnus a church burial and with respect to the subsequent removal of the remains to Birsay, merely notes that following his mother's intervention '*Earl Magnus' body was carried to Mainland and buried at Christ Church*'¹⁷.

Thomson draws an interesting comparison, noting that '*it is believed that the Durham masons were subsequently employed in Kirkwall*' and he draws parallels between the delayed translation of the St. Magnus to the 'stone minster' and the far longer, far more intermittent passage of the bones of St. Cuthbert and the skull of St. Oswald to Durham. Drawing particular attention to Oswald, a seventh century Northumbrian king, Thomson suggests that '*perhaps they [the masons] brought with them stories that account for some of the parallels between Oswald and Magnus: both were married saints who preserved their chastity by bathing in cold water..., and they have at least two miracles in common: both punished people who had the temerity to work on their saints day, and both brought divine punishment on thieves who stole from their altar*'¹⁸. Whatever the origins of the miracles and legends that developed around St. Magnus, it can be reasonably concluded that they were promulgated with a clear political purpose to secure the power and legitimacy of Rognvald and his successors, indeed the translation of the Bishop's seat from windswept Birsay to the sheltered shores of Kirkwall, from where both the Wide Firth to the north and Scapa Flow to the south can easily be controlled, may well have formed part of this calculation.

Magnus' second journey, from Birsay to Kirkwall was therefore undertaken in very different circumstances from the first. The first in the immediate aftermath of his death, on a small minor component of the Orkadian archipelago, was a forlorn affair; the reluctant transport of the remains of a brutally slain aristocrat, that was permitted by the victor only after the intervention of his aunt, Magnus's mother Thora, towards a church that had been built on the orders of their shared grandfather, Thorfinn. It is unlikely to have been a grand affair and on the evidence of the Orkney Saga may not necessarily have followed the route that is now ascribed to it by the St. Magnus Way. Indeed, if Eynhallow could be safely navigated then the simplest, most discreet way to move a defeated body from Egilsay to Birsay would have been by boat. Magnus' second journey some twenty years later under the control of his triumphant nephew was a much more exultant affair. As Thomson notes:

"Nowadays the creation of a new saint is a lengthy process, but at that time it was controlled by the local bishop and so there was no need for delay. Magnus's canonisation involved, first,

¹⁴ Anderson (ed), 1873 The Orkneyinga Saga, Edinburgh, Edmonston and Douglas <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57723/57723-h/57723-h.htm>

¹⁵ Anderson 1873, Chapter XL

¹⁶ Anderson 1873, Chapter XLI

¹⁷ Palsson and Edwards, 1981, p96

¹⁸ Ibid. p57

local enthusiasm for his cult, part spontaneous and part, we may suppose, carefully fostered by those who hoped to benefit; second, there were miracles at his grave, and finally came the taking up of his bones which the bishop tested in fire. His sainthood was proclaimed and a triumphal procession conveyed the relics from Birsay to Kirkwall”¹⁹.

The St Magnus Way

Orkney Pilgrimage acknowledge on their website that the project began in October 2015 “when a group of interested pilgrims began discussing how to better support and encourage pilgrimage in Orkney”; the primary purpose of the project therefore appears to have been to encourage spiritual growth and healthy living rather than to directly trace the route that St. Magnus’ body would have taken on its staged return from Egilsay. Having started with this overarching objective the promoters then determined that “the best place to start was with St. Magnus [as] the journeys associated with him after his death, along with the growing place of Orkney as a pilgrimage destination in the Middle Ages, made it the ideal project to capture people’s imaginations and encourage exploration of our physical and spiritual heritage”²⁰.

Although the St. Magnus Way is a recent creation, Orkney Pilgrimage highlight the presence of ‘Mans’ or ‘Mansie Stanes’ within the West Mainland landscape arguing that “the route of St. Magnus is partly determined by a series of stones, locally known as Mans or Mansie Stanes that are said to have been raised as resting places for the body and shrine of St. Magnus as he was carried from his place of death to his first place of burial in Birsay... Ernest Marwick, the historian who first looked into these places wrote “There may have been a time when pilgrims following the processional route and praying at these stones were a familiar sight”²¹.

Although the contribution made by the Mansie Stanes to the St. Magnus story should not be diminished, it should be noted that only one of the stones, Strathyre, survives and it is positioned above the western shore of the Loch of Boardhouse, to the southeast of the large Scheduled prehistoric standing stone at Wheebin (SM1414), which enjoys the same contextual relationship with the loch and also lies on the St. Magnus Way. Orkney Pilgrimage also highlight the possible site of a former Mansie Stone at the northern head of the Loch of Swannay noting that ‘though no longer visible, there is a strong tradition of there being a stone at the head of the loch, associated with Magnus’²². Although neither the surviving Strathyre stone or the lost Swannay monolith are recorded on the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), it should be noted that the Strathyre stone stands immediately north of a Scheduled prehistoric burial mound cluster at Bigbreck Cottage (SM157) and east of the non-designated site of a further tumulus at Strathyre itself. Given its proximity to these burial mounds and its visual relationship to the loch, the possibility that the Strathyre stone is a prehistoric survival cannot, on the present evidence, be discounted. Although evidence for the lost

¹⁹ Ibid p53

²⁰ Orkney Pilgrimage, <https://www.stmagnusway.com/about>

²¹ Orkney Pilgrimage, <https://www.stmagnusway.com/resources>

²² Orkney Pilgrimage <https://www.stmagnusway.com/route/evie-to-birsay>

stone at Swannay is now inevitably limited, its reported position at the head of the loch would suggest that it had a similar visual interaction with water as a number of surviving Orcadian standing stones including Wheebin and the better-known Watch Stone at Stenness (SM90352) and for this reason the possibility that the Swannay stone was in fact prehistoric cannot be discounted.

Despite limitations in the available evidence, whatever the historical truth of St. Magnus' journey from Egilsay to Birsay, and then after an intermission of two decades on to Kirkwall, it is clear that Orkney Pilgrimage have drawn attention to a number of associative links between the north part of West Mainland and the transportation of the Orcadian saint's body. However, this does not necessarily mean that his was brought to Birsay along the route of the recently inscribed St. Magnus Way, or even along an approximation of it, as given the circumstances the actual transport of the saint's body may have been discreet and low key, as the brief limited description of the transportation in the Orkneyinga Saga would seem to suggest. Similarly, although the Mansie Stanes that are discussed above may well have been prehistoric standing stones, given that Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments continue to serve as way markers within the Orcadian landscape today, it is likely that they would have served a similar purpose within the Viking and medieval world. As such they would have been natural staging points for those on route to the various Orcadian churches with Magnus associations. Therefore, although the post-2015 St. Magnus Way cannot be reasonably considered to be a heritage asset, it does pass through a landscape that historically had at least some association with the saint, which Orkney Pilgrimage are once again highlighting.

Before progressing further, some consideration should be given to the status of the St. Magnus Way. OIC published a Core Paths Plan in 2018²³ shortly after the creation of the new route and documentation on the St. Magnus Way website shows that Orkney Pilgrimage were involved in the consultation.²⁴ Preparation of the Core Paths Plan is a statutory duty placed on OIC under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which requires the Council to identify the '*key routes for outdoor access in Orkney*'²⁵. The original plan was published in December 2008, and it was updated in 2018 following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and in the light of the Land Reform (Scotland Act) 2016. A 'find' search of the text found only one reference to Magnus; Core Path EG2 St. Magnus Church which is a short path on Egilsay²⁶. Although it should be acknowledged that the GIS mapping²⁷ which accompanies the plan identifies the entirety of the St. Magnus Way, only short intermittent lengths of it, as it crosses West Mainland, are identified as Core Paths. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the majority of the St. Magnus Way lies outwith the Core Path 'system' as defined by Section 17(1) of the 2003 Act.²⁸

²³ Orkney Islands Council (OIC), 2018, Core Paths Plan

<https://oic.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=462f21e42d74428984b868be3a8c57c2>

²⁴ Orkney Pilgrimages <https://www.stmagnusway.com/resources?category=engagement>

²⁵ OIC 2018, p3

²⁶ OIC 2018, p16

²⁷ OIC 2018, <https://oic.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=462f21e42d74428984b868be3a8c57c2>

²⁸ Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/section/17>

St Magnus Way Sequential Cumulative Assessment

This assessment is structured around nine visualisations, three of which were submitted previously as part of the EIA Report and four that have been prepared specifically to support this document. The visualisations will be discussed sequentially as if the ‘pilgrim’ is travelling from east to west, in the same direction as St. Magnus’ body. Those viewpoints that lie on the St. Magnus Way itself are underlined, the remainder were taken from points within the vicinity of the way:

- Loch of Swannay (EIA Report **Figure 6.19**, VP 1, Photomontage)
- St Magnus Way at Costa Head (Figure 1 Wireline)
- St Magnus Way at Crustan (Figure 2, Wireline)
- The Brough of Birsay (EIA Report **Figure 9.20**, Photomontage)
- The Earl’s Palace, Birsay (EIA Report **Figure 9.19**, Wireline)
- Birsay Community Hall (EIA Report **Figure 6.25**, VP 7, Photomontage)
- Strathyre Mans Stone (Figure 3, Wireline)
- A967 Twatt (EIA Report **Figure 6.26**, VP 8, Photomontage)
- St. Magnus Way at Dirkadale Road, Loch of Hundland (Figure 4, Wireline)

In addition to the visualisations set out above the Proposed Development’s 20km Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping (Figure 6.3 of the EIA Report) is also discussed, this locates the VPs 1, 7 and 8 (above), the remainder being located individually on the visualisation sheets themselves.

The visualisations respect the scope for cumulative wind energy developments that was set out in Appendix 6.1 of the EIA Report and was consulted on in section 4.2.3 of the Applicant’s scoping report²⁹, this allows for the consideration of ‘*all wind turbine developments [within a 45km radius] that are operational, under construction, consented or at planning application stage and are over 50 m to tip in height*’. This is because ‘*turbines below 50 m in height are unlikely to result in significant cumulative effects with the Proposed Development*’ (EIA Report Appendix 6.1, page 19). It is acknowledged that this scope excludes micro turbines that are now a relatively common component of the Orcadian landscape as well as small to medium scale turbines such as the 46.5m 500kw operational turbine that stands within the site boundary. These developments are different in character from larger scale schemes such as the Proposed Development, the consented Costa Head turbines or the operational Bugar Hill Wind Farm. Given these differences in scale and character it is not considered that the addition of the sub 50m turbines into a cumulative baseline that includes both the Proposed Development and the 50m plus schemes, would have the potential to elevate the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development above the EIA threshold of significance.

For ease of reference the assessment is divided into sections.

²⁹ ITPE Energised, 2022, Nisthill Wind Farm EIA Scoping Report, p12.

The route of the St. Magnus Way from Evie to Birsay is shown in detail on the Orkney Pilgrimage website: <https://www.stmagnusway.com/route/evie-to-birsay>

Gurness to Costa Head (EIA Report Figure 6.19, VP 1)

Comparison between the ZTV (EIA Report **Figure 6.3**) and the online map of the route, as it is published on the St. Magnus Way website, suggests that although there would be distant visibility of the Proposed Development from the start of the route at the Broch of Gurness at Aiker Ness, the turbines would pass from view once Evie Pier is reached, and the route progresses north eastwards along the western shore of Eynhallow. The St. Magnus Way then joins the A966 northwest of Evie and, with the exception of a potential for limited visibility within the settlement at Costa, the turbines would not come in to view again until the A966 crosses the Vinquin ridge just east of Midhouse; the route then continues along the A966 until the northern edge of the Loch of Swannay is reached, at which point the way then turns sharply to the east and then northwest to ascend Costa Hill. Whilst the road continues to track the shores of the loch, passing the reported location of the now lost Swannay 'Mansie Stone', a photomontage (**Figure 6.19**, VP 1) taken from its approximate position indicates that all four Nisthill turbines would be visible from this vantage point at a distance of 2.21km to the nearest turbine. However, it should be acknowledged that at this point the St. Magnus Way is separated from the possible stone location by the site of the consented Costa Head Wind Farm and as VP1 shows the intervening turbines would be considerably closer to the possible stone location than those of the Proposed Development. Therefore, in cumulative terms the effect of the consented turbines of Costa Head Wind Farm on the possible stone location would be greater than that of the Proposed Development.

Costa Head to the Brough of Birsay (EIA Report Figure 9.20 & Figures 1 & 2 attached)

The St. Magnus Way turns to the east and then northwest upon reaching the foot of the Costa Head landmass ascending to the summit of the headland as it does so before turning westwards to extend along the extreme edge of the northern coast of West Mainland. As it descends the western slopes of Costa Head, it passes behind – immediately north of the footprint of the consented Costa Head Wind Farm from where, as Figure 1a shows, two of the proposed Nisthill turbines would be visible at a distance of 2.74km, although inland views from this viewpoint would unsurprisingly be dominated by the consented Costa Head turbines. The Brough of Birsay can be glimpsed from this viewpoint, from behind one of the Costa Head turbine positions, which suggests that Costa Head represents the start of a visual progress towards what was the core Viking settlement on West Mainland.

St. Magnus Way continues westwards along the northern edge of West Mainland, although EIA Report **Figure 6.3** indicates that this section of the route would either be outwith the ZTV or on its extreme periphery. Although a note of caution needs to be sounded as this section of the route is poorly tracked on the Orkney Pilgrimage website and the satellite mapping on the website suggests that it could extend over cliff edges. It is therefore likely that walkers follow a course inland of the one that is recorded on the website. Whatever the limits of visibility at the eastern end of the Costa Head – Brough of Birsay section of the route, the ZTV clearly shows that there would be no visibility from its

western section, and this is confirmed by a second wireline taken from the St. Magnus Way at Crustan (Figure 2) which shows that views of the Proposed Development would be blocked by an intervening hillslope.

Although it is not on the St. Magnus Way itself the EIA Report **Figure 9.20** shows the view looking back eastwards along the clifftop axis of the route from the Viking settlement on the Brough of Birsay. Both the Proposed Development and the consented Costa Head turbines would be visible from this vantage point, although the Nisthill turbines would be considerably inland of the Costa Head turbines which would extend to the cliff edge, back marking the route of the St. Magnus Way.

The Brough of Birsay to Twatt (EIA Report Figures 6.25 VP 7, 6.26 VP 8, 9.19 & attached Figure 3)

The route of the St. Magnus Way continues westwards along the northern coast of West Mainland, before turning south when it reaches the Brough of Birsay car park, running along the edge of the bay until it enters the village of Birsay, which includes the Scheduled late 16th century Earl's Palace and the Category B Listed 17th century Birsay Kirk. The latter may occupy the site of the original Christ Kirk, where St. Magnus was initially buried at the behest of his mother. Wireline evidence (EIA Report **Figure 9.19**) suggests that the blades of all four of the Nisthill turbines could potentially be visible from the Palace at a distance of 5 km, although only one may appear from just below hub height. The wireline shows the blade tips of the operational Bugar Hill turbines slightly to the east of the Nisthill turbines at a distance of 9.2 km whilst the blades of the consented Costa Head turbines would appear separately to the north. However, it should be recognised that any visibility would be across a modern farmed landscape, and also in the case of the church, the modern village of Birsay, and that both the church and the palace post-date the age of St. Magnus by a considerable period of time.

Birsay Kirk marks the end of the second stage of the St. Magnus Way, the section that reflects the initial transportation of his body from Egilsay to the Christ Church. The journey south from Birsay, that occurred some twenty years later under very different circumstances, is reflected in the next stage of the St. Magnus Way which is also mapped in detail on the Orkney Pilgrimage website: <https://www.stmagnusway.com/route/birsay-to-dounby>.

Upon passing the Kirk, the St. Magnus Way continues along the public road until it crosses the Burn of Boardhouse where it turns inland to track the southern bank of the burn as far as the late 19th century Category B Listed New Barony Meal Mill, which operates as a visitor attraction; it then extends northwards for a short distance up the A967 before turning east onto Wattle Road where it soon stops at the 'St. Magnus's Well', a non-designated heritage asset recorded on the NRHE, which is reputed to have associations with the saint. The St. Magnus Way then turns back the way it came, returning to Birsay via the New Barony Meal Mill.

The St Magnus Way tracks the coast to the southwest of Birsay, before re-entering the public road network at the B9056, joining the A967 at the Scheduled Wheebin standing stone, the route then continues to southeast along the A967 as it passes along the southern edge of the Loch of Boardhouse until it reaches the settlement of Twatt, where it extends briefly along the A986 before turning

northwards onto Hundland Road. Three visualisations trace the route of the St. Magnus Way as it extends along the A967; EIA Report **Figure 6.25** VP 7 taken from a point to the north of the Wheebin standing stone, Figure 3 (attached) taken from the approximate position of the surviving Strathyre Mans Stone and EIA Report **Figure 6.26** VP 8 taken from the settlement of Twatt. Although all three visualisations show that the Proposed Development would be visible, across the Loch of Boardhouse when viewed from these vantage points, along with cumulative schemes (most notably the operational Bugar Hill turbines) this needs to be balanced against the simple fact that this particular length of the St. Magnus Way extends along an A class road that is '*intended to provide large-scale transport links within or between areas*'³⁰, rather than any historic track or path. As a modern asphalt road, the A967 can be reasonably considered to be of, at most, negligible cultural heritage importance and any associations that it may have once had with the transportation of St. Magnus's body to Kirkwall are at best severely compromised.

Twatt to the Loch of Hundland (attached Figure 4)

Upon exiting Twatt via the A986, the St. Magnus Way turns sharply to the northeast extending along Hundland Road until it reaches its junction with Dirkadale Road, where the road forks with Hundland Road continuing northwards to the Kirbister Farm Museum where both the NRHE and the Orkney Pilgrimage website record the site of a medieval church or chapel. However, instead of continuing to the museum the St. Magnus Way continues eastwards along Dirkadale Road, until it reaches the southern tip of the Loch of Hundland from. Figure 4, attached, shows that at this point all four of the turbines would be viewed at a distance of 2.06 km with the Costa Head turbines to their rear and the more distant Bugar Hill turbines which are set apart to the south. Although the Proposed Development would inevitably be visible from the southern tip of the Loch of Hundland, it is unclear from the Orkney Pilgrimage website why the St. Magnus Way has been extended to include a view of the loch as, apart from the recorded site of the church at Kirbister which lies around a kilometre west of this vantage point, no links to St. Magnus or the medieval church are documented along this section of the route. It should also be noted that this section of the St. Magnus Way deviates considerably from the most direct route from Twatt to Finstown which tracks the line of the modern A986.

The Remainder of the St Magnus way

The route of the St Magnus Way continues south from the Loch of Hundland until it reaches the modern settlement of Dounby where it continues on a broadly southeast alignment until it reaches Finstown. As EIA Report **Figure 6.3** shows the A986 broadly follows the edge of the ZTV, which means that the Proposed Development is more likely to be visible from those sections of the St. Magnus Way that lie to the west of the road, than it is from those that lie to the east. After passing through the Finstown Gap the remainder of the way would be predominantly outwith the ZTV although there is a

³⁰ UK Government, 2012, *Statutory Guidance: Guidance on road classification and the primary route network*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-road-classification-and-the-primary-route-network/guidance-on-road-classification-and-the-primary-route-network>

potential for some limited visibility as it crosses the high ground south of Heddle enroute to Orphir, any such views would be set at a distance of greater than 15 km.

Conclusion

The visualisations that have been prepared in support of the application show that the Proposed Development would be visible from multiple viewpoints on the St Magnus Way. Although at the point where arguably these views are most sensitive, on the section of the route that extends along the northern edge of West Mainland between Costa Head and the Brough of Birsay, this visibility would be limited, in part by the much closer presence of the consented Costa Head Wind Farm, and in part by the natural topography which means that the western portion of this section lies largely outwith the ZTV. Similarly, although the Proposed Development would be viewed across the Loch of Boardhouse from the section of the route that extends from Birsay to Twatt, this section of the way tracks the A967, a modern A class road and therefore any cultural heritage value that it may have once had has been severely compromised. Finally, although the Proposed Development would be visible from the southern tip of the Loch of Hundland it is unclear from the Orkney Pilgrimage website whether this particular section of the route has any link with either the transportation of the body of St. Magnus to Kirkwall or the medieval church and the pilgrim economy that subsequently developed from it. It also should be acknowledged that the St. Magnus Way itself is a very recent creation, that lies largely outwith Orkney's statutory Core Paths system and that although it celebrates the passage of St. Magnus' body from Egilsay to Birsay and then, after a 20 year period, onto the new Cathedral at Kirkwall, there is little direct historical evidence for this transportation. Indeed, as would be expected following a death in those circumstances, the Orkneyinga Saga's account of the movement of the future saint's body from Egilsay to Birsay is brief and succinct. Given the limitations of the historical evidence and the recent date for the establishment of the way it seems appropriate, as the Orkney Islands Archaeologist has indicated, to regard the St. Magnus Way as primarily a recreation and tourism matter. As was noted in the introduction, **Chapter 14** of the EIA Report, which deals with recreation and tourism has concluded that *"in general motivations for using the [St. Magnus Way] along its 58mile length are unlikely to be affected. For a small stretch near the Proposed Development, it is possible that the Proposed Development may affect motivations (low magnitude). Therefore, the effect of the Proposed Development on tourism has been assessed as negligible"* (Paragraph 14.9.84).