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Chapter 13: Socioeconomics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation

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13 SOCIO-ECONOMICS, LAND USE, TOURISM AND RECREATION

13.1 Introduction

13.1.1.1 This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) presents the results of the socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreation impact assessment. It considers the potential impact of the Proposed Development during the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases.

13.1.1.2 The chapter provides an overview of the existing baseline environment for the Proposed Development, followed by an assessment of the significance socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreational impacts and effects.

13.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

13.2.1.1 The key legislation, planning policy and guidance relevant to the socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreation assessment is summarised below. Please refer to **Chapter 5: Policy ad Legislative Context** for further information and detail regarding the planning policy and general legislative context of the Proposed Development.

13.2.2 Legislation

13.2.2.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act, 2003, introduced the right of responsible non-motorised access for recreational and other purposes to land and inland water throughout Scotland, with a few exceptions (including land in which crops have been sown or are growing). The Act also places a duty on local authorities to manage access in their areas, including planning for a system of core paths that cater for everyone.

13.2.2.2 The Countryside (Scotland) Act, 1967, established a duty for local authorities and National Park authorities to protect and manage public rights of way in Scotland.

13.2.3 National Policy

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

13.2.3.1 The Scottish National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4[1]) is the national spatial strategy for Scotland and was adopted on the 13th February 2023 – superseding the NPF3.

13.2.3.2 The Plan sets out Policy principles related to Energy with the intent to '*encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore'* with the overarching desired outcome to expand renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies. Relevant policies to this chapter include:

- Policy 11- Energy:

[1] Scottish Government (2023) National Planning Framework 4

- Part A) Development proposals of solar arrays will be supported.
- Part C) Proposals will be supported where they demonstrate that they maximise the net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.
- Part E) How design will mitigate the following relevant points:
  - Impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker; and
  - public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes.

- Policy 5 – Soils:
  - Part b) '*Development proposals on prime agricultural land, or land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use, as identified by the LDP, will only be supported where it is for*:
    - Iv. *The generation of energy from renewable sources or the extraction of minerals and there is secure provision for restoration'*.

13.2.3.3 Policy 5 states that the layout and design of the proposal should minimise the amount of protected land that is required.

- Policy 25 – Community wealth building:
  - Part a) 'Development proposals which contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities will be supported'. Examples include:
    - Increasing spending within communities;
    - Ensuring the use of local supply chains and services; and
    - Local job creation.

Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland

13.2.3.4 The Just Transition Commission set out in their 2021 plan[2] titled a national mission for a fairer, greener Scotland that the "*imperative of a just transition is that Governments design policies in a way that ensures the benefits of climate change action are shared widely*'. As part of their work, they highlighted their call to action into four messages:

1. Pursue an orderly, managed transition to net-zero that creates benefits and opportunities for people across Scotland. Delivery of this must be a national mission;
2. Equip people with the skills and education they need to benefit from the transition;
3. Empower and invigorate our communities and strengthen local economies; and

[2] Just Transition Commission (2021) A national mission for a fairer, greener Scotland

4. Share benefits widely and ensure burdens are distributed on the basis of ability to pay.

13.2.3.5 In response to the Just Transmission Commission the Scottish Government established the National Just Transition Planning Framework[3] as a proactive measure aimed at ensuring the transition to a low-carbon economy is equitable and inclusive. As part of the framework there is a recognition of the urgency of achieving the climate goals which include a 75% reduction in greenhouse gases (GHG) by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2045 – with the framework overseeing the necessary transformation.

13.2.3.6 The Framework sets out to ensure that there is a shared vision for the just transition for the wellbeing of the nation as a whole and displays a clear message of collaboration between business, unions, workforce and the local community.

National Performance Framework

13.2.3.7 The National Performance Framework incorporates the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and guides the work of the Scottish Government. At the heart of this is the purpose of '*creating a more successful country with opportunities for all Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and economic growth'*.

13.2.4 Local Policy

13.2.4.1 The Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan[4] sets out a series of policies and proposals where development can or should take place and provides guidance on future provision of subjects such as infrastructure, business and recreation. The Plan splits the policies across five categories of Placemaking and Design, Economic Development, Housing Development, Environmental Promotion and Protection and Infrastructure and Standards. The following policies are the most relevant policies for the socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreation:

- Policy ED9 – Renewable energy development: which states that proposals for all forms of renewable, low carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported which includes solar arrays; and

- Policy ED10 – Protection of prime quality agricultural land and carbon rich soils: which states that development will not be permitted if it results in the loss of prime agricultural land, except proposals for renewable energy development which will be permitted if they accord with Policy ED9.

13.2.5 Guidance

13.2.5.1 There is limited published guidance for the assessment of socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreation effects. Relevant guidance that has informed the assessment includes:

[3] Scottish Government (2021) Just Transition – A Fairer, Greener Scotland
[4] Scottish Borders Council (2024) Local Development Plan

- Scottish Natural Heritage, Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook, Appendix 6: Outdoor access impact assessment[5];
- Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), LA109 – Geology and soils[6]; and
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment[7].

13.3 Scope and Consultation

13.3.1.1 To inform the scope of the assessment for the Proposed Development, consultation was undertaken with statutory and non-statutory bodies through early consultation and a formal EIA scoping process. Full details of the consultation process and responses are included in **Chapter 4: EIA Methodology**.

13.3.1.2 Given the anticipated positive impact of the Proposed Development on socio economic receptors, it was proposed in the Scoping Report that socio-economics could be scoped out of the EIAR. Specific scoping responses, relevant to Socio-economics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation, are provided in **Table 13.1**.

TABLE 13.1 SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSES

CONSULTEE	SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSE	RESPONSE TO CONSULTEE
ScotWays	ScotWays noted that the following routes cross or are close to the application site: • Right of Way BB84; • Other path BB190; and • Scottish Hill Track SHT(6)013. ScotWays also highlighted the proximity of the Southern Upland Way long distance route, and noted that the assessment should take into account recreational amenity and landscape impacts. ScotWays also noted access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the requirement to	Right of Way BB84 follows the same route as Scottish Borders Core Path BB84. Other route BB190 and Scottish Hill Track SHT(6)013 also follow similar routes to core paths shown on **Figure 13.4** and are therefore included in the assessment. The SUW and access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 have also been considered as part of the assessment. The Traffic Mitigation section of **Volume 1 Chapter 11 Traffic and Transport** presents proposed measures to alleviate the impact on core path users and maintain use, such as

[5] Scottish Natural Heritage (2018), Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook, Appendix 6: Outdoor access impact assessment. Available online at: Wayback Machine
[6] DMRB, LA 109 – Geology and Soils. Available online at: LA 109 - Geology and soils While this guidance was developed in the highways sector, it provides industry-standard guidance for the assessment of impacts on agricultural land and so has informed the methodology for this chapter.
[7] IEMA (2022), A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment. Available online at: 2022-iema_land_and_soils_guidance.pdf

CONSULTEE	SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSE	RESPONSE TO CONSULTEE
	produce an Access Management Plan.	barriers to maintain separation from construction.

13.4 Scope and Methodology

13.4.1 Scope

13.4.1.1 The scope of this socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreation assessment has been informed by feedback from consultation bodies in their Scoping Opinion (as summarised in Table 13.1), feedback from the local community received through public consultation held during August/September 2024 and March 2025, European Commission guidance on scoping[8], and professional judgement. Impacts and effects included within the scope of this socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreation assessment are summarised in **Table 13.2** below.

TABLE 13.2 SCOPE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC, LAND USE, TOURISM AND RECREATION ASSESSMENT

SCOPE	POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS AND EFFECTS
Socio-economic impacts	• Direct, indirect, and induced employment created by the project • Direct, indirect, and induced productivity gains measured as GVA
Wider socio-economic effects	• Effects on industries arising from socio-economic impacts, specifically food production and tourism sectors
Socio-cultural effects	• Local population changes arising from socio-economic impacts • Effects on access to local community services (health and education) • Change in local identity and sense of place because of the project impacts, population change, and changes to local industry •
Land use effects	• Temporary change in land use
Tourism and recreation effects	• Effects on tourism and recreation receptors (quality and access) including core paths, open spaces, and accommodation

13.4.1.2 Effects on soils are outside the scope of this chapter and are assessed in **Chapter 10: Geology and Soils.**

13.4.1.3 Effects are considered during the construction phase (18 months) and operation and maintenance phase (40 years). While the starting date for construction activities will be

[8] European Commission (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Scoping (Section 9 p57) Circabc

dependent on consent being granted and on grid connection availability, for the purposes of this assessment it is assumed that construction will begin in 2030, with operation and maintenance beginning in 2031 and the first full year of operation being 2032. Decommissioning at the end of the project life is also included in the scope.

13.4.2 Methodology

13.4.2.1 The overall methodology is to assess the significance of potential impacts and effects against the baseline position. The baseline describes the current socio-economic, land use, tourism and recreational conditions within the relevant study areas using latest available data. Baseline data sources are summarised in **Table 13.3** below:

TABLE 13.3 BASELINE INDICATORS AND SOURCES

INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE	YEAR
Population, age profile	Scotland Census	2022
Ethnicity	Scotland Census	2022
Economic Activity, Qualifications, Occupations	Scotland Census	2022
Households	Scotland Census	2022
Property Price	Land Registry	2024
Economic Activity	Scotland Census	2022
Long-term health problems or disability	Scotland Census	2022
Health Services	Public Health Scotland, Scottish Government	2024, 2025
Gross Value Added (GVA)	ONS	2022
Tourism employment, tourism spending, tourism volume, tourism	Visit Scotland	2022
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)	Scottish Government	2020

13.4.2.2 Impacts and effects are defined and quantified as much as possible to determine their magnitude. Where they cannot be quantified, a qualitative assessment is made using professional judgement. The criteria used to assess sensitivity, magnitude and significance are provided in **Chapter 4: EIA Methodology**.

13.4.3 Limitations

13.4.3.1 Limitations of the methodological approach are:

- Baseline data is available at different spatial levels and does not always align neatly with the relevant study areas for each impact and effect.

- Latest data is used as much as possible. However, this relies on the frequency at which data is published by the Government and other sources. For example, the Census is published every 10 years.

- The detail for decommissioning will be agreed at the time, and so there is limited information available at this stage. Impacts of decommissioning are assumed to be similar to construction;

- The assessment draws on the findings of other relevant chapters of the EIAR. Professional judgement has been used to interpret the findings of these chapters for the purposes of the Socio-economics, Land Use, Tourism and Recreation assessment.

13.4.4 Study Area

13.4.4.1 The significance of impacts and effects on socio-economic, land use and tourism and recreation receptors will vary across different spatial scales. Therefore, impacts and effects will be assessed at multiple spatial scales as relevant to the impact, for example, national, local and neighbourhood levels against their respective baselines. The study area for the Socio-economics, Land Use, and Tourism and Recreation impact assessment is therefore determined by:

- The location of the project and associated activity;

- The nature of impacts being assessed and the spatial scale that impacts could occur;

- The location of receptors who may be directly and indirectly affected;

- Considering local administrative boundaries and functional areas; and

- Considering that impacts and effects could vary at different spatial scales.

13.4.4.2 The selection of study areas for each impact and effect are explained below:

- **Socio-economic impacts:** Socio-economic impacts are likely to be realised at a national and local level. Some socio-economic impacts may occur at a neighbourhood level, for example, where jobs are filled by residents, or opportunities are secured by businesses located in the neighbourhood. However, this is unlikely to be significant. Therefore, the local (Scottish Borders) and national (Scotland) study areas are most relevant for socio-economic impacts.

- **Land use effects:** Land use effects relate to the impact of the change in land use and are specific to the project site. Therefore, the study area for land use includes the project site and implications for the surrounding neighbourhood.

- **Tourism and recreation effects:** Tourism and recreation effects could be significant at a neighbourhood level where the community and related tourism and recreation receptors are directly impacted by the project. Tourism accommodation in the wider local area may also be affected.

- **Wider socio-economic effects:** The wider socio-economic effects arising from socio-economic impacts and changes in land use are unlikely to be significant at a national level but may affect very localised industries at the neighbourhood or local level.

Therefore, the neighbourhood (data zone) and local study areas are relevant for assessing wider socio-economic effects.

- **Socio cultural effects:** Socio-cultural effects are not likely to be significant at a national or local level but may be perceived or observed at a small area level where there are changes impacting small communities nearby. Therefore, the neighbourhood and local study areas are relevant for assessing wider socio-economic effects.

13.4.4.3 The neighbourhood study area is used as an area of best fit to define the communities who will be most likely affected at the small area level. Data zones are the key geography used for producing small area statistics in Scotland. The Cockburnspath and Area data zone (S01012313) has been identified as the neighbourhood study area which best fits. The tourism and recreation effects are also assessed at the neighbourhood level, where the study area includes the relevant data zone and any identified receptors within a 5 km buffer of the Proposed Development. The local study area refers to the East Lothian local authority area. The national study area refers to Scotland. **Table 13.4** below summarises the relevant study areas for key impacts and effects. The study area boundaries are shown on **Figure 13.1.**

TABLE 13.4 IMPACTS AND EFFECTS AND RESPECTIVE STUDY AREAS

IMPACTS AND EFFECTS	NEIGHBOURHOOD: COCKBURNSPATH AND AREA	LOCAL: SCOTTISH BORDERS	NATIONAL: SCOTLAND
Socio-economic		✓	✓
Land use	✓	✓	
Tourism and recreation	✓	✓	
Wider socio-economic	✓	✓	
Socio-cultural	✓	✓	

13.5 Baseline Conditions

13.5.1.1 The baseline conditions are explained below. The full baseline data sets are included in **Technical Appendix 13.1: Baseline Data (Technical Appendix 13.1).** The relevant socio-economic data has been summarised and presented against the groups of impacts and effects included in the scope of this assessment. These are socio-economic impacts, land use effects, tourism and recreation effects, wider socio-economic effects, and socio-cultural effects.

13.5.2 Socio-economic

13.5.2.1 **Table 13.4** above indicates that socio-economic impacts will be assessed at both the local and national level. Therefore, the baseline environment for socio-economic impacts is described in this section for the Scottish Borders and Scotland.

Employment and Earnings

13.5.2.2 Scotland has a lower unemployment rate at 3.3% when compared with the rest of the UK (3.8%). Data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) for 2024 shows that gross median weekly earnings for full-time employees resident in Scotland were £740, slightly above the UK average of £728.30[9] . In the Scottish Borders, however, earnings were considerably lower than average, at £667.10. This could suggest that the economy of the Scottish Borders is characterised by employment in typically lower paid sectors.

Economic Activity

13.5.2.3 The rate of economic inactivity is higher in Scotland at 23.0%, compared to 21.5% in the UK[10]. In the Scottish Borders, it is in between the Scotland wide and UK average at 22.4%. Economic inactivity includes people who are not in work and not seeking work, and includes for example, students, retired people, carers and long-term sick people. The rate of economic inactivity that is due to retirement is considerably higher than average in the Scottish Borders, at 22.3% compared with 15.4% for Scotland. The unemployment rate is also below the Scottish average at 3.9%. See **Table 1** in **Technical Appendix 13.1** for further details.

Productivity

13.5.2.4 Scotland's economy is valued at £183,471m GVA per annum in 2022. The Scottish Borders area contributes £2,810m GVA per annum, which is a relatively small contribution to Scotland's economy overall.

13.5.2.5 Scotland tends to have lower rates of productivity than the rest of the UK. GDP per head is £37,192 in Scotland, which is lower than the UK average of £39,845. In the Scottish Borders, GDP per head falls to £27,485[11]. This would suggest the Scottish economy, and the local economy in the Scottish Borders especially, has a higher concentration of jobs in lower value industries.

Economic Structure

13.5.2.6 **Table 4** in **Technical Appendix 13.1** shows that employees working in the Scottish Borders are employed in sectors which are broadly reflective of the wider Scottish economy. The main exception is the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, which employs 6.1% of the local workforce in the Scottish Borders, compared with 1.6% nationally. There is also slightly higher representation of employees in manufacturing; construction; wholesale and retail

[9] ONS (2024), Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.
[10] ONS (2024), Labour Force Survey.
[11] ONS (2025), Annual estimates of balanced UK regional gross domestic product.

and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; and health. In summary, those working in the Scottish Borders are a little more likely to be employed in manual and skilled trades, and a little less likely to be employed in the creative, knowledge and service sectors.

13.5.2.7 The latest data on the UK Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE)[12] shows that Scotland has above average employment in the solar sector, compared to the rest of UK, with a location quotient of above one, which is higher than the same indicator for England. A location quotient above one means the solar industry has a higher concentration of employment in Scotland than the rest of the UK (i.e. it accounts for a higher proportion of employment in Scotland than in the rest of the UK). Whilst this data is not available at the local level, the Scottish Borders has above average employment in some sub sectors prevalent in solar (such as construction), but below average employment in others (including professional, scientific and technical activities). Further information is provided in **Table 4** in **Technical Appendix 13.1**.

Summary

13.5.2.8 In conclusion, the Scottish economy appears to have lower productivity than the UK which could mean a higher concentration of lower value jobs. Unemployment is low and earnings are above average, however at the local level earnings are lower than average suggesting a concentration of employment in lower-paid sectors. Scotland also appears to have above average representation of employment in renewables sectors including solar, which tend to have higher value added. This includes a higher-than-average proportion of employees in the construction sector within the Scottish Borders.

13.5.3 Land Use

13.5.3.1 Land within the site boundary is currently in agricultural use, for a mixture of crops and grazing for sheep and cattle. Land capability for agriculture (LCA) mapping, shown in **Figure 13.3**, shows that the majority of land within the site is classed as LCA4.1, with a smaller area of land classed as LCA3.1. Classes 1 to 3.1 are considered 'prime agricultural land'.

13.5.3.2 The total agricultural area of the Scottish Borders is 367,723 hectares (ha)[13], of which 67,005 ha is classed as prime agricultural land[14]. A total of 70,169 ha is used for growing crops, principally wheat, barley and oilseeds[15]. 262,923 ha is used as grazing, and the Scottish

[12] Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE) (2022), Employment data by solar sector and industry, UK.
[13] Scottish Agricultural Census, June 2024. Available online at: Agricultural+Census+-+June+2024+-+Tables.xlsx
[14] ERM calculations using data from Soil Survey of Scotland Staff (1970-1987), Soil maps of Scotland (partial coverage). Digital version 10 release, James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen. Available online at: Soil maps - James Hutton Institute This dataset is the most detailed dataset available for LCA in Scotland, however it does not provide full coverage of the Scottish Borders local authority area. This calculation has been based on the area of the Scottish Borders for which data is available, however the total area of prime agricultural land within the local authority area is likely to be larger..
[15] Scottish Agricultural Census, June 2024. Available online at: Agricultural+Census+-+June+2024+-+Tables.xlsx

Borders has the largest sheep flock in Scotland (over 1,000,000 head of sheep), and the second largest herd of cattle (135,000 head of cattle)[16].

13.5.4 Tourism and Recreation

13.5.4.1 Tourism is an important sector of the Scottish economy. Visitor data for the Scottish Borders is included in **Technical Appendix 13.1**. This shows there were almost 300,000 domestic visits and a further 26,000 international visits to the Scottish Borders in 2022. Visitor spend for both national and international visits equates to more than £100m per annum[17].

13.5.4.2 Tourism and recreation receptors within 5km of the Proposed Development include:

- Dunglass Estate Events;
- Penmanshiel Memorial Obelisk;
- Cove Harbour;
- Pease Sands;
- Siccar Point;
- Cockburnspath Holiday Park;
- Belstruther Glamping;
- Cockburnspath Holiday Park;
- Pease Bay Leisure Park;
- High View Caravan Park;
- Tower Farm Holidays;
- Neuk Farm Holiday Cottages;
- Cove Farm Wigwam Holidays;
- Bilsdean Waterfall; and
- Pease Dean Scottish Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve.

13.5.4.3 Bowshiel Farm Road is also a core path, Scottish Borders Core Path BB84. It runs through the centre of the site of the Proposed Development, and connects to Core Path 189 to the southwest of the Site, outside of the Site boundary.

[16] Scottish Agricultural Census, June 2024. Available online at: Agricultural+Census+-+June+2024+-+Tables.xlsx
[17] Visit Scotland, Scottish Borders. Available online at: Scottish Borders - Research | VisitScotland.org

13.5.4.4 Land within the site boundary is mostly used for grazing sheep and cattle, with some smaller areas used for growing crops. As set out in Section 13.2, the access rights permitted under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 do not apply to land on which crops have been sown or are growing (paragraph 6 (1) (i) of the Act). It is possible that field boundaries and areas of woodland within the site boundary may be used by the public for recreation, however it is understood that current recreational use of the land is limited.

13.5.4.5 Outside the site boundary, National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 76, which connects Berwick-upon-Tweed to Kirkcaldy in Fife, runs along the coast, on minor roads and on the A1. The coast-to-coast Southern Upland Way (SUW) runs along Pease Bay and ends at Cockburnspath. The SUW connects Cockburnspath to Portpatrick on the West Coast of Dumfries and Galloway. It is 214 miles long, and it was reported in 2024 that an estimated 1,000 people walk the entire length of the path each year, with larger numbers of people walking shorter sections. It is estimated that the SUW generates approximately £500,000 in tourism revenue each year[18]. Crachoctrestrete Heritage Path is around 1km to the west of the site, and the Laird's Road Heritage Path is around 1km to the east[19].

13.5.4.6 All core paths within 5 km of the Proposed Development are mapped on **Figure 13.4**.

13.5.5 Wider Socio-economic

13.5.5.1 **Table 13.4** above indicates that the wider socio-economic effects could occur at the neighbourhood and local levels which are defined as Cockburnspath and Area data zone and the Scottish Borders local authority area. Therefore, the baseline environment for wider socio-economic effects is described for both the neighbouring communities and the Scottish Borders below.

Key Local Industries

13.5.5.2 As explained in **Section 13.5.2** above, the employment profile of Scottish Borders residents is similar to the rest of Scotland, with a few key differences. In particular, there is a considerably higher than average proportion of residents employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. The data suggests that residents in the neighbourhood study area are still more likely to rely on agriculture, forestry and fishing for their livelihoods, with 12.4% of residents employed in the sector. See **Table 4** in **Technical Appendix 13.1**.

13.5.5.3 Employment in the tourism-related sectors of accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment, recreation and other services, is broadly in line with the national average in both the neighbourhood study area and the Scottish Borders.

13.5.5.4 The data shows that residents in the Scottish Borders are more likely to be employed in some sectors relevant to solar projects based on employment by solar sector and industry, including construction, but less likely to be employed in others, such as professional,

[18] BBC, 'Coast-to-coast path reaches 40-year landmark', 26th April 2024. Available online at: Southern Upland Way: Coast-to-coast path reaches 40-year landmark - BBC News
[19] ScotWays, Heritage Paths. Available online at: Heritage Path | ScotWays

scientific and technical activities[20]. In the neighbourhood study area, employment in both of these sectors is below average.

13.5.6 Socio-cultural

13.5.6.1 As noted in **Table 13.4** above, socio-cultural changes have the potential to affect neighbouring communities and potentially the Scottish Borders. Therefore, the baseline environment for socio-cultural effects is described for both the neighbourhood and the Scottish Borders below.

Population and Demographics

13.5.6.2 The Cockburnspath and Area data zone has a population of 721 people (based on the Census 2022). The main settlement in the data zone is the village of Cockburnspath, approximately 2.5km to the north of the Proposed Development, with the remainder of the local population dispersed across smaller settlements and farmsteads in this rural setting.

13.5.6.3 The community has an older age profile. More than half of the local community are aged over 50 (55%) which is marginally higher than the Scottish Borders (54%) and considerably higher than Scotland (41%)[21]. The community has under representation of all age groups below 50 in comparison to the Scottish average, with the exception of children aged between 5 and 9 who make up a marginally higher than average proportion of the population. In terms of ethnicity, most of the community is White with 1.5% of the community representing other ethnic groups. The proportion of residents who are considered disabled under the Equality Act is slightly lower than average, despite the area having an ageing population. See **Technical Appendix 13.1** for further information.

Deprivation

13.5.6.4 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a relative measure of deprivation in Scotland. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing. SIMD is used to understand the outcomes and circumstances of people living in the most deprived areas in Scotland. It ranks each data zone from most deprived to least deprived. Neighbourhoods ranking in the top 20% most deprived areas tend to be a priority for government policy and intervention.

13.5.6.5 **Figure 13.2** shows that the neighbourhood study area ranks within the 50% most deprived in Scotland overall. However, it is in the 10% most deprived in terms of geographical access to services, reflecting its rural and relatively remote location.

Social Infrastructure

13.5.6.6 Socio-cultural changes caused by the construction of the proposed development could have the potential to affect the availability of social infrastructure and services. Social

[20] Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE) (2022), Employment data by solar sector and industry, UK.
[21] NRS, Census 2022.

infrastructure includes local housing supply as well as education and health receptors, summarised below:

13.5.6.7 **Housing:** There are over 55,000 households in the Scottish Borders, with slightly below average owner occupancy and slightly higher than average rates of private renting. The median house price is £176,000, lower than the Scottish average (£189,000). The neighbouring community comprises 339 households and has owner occupancy rates that are considerably higher than both the Scottish Borders and Scotland averages. Land Register of Scotland data is not available at the neighbourhood level, however searches of Rightmove and ESPC conducted in March 2025 found no properties on the market in the Cockburnspath area. Properties for sale in the surrounding areas are well in excess of the Scottish Borders and Scotland average house price. There are also very few rental properties on the market nearby.

13.5.6.8 **Education:** There are 58 primary schools in the Scottish Borders, of which one, Cockburnspath Primary School, is located in the neighbourhood study area. As of September 2023, Cockburnspath Primary School had a pupil roll of 44, 58.7% of its total capacity of 75[22]. There are nine secondary schools in the Scottish Borders, the nearest of which to the neighbourhood study area is Berwickshire High School at Duns, approximately 14 miles away, and Eyemouth High School, approximately 15 miles away. Both of these schools were operating at less than 75% of their capacity in September 2023. The nearest secondary school to Cockburnspath is Dunbar Grammar School in neighbouring East Lothian, which was at 93.4% of its capacity in September 2023.

13.5.6.9 **Health:** In October 2022, there were 23 GP practices within the Scottish Borders, with an average practice list of 5,264 patients. This is smaller than the national average practice list of 6,470[23]. There are no GP practices within the neighbourhood study area, with the nearest being Eyemouth Medical Practice and Duns Medical Practice[24]. As with secondary schools, above, the nearest GP practices to Cockburnspath are located in Dunbar in neighbouring East Lothian. There is a community hospital in Dunbar, however the nearest hospital with an Accident and Emergency department is the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

13.6 Assessment of Effects

13.6.1 Construction

Socio-economic

13.6.1.1 Socio-economic impacts are measured in terms of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs and Gross Value Added (GVA) and are assessed at the level of the local study area (the Scottish Borders) and Scotland. Estimates of jobs and GVA are derived from project capital expenditure (CAPEX). The construction period is anticipated to be from 30th April 2030 to 31st October 2031 which would be an 18-month construction period.

[22] Scottish Government (2024), School Estate Statistics.
[23] Public Health Scotland (2022), GP Workforce and Practice List Sizes.
[24] NHS Inform (2025), Scotland's Service Directory.

13.6.1.2 The CAPEX has been derived using information provided by Voltalia (the Applicant) and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which provides an estimated construction cost per kilowatt (KW) of solar capacity[25]. Using this methodology and uplifting the costs into 2025 prices the total CAPEX has been calculated as £50.3m. Based on research of existing studies and literature[26],[27] the CAPEX has been split across three spend categories; materials (53%), labour (28%) and equipment and other costs (19%). These categories have been used to estimate the employment sectors and assigned a Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code and relevant FTE and GVA effects and multipliers from the Scottish Government input-output tables[28], which are then used to estimate direct, indirect and induced effects. There is limited UK evidence or guidance on the solar supply chain. Based on professional judgement, the assessment assumes 100% of CAPEX will be spent in Scotland, with 35% being in the Scottish Borders and 65% will be spent in the rest of Scotland. The assumed split of CAPEX between local and national spend is based upon recent studies[29].

13.6.1.3 Based on the method described above, **Table 13.5** shows that the construction of the Proposed Development would create a total of 880 direct FTE person years of employment over the 18 month construction period, with a further 407 indirect and 494 induced person years in the supply chain. Of these, 308 direct person years, 142 indirect person years, and 210 induced person years would be within the local study area. Indirect employment refers to jobs created as a result of linked purchases within the supply chain, and induced employment refers to those created by local spend by construction workers.

TABLE 13.5 HEADLINE CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

TYPE	LOCAL	NATIONAL	TOTAL
Direct FTEs	308	572	880
Indirect FTEs	142	264	407
Induced FTEs	210	283	494
Total	**661**	**1,119**	**1,780**

Source: ERM 2025 (may not sum due to rounding)

[25] Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (2023) Contracts for Difference. Methodology used to set Administrative Strike Prices for CfD Allocation Round 6
[26] NREL (2023) Clean Energy Employment Impacts. Online. Available at < Clean Energy Employment Impacts >
[27] Ethos Urban (2023) Goulburn River Solar Farm. Online. Available at < Appendix-19-Economic-Impact-Assessment.pdf >
[28] Scottish Government (2024) Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998 – 2021. Online. Available at < Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables: 1998-2021 - gov.scot >
[29] Ethos Urban (2023) Goulburn River Solar Farm.

13.6.1.4 In the local study area, the sensitivity of the labour market is assessed as low as the current labour supply force in the construction and manufacturing sectors are capable of absorbing the impact. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as medium. As there would be temporary alterations to existing industries (construction and manufacturing), the new FTEs would crudely account for 4.2% of the manufacturing and construction sectors (estimated in the baseline at 7,395 employees in 2023). This results in a minor adverse effect that is not significant.

13.6.1.5 Construction would create a further 572 direct, 264 indirect and 283 induced FTE person years of employment elsewhere in Scotland. The sensitivity of the national labour market is assessed as low, as the national economy is anticipated to have the ability to absorb change without altering characteristics. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible as there would be a barely perceptible alteration to existing industry sectors (manufacturing and construction) from direct and indirect jobs. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

GVA

13.6.1.6 **Table 13.6** shows that the construction of the Proposed Development would generate a total of £40.6m in direct GVA over the 18 month construction period, with a further £15.6m in indirect GVA and £25.5m in induced GVA in the supply chain. Of this, £14.2m of direct GVA, £5.5m of indirect GVA, and £8.9m of induced GVA would be within the local study area.

TABLE 13.6 HEADLINE CONSTRUCTION GVA IMPACTS

TYPE	LOCAL	NATIONAL	TOTAL
Direct GVA	£14.2	£26.4	£40.6
Indirect GVA	£5.5	£10.1	£15.6
Induced GVA	£8.9	£16.6	£25.5
Total	**£28.6**	**£53.1**	**£81.7**

Source: ERM 2025 (may not sum due to rounding)

13.6.1.7 For impacts associated with GVA within the local study area, the sensitivity of the baseline is assessed as low as the local economy is receptive to change and has the ability to absorb the change. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible as there would be a slight alteration to overall GVA, with a total of £14.2m added to total GVA estimated at £2,506m (2022) – accounting for just 0.5% of total GVA. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

13.6.1.8 Construction would create a further £26.4m direct, £10.1m indirect and £16.6m induced GVA elsewhere in Scotland. In the national study area, the sensitivity of the baseline is assessed as low, as the economy of Scotland is receptive to change and can absorb the change. The magnitude of the effect is assessed as negligible as there would be a barely perceptible alteration to the existing GVA through the addition of £53.1m during the construction of the Development. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

Land Use

13.6.1.9 Construction of the Proposed Development would require the temporary use of a total of approximately 190.3 ha of agricultural land, for a period of 40 years. **Table 13.7** provides a breakdown of the area of land that would be required temporarily by land capability for agriculture classification. 1.2 ha of the land required is LCA class 3.1 and therefore considered prime agricultural land[30]. This accounts for a very small proportion (less than 0.2%[31]) of all prime agricultural land in the Scottish Borders.

TABLE 13.7 LAND REQUIREMENTS BY CAPABILITY FOR AGRICULTURE CLASS

LAND CAPABILITY FOR AGRICULTURE CLASS	DESCRIPTION	AREA REQUIRED TEMPORARILY
3.1	Land capable of producing consistently high yields of a narrow range of crops and/or moderate yields of a wider range	1.2
3.2	Land capable of average production though high yields of barley, oats and grass can be obtained. Grass leys are common.	44.8
4.1	Land capable of producing a narrow range of crops, primarily grassland with short arable breaks of forage crops and cereal	139.5
6.1	Land capable of use as rough grazings with a high proportion of palatable plants.	4.7
Total prime agricultural land requirement:		1.3

Source: ERM calculations based on Soil Survey of Scotland Staff (1970-1987), Soil maps of Scotland (partial coverage).

13.6.1.10 While this land would be required for the 40 year lifespan of the Proposed Development, following decommissioning, the photovoltaic (PV) modules, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure would be removed, and the land would be reinstated. As the land would be returned to agricultural use, there would be no permanent impact on the availability of land for agriculture. There is some evidence that use of agricultural land for solar farms can give soils the opportunity to recover from intensive use, with the

[30] LCA lasses 1 to 3.1 are considered 'prime agricultural land'

[31] The Soil maps of Scotland (partial coverage) dataset is the most detailed dataset available for LCA in Scotland, however it does not provide full coverage of the Scottish Borders local authority area. This calculation has been based on the area of the Scottish Borders for which data is available. The proportion of the total prime agricultural land in the Scottish Borders, including the area for which data is not available, is likely to be smaller.

potential for longer term benefits[32]. Impacts on soils are outside the scope of this chapter and are assessed in **Chapter 10: Geology and Soils.**

13.6.1.11 As the land that would be lost temporarily is mostly LCA class 4.1, with only a very small area of LCA class 3.1, the sensitivity of the resource is assessed as medium. The area of land that would be required temporarily comprises a very small proportion of the total agricultural area of the Scottish Borders, and less than 0.2% of prime agricultural land in the area. The loss of this land would be reversible on decommissioning and reinstatement of the land, and it is expected that there would be no permanent loss. The magnitude of the impact is therefore assessed to be low. This results in a minor adverse effect on the availability of agricultural land in the Scottish Borders that would not be significant.

Tourism and Recreation

13.6.1.12 Bowshiel Farm Road / Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 passes through the site of the Proposed Development and connects to Core Path BB189. It is proposed that there would be solar PV modules on either side of the core path, and that there would be three access tracks leading off it. The core path would also be used as an access route to the Site. **Chapter 11: Traffic and Transport** reports that it is proposed that this route is kept open throughout the construction phases, and that a management strategy is required to address the interactions between the core path and the Site during construction. This could include potential re-routing of the core path, maintaining the current route with enhanced signage, temporary closure or restriction of access as required, and an active management for crossing points and shared access routes.

13.6.1.13 Much of the land within the site boundary is currently used for grazing sheep and cattle rather than for crops, and it is understood that there is limited use of the land by local residents and visitors for recreational purposes. The right of responsible access (see **Section 13.2**) would be maintained as far as is practicable, however during construction it is proposed that public access to some parts of the site would be restricted for safety and security purposes.

13.6.1.14 The assessment has considered the potential for effects on amenity for users of core paths and other tourism receptors from a combination of noise, visual and traffic effects. **Chapter 11: Traffic and Transport** reports that there could be a decrease in amenity for users of Scottish Borders Core Path BB84, but that the measures outlined above would mitigate the effect. **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual** reports that there would be significant adverse visual effects for users of Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 through the site of the Proposed Development, for users of the SUW long distance route, and other local routes that connect to the SUW. There would not be any significant adverse visual effects on other receptors.

13.6.1.15 **Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration** reports that there would not be any significant adverse effects associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. The noise assessment focuses on Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSRs), all of which are residential properties, and does not assess effects for outdoor locations including core paths. However, any noise associated with construction activity would be temporary and short-

[32] Solar Energy UK (2024), Factsheet: Solar Farms and Agricultural Land. Available online at: FactSheet: Solar Farms and Agricultural Land 2024 | Final

term, and recreational users of core paths are transitory, reducing their sensitivity to any potential noise impacts on the core path network.

13.6.1.16 **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual** notes that Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 is an effective dead-end for walkers, as it joins the A1 dual carriageway where there is no parking area and there are no onward links for pedestrians. This limits the recreational use of the route. The SUW, however, is a promoted recreational route, which attracts thousands of walkers each year (see data presented in the baseline).

13.6.1.17 In terms of access, **Chapter 11: Transport Statement** concludes that the increase in traffic on local roads associated with construction would be negligible in terms of traffic flows and existing capacity. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be any impact on access to tourism and recreation receptors within the study area.

13.6.1.18 Given the importance of the SUW as a promoted long-distance path and the use of core paths and other areas within the site boundary for recreational purposes, the sensitivity of tourism and recreation receptors within the 5km study area is assessed as medium. It is proposed that Core Path BB189 would be kept open, and any restriction to access within the site boundary would affect a small portion of the overall site area. It is not expected that there would be any significant noise effects for users of core paths, and the section of the SUW that would be impacted by changes in the visual environment is a relatively small proportion of the overall length of the route. The magnitude of the impact is therefore assessed as low. This results in a minor adverse effect that would not be significant.

Wider Socio-economic Effects

Agriculture and food production

13.6.1.19 The baseline demonstrates the importance of the agricultural sector to the local economy, with 12.4% of employees in the neighbourhood study area employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing, compared with 6.1% in the Scottish Borders and 1.6% across Scotland as a whole. Table 13.7 shows that the construction of the Proposed Development would require the temporary loss of approximately 190.3 ha of agricultural land, including 1.2 ha of prime agricultural land for a period of 40 years. It is anticipated that the land would be returned to agricultural use post-decommissioning, and so there would be no permanent loss. The land required comprises less than 0.2% of the prime agricultural land available in the Scottish Borders.

13.6.1.20 There is the potential for wider impacts on the agricultural sector in the Scottish Borders and the neighbourhood study area, on food production, and on the security of food supplies. It is understood that the affected land is used primarily for grazing sheep and cattle, however it is not known what role the livestock grazed on this land plays in local food supply chains. While some small parts of the site (for example the area where the BESS will be located) will be removed from any agricultural use for the lifespan of the project, there may be opportunities for some agricultural uses, such as grazing of sheep, to continue around the solar array. Industry bodies such as Solar Energy UK recognise that solar farms can have multiple, simultaneous uses, supporting grazing and improving biodiversity alongside

generating renewable energy[33]. Farm diversification, including the use of agricultural land for solar projects, can also help to support farm profitability and viability.

13.6.1.21 Given the importance of agriculture to the local economy, the sensitivity of the sector in the neighbourhood study area and the Scottish Borders is assessed as medium. The loss of agricultural land would be small – at less than 0.1% of the total agricultural area of the Scottish Borders – and temporary, for a period of 40 years. It is therefore expected that the impact on employment and productivity in the neighbourhood and Scottish Borders agricultural sector would be minimal. The land is currently used primarily for grazing sheep and cattle. The Scottish Borders has among the largest herds of sheep and cattle in Scotland, and a large area of land available for grazing. The impact on food production and security is therefore also expected to be small. Overall, the magnitude of the impact on the wider agricultural sector in the neighbourhood study area and the Scottish Borders is assessed as low. The magnitude of the impact is therefore assessed as low. This results in a minor adverse effect on the wider agriculture sector that would not be significant.

Tourism

13.6.1.22 Employment in tourism-related sectors is slightly below average in the neighbourhood study area, at 6.1% in the accommodation and food sector, compared with 6.3% in the Scottish Borders and 6.9% for Scotland as a whole, and 3.3% in the arts, entertainment, recreation and other services sector compared with 3% in the Scottish Borders and 2.7% for Scotland as a whole. Direct and indirect impacts on tourism receptors are discussed in paragraphs 13.6.1.12 to 13.6.1.18. The assessment has not identified any significant effects for tourism and recreation receptors within 5km of the Proposed Development.

13.6.1.23 Major tourism attractions in the Scottish Borders include the coastal towns of St Abbs and Eyemouth, and historic properties such as Melrose Abbey, Abbotsford House and Floors Castle, all of which are outside of the 5 km study area and would not be impacted directly by the construction of the Proposed Development. Data from the Scotland Visitor Survey 2023 shows that the top attraction or activity visited or undertaken by visitors to the Scottish Borders was visiting a cathedral, church, abbey or other place of worship (43% of visitors)[34]. The area is also popular for outdoor recreation, with attractions including the long-distance Southern Uplands Way footpath and mountain bike trails at Glentress Forest near Peebles.

13.6.1.24 There could be some additional demand for tourism accommodation associated with an incoming construction workforce. It is estimated that the construction of the Proposed Development would create a total of 880 direct FTE jobs over the 18 month construction programme, of which 308 would be taken up by workers living in the Scottish Borders and 572 by workers living elsewhere in Scotland. At the peak of construction it is expected that there would be an average of up to 150 workers required on site each day. Assuming a similar split, this would equate to an average of approximately 100 workers from outside of the Scottish Borders working on site each day.

[33] Solar Energy UK, Solar farms no threat to food security, 15th May 2024. Available online at: Solar farms 'no threat to food security' Solar Energy UK
[34] Visit Scotland (2023), Scotland Visitor Survey 2023, Local Area Factsheet: Scottish Borders. Available online at: Scottish Borders - Tourism Research & Insights | VisitScotland.org

13.6.1.25 It is anticipated that many of these workers would travel from the neighbouring local authority area of East Lothian and from the City of Edinburgh, which is within one hour's travel time of the site, and would therefore not require accommodation in the neighbourhood study area. However, there may be a smaller portion of the workforce that would travel from further afield and would require temporary accommodation nearby. The baseline information set out in Section 13.5.4 shows that there are a number of holiday parks and self-catering complexes located within 5km of the Proposed Development.

13.6.1.26 Employment in the tourism sector is often seasonal, and the employment created by the construction of the Proposed Development could introduce additional competition for workers. However, the socio-economic assessment set out above shows that there is capacity within the Scottish Borders construction and manufacturing sector to absorb the additional demand, and so it is not expected that there would be any largescale displacement of workers from tourism-related sectors.

13.6.1.27 Should the peak of construction coincide with the peak summer tourist season, any increase in demand for tourist accommodation could result in displacement of tourists, with negative knock-on effects for hospitality and tourism-related businesses in the Scottish Borders. Outside of the peak season, there could be positive effects for businesses from the additional demand. However, the proportion of construction workers expected to require accommodation locally is small, and so the magnitude of the impact would be minor.

13.6.1.28 As employment in tourism-related sectors of the economy is below average, the sensitivity of the tourism sector in the neighbourhood study area and the Scottish Borders is assessed as low. As there would be no significant effects for tourism and recreation receptors, and as the additional demand for tourism accommodation is expected to be relatively small, the magnitude of the impact on the tourism sector in the neighbourhood study area and the Scottish Borders is also assessed as low. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

Socio-cultural

Population change and access to services

13.6.1.29 As discussed above, it is estimated that the construction of the Proposed Development would create a total of 880 direct FTE jobs over the 18 month construction programme, of which 308 would be taken up by workers living in the Scottish Borders and 572 by workers living elsewhere in Scotland. This equates to an average of up to 150 workers required on site each day at the peak of construction.

13.6.1.30 It is anticipated that many of these workers would travel from the neighbouring local authority area of East Lothian and from the City of Edinburgh, which is within one hour's travel time of the site and would therefore not require accommodation in the neighbourhood study area. There is very little housing available locally and it is considered that any workers travelling from further afield who would require temporary housing would be more likely to use tourism accommodation (assessed above).

13.6.1.31 As the construction programme is relatively short at 18 months, it is not anticipated that construction workers moving to the area temporarily would bring their families with them. This reduces the likely impact on local demographics and on access to services including housing, health and education. The sensitivity of the population in the neighbourhood study

area and the Scottish Borders is assessed as low. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

Sense of place

13.6.1.32 While any impact on local demographics or service provision is likely to be small, the construction of the Proposed Development could affect local identity and the sense of place within the neighbourhood study area due to changes in land use, impacts on traditional local industries, and environmental effects such as temporary increases in noise and changes in the visual environment. As noted above, agriculture is an important employer locally and forms a key aspect of the local identity within the neighbourhood study area.

13.6.1.33 As discussed above, it is not expected that there would be a significant effect on the agricultural sector, although there would be a temporary loss of agricultural land associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual** reports that there would be significant adverse visual effects for users of Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 through the site of the Proposed Development, and for users of the SUW long distance route and other local routes that connect to the SUW. Effects on landscape character are assessed as not significant.

13.6.1.34 **Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration** and **Chapter 11: Transport Statement** report that there would not be any significant adverse effects associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. **Chapter 11: Transport Statement** notes that there could be a decrease in amenity for non-motorised users of Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 / Bowshiel Farm Road, however mitigation measures would be put in place to mitigate any risk.

13.6.1.35 The temporary change in land use from agricultural land, in combination with adverse visual effects for users of core paths and other routes within the vicinity of the site, could result in localised effects on the sense of place for residents of and visitors to the immediate local area during the construction of the Proposed Development. However, there are no significant visual effects predicted for residential properties or other receptors, and it is not expected that there would be a significant effect on landscape character.

13.6.1.36 Given concerns expressed by stakeholders regarding the sense of place in the area, the sensitivity of the local population of Cockburnspath and Area is assessed as medium. As the impact would be highly localised and would affect users of core paths rather than residential properties, the magnitude of the impact is assessed as low. This results in a minor adverse effect that would not be significant.

13.6.2 Operation and Maintenance

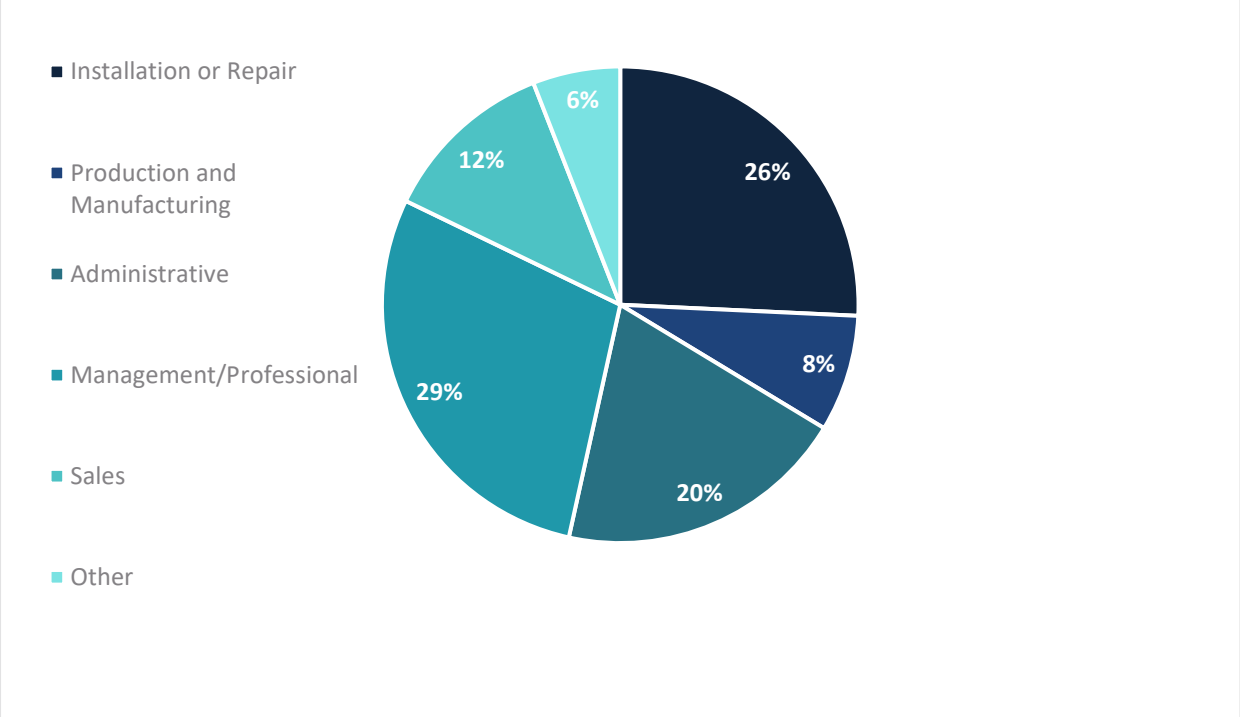
Socio-economic

Employment

13.6.2.1 It is proposed that the Development would be operational for a period of 40 years with the first year of operation being 2032. The operational expenditure (OPEX) has been estimated using information provided by the Applicant and qualified using professional judgement and adjusted for inflation. The average annual OPEX is estimated to be £1.2m per annum.

13.6.2.2 The breakdown of potential employment opportunities has been derived from existing literature and sources which shows a diverse skill range of employment from entry level jobs such as a solar installer to an advanced level job such as a solar project manager[35]. **Chart 13.1** shows the National Solar Jobs Census (2023[36]) occupational profile for operations and maintenance of solar farms. Operations and maintenance roles would require specialists to monitor the system performance in order to assess faults, determine and schedule maintenance, solar cleaning and data analysis[37].

CHART 13.1 SOLAR OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE JOBS BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY



Source: IREC, 2024

13.6.2.3 **Table 13.8** shows the estimated employment figures for the Proposed Development in the first full year of operation (2032). It is estimated that the operation and maintenance phase would create a total of 12 direct FTEs, with a further 5 indirect FTEs and 8 induced FTEs in the supply chain. Of these, it is expected that the majority (10 of the direct FTEs, 4 of the indirect FTEs, and 7 of the induced FTEs) would be retained within the local study area.

[35] Interstate Renewable Energy Council (2025) Solar Career Map. Online. Available at < Home | Solar Career Map >
[36] Interstate Renewable Energy Council (2024) National Solar Jobs Census 2023. Online. Available at < Census Solar Job Trends - Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) >
[37] Solar Energy Scotland (2022) Solar Skills Scotland – The job creation potential of Scottish solar. Online. Available at < Solar-Skills-Scotland-Briefing_May2022.pdf >

TABLE 13.8 HEADLINE OPERATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IMPACTS

TYPE	LOCAL	NATIONAL	TOTAL
Direct FTEs	10	2	12
Indirect FTEs	4	1	5
Induced FTEs	7	1	8
Total	**21**	**3**	**24**

Source: ERM 2025 (may not sum due to rounding)

13.6.2.4 In the local study area, the baseline sensitivity is assessed as low as there is an existing supply of labour in the area in the sectors that would be required. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible, as there would be barely perceptible alterations to existing industries that would not be big enough to create structural economic change, with a total of seven jobs in the local area being created in sectors that account for 2,500 jobs as per the baseline data (in 2023) – accounting for less than 1% of the current baseline. While long-term operational employment directly and in the supply chain would bring benefits to the local economy, the overall effect is assessed as negligible effect and therefore not significant.

13.6.2.5 Operation and maintenance would create a further 2 direct, 1 indirect and 1 induced FTE job elsewhere in Scotland. Nationally it has been estimated that there is a demand of 1,563 estimated operations and maintenance jobs in Scotland in the solar industry in 2025[38]. As such the sensitivity of the national study area is assessed as low as the two operational and maintenance jobs would account for just 0.1% of the total national demand. Additionally, the national economy is anticipated to have the ability to absorb change initiated by job creation without altering characteristics. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible as there would be a barely perceptible change to the existing sectors. Additionally, while recent reports show that people employed in the solar industry in Scotland have the necessary skills, there is a "significant shortage of skilled labour[39]". While this may be the case, it is anticipated that with some adaption the existing training provision can provide the skills to those who do not have existing direct solar industry experience. Therefore, this results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

GVA

13.6.2.6 **Table 13.9** shows that the operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development would generate a total of £0.6m in direct GVA annually, with a further £0.1m in indirect GVA and

[38] Climate Exchange (2024) Mapping current and future workforce and skills requirements in Scotland's solar industry. Online. Available at < Mapping current and future workforce and skills requirements in Scotland's solar industry >
[39] Climate Exchange (2024) Mapping current and future workforce and skills requirements in Scotland's solar industry. Online. Available at < Mapping current and future workforce and skills requirements in Scotland's solar industry >

£0.3m in induced GVA in the supply chain. Of this, the majority (£0.5m of direct GVA, £0.1m of indirect GVA, and £0.3m of induced GVA) would be retained within the local study area.

TABLE 13.9 HEADLINE OPERATIONAL GVA IMPACTS

TYPE	LOCAL	NATIONAL	TOTAL
Direct GVA	£0.5	£0.1	£0.6
Indirect GVA	£0.1	£0.0	£0.1
Induced GVA	£0.2	£0.0	£0.3
Total	**£0.8**	**£0.1**	**£1.0**

Source: ERM 2025

13.6.2.7 The sensitivity of the baseline in the local study area is assessed as low as the local economy is receptive and can absorb change. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible as there would be a barely perceptible alteration to the GVA, with a total of direct GVA of £0.5m to a GVA per annum added to a GVA estimated at £2,506m as per the baseline data (2022). While this would be a benefit to the local economy, the effect is assessed as negligible and therefore not significant.

13.6.2.8 Operation and maintenance would generate a further £0.1m direct, minimal indirect and minimal induced GVA elsewhere in Scotland. The sensitivity of the national study area is assessed as low as the national economy is receptive to and can absorb change. The magnitude of the impact is assessed as negligible as there would be a barely perceptible alteration to the existing GVA through the addition of £0.1m per annum during the operation and maintenance of the Development. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

Land Use

13.6.2.9 The temporary loss of land required for the Proposed Development would occur during the construction phase and is therefore assessed as a construction effect. There would be no additional impacts on land use during operation.

Tourism and Recreation

13.6.2.10 It is not anticipated that there would be any closures or diversions to core paths during operation. The right of responsible access (see **Section 13.2**) would be maintained as far as is practicable, and public access to land within the site would be maintained where this it is safe to do so. There may be certain areas of the site where access would be restricted for safety and security purposes.

13.6.2.11 There may be a visual impact for users of Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 and parts of the SUW. These are assessed in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual**. **Chapter 12 Noise and Vibration** reports that there would not be any significant noise effects during operation, therefore there would not be any effect on amenity for users of tourism and recreation receptors from a combination of noise and visual effects.

13.6.2.12 As there are alternative routes for walking available within the local area and it is understood that existing use of the land for recreational purposes is limited, the sensitivity of the receptor is assessed as low. As access to land within the site would be maintained as far as practicable, the magnitude of the impact is also assessed as low. This results in a negligible effect that would not be significant.

Wider Socio-economic

13.6.2.13 Wider socio-economic effects on the agriculture sector associated with the temporary loss of land required for the Proposed Development would occur during the construction phase and are therefore assessed as construction effects. There would be no additional impacts on the agriculture or tourism sectors during operation.

Socio-cultural

Population change and access to services

13.6.2.14 It is estimated that, once in operation, the Proposed Development would create a total of 12 direct FTE jobs, of which 10 would be taken up by workers living in the Scottish Borders and 2 by workers living elsewhere in Scotland. As the number of jobs created is small, and it is unlikely that workers would seek to relocate to the neighbourhood study area, it is not expected that there would be any impact on the local population, or on community services such as health and education.

Sense of place

13.6.2.15 While it is not expected that there would be any impact on local demographics or on service provision, once in operation the Proposed Development could affect local identity and the sense of place within the neighbourhood study area due to changes in land use, impacts on traditional local industries, and changes in the visual environment.

13.6.2.16 As noted above, agriculture is an important employer locally and forms a key aspect of the local identity within the neighbourhood study area. The temporary loss of agricultural land would occur during the construction phase, however the potential knock-on effect of this for the local sense of place would be qualitatively different during operation due to the visual impact associated with the solar PV modules.

13.6.2.17 As discussed in the construction assessment, **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Report** reports that there would be significant adverse visual effects for users of Scottish Borders Core Path BB84 and parts of the SUW. Views of the solar PV modules from some of these receptors would be increasingly screened as proposed landscape mitigation grows. Beyond the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, visual effects would be small or negligible, and therefore not significant. Effects on landscape character are also assessed as not significant. **Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration** and **Chapter 11: Transport Statement** report that there would not be any significant adverse effects associated with the operation of the Proposed Development.

13.6.2.18 Given concerns expressed by some stakeholders regarding the sense of place in the area, the sensitivity of the local population of the neighbourhood study area is assessed as medium. As the impact would affect users of core paths and other recreational receptors rather than residential properties or community receptors, the magnitude of the impact on

sense of place and community identity in the neighbourhood study area as a whole is assessed as low. This results in a minor adverse effect that would not be significant.

13.6.3 Decommissioning

13.6.3.1 For most aspects of the assessment, any effects arising from the decommissioning of the Proposed Development are expected to be comparable to, or less than, those arising during construction.

13.6.3.2 Following decommissioning, it is anticipated that it should be possible for the majority of land required for the construction of the Proposed Development to be returned to agricultural use.

13.6.4 Cumulative Effects

13.6.4.1 There is the potential for the Proposed Development, in combination with other projects, to result in cumulative effects. The assessment has considered the potential for cumulative effects as a result of the Proposed Development in combination with the projects listed in **Table 4.5** in **Chapter 4: EIA Methodology**, all of which are within a 5km buffer of the Proposed Development. In addition, the assessment has considered the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with the proposed Crystal Rig solar development. Crystal Rig is outside the 5km buffer but has been included in the assessment due to the potential cumulative effect on agricultural land associated with solar projects.

Socio-economics, Wider Socio-economic Effects and Socio-cultural Effects

13.6.4.2 Estimated employment projections were not publicly available at the time of writing for any of the cumulative developments, with the exception of the proposed Springfield Solar and BESS project which is expected to have a similar labour requirement to the Proposed Development. There could be benefits for the local economy associated with construction employment and GVA from the construction of the Proposed Development in combination with the cumulative projects. However, should multiple projects come forward concurrently, there is the potential for adverse effects such as displacement of economic activity that could arise due to additional demand on the local labour market, or knock-on socio-cultural effects as a result of demographic change and additional demand for services from incoming construction workers.

13.6.4.3 The cumulative projects considered in this assessment are all at different stages in the planning and development process, and so it is unlikely that the peak construction period associated with the Proposed Development would coincide with the peak construction period for other cumulative schemes, which reduces the potential for significant cumulative effects. The exception to this is the Springfield Solar and BESS project, which currently has a similar timescale and construction programme to the Proposed Development. As both projects are being developed by the Applicant, it is likely that construction activity can be planned and managed to mitigate the potential cumulative effect on the local labour market.

Land Use

13.6.4.4 There could also be cumulative effects on land use due to the land required temporarily or permanently for other schemes in planning. However, most of the cumulative schemes that have been considered as part of this assessment are BESS or grid connection projects which generally do not permanently require large areas of prime agricultural land. While there may be some short-term, temporary loss of agricultural land during construction, and very small permanent losses associated with BESS and other associated infrastructure, these are not likely to be significant.

13.6.4.5 Two other solar PV developments have been considered – Springfield Solar and BESS, located in the East Lothian local authority area, and Crystal Rig Solar, in the Scottish Borders. The site of the proposed Crystal Rig Solar development is within the existing Crystal Rig Wind Farm, and so the construction and operation of the development would not require any land currently in agricultural use. The EIAR for the proposed Springfield Solar and BESS shows that the development is located on land that is primarily LCA 3.2, with a smaller area of LCA 3.1. There would therefore be a cumulative, temporary requirement for 22.1 ha of prime agricultural land across the Proposed Development and the proposed Springfield Solar and BESS. This represents a very small proportion of the prime agricultural land in East Lothian, the Scottish Borders, and Scotland as a whole, and would therefore not be significant.

Tourism and Recreation

13.6.4.6 Details of direct and indirect impacts on core paths, land used for recreation, and other tourism and recreation receptors were not publicly available at the time of writing for any of the cumulative developments, with the exception of the proposed Springfield Solar and BESS project. The EIAR for the Springfield Solar and BESS project concludes that there would be a minor adverse effect on tourism and recreation during construction, and a minor adverse effect during operation, due to amenity effects for users of core paths and potential restrictions on access to land currently used for recreation. It is not expected that there would be any temporary or permanent closures of core paths. As there are numerous alternative routes and areas available for walking within East Lothian and the Scottish Borders, it is not expected that there would be a significant cumulative effect.

13.6.5 Mitigation

13.6.5.1 Mitigation was embedded into the design of the Proposed Development through the site selection and design evolution process. **Chapter 3: Development Description** provides further details of the mitigation embedded into the design of the Proposed Development

13.6.5.2 Further relevant mitigation measures are set out in the outline Construction Environment Management Plan (oCEMP) (**Technical Appendix 3.1: oCEMP**). The oCEMP comprises good practice methods and guidelines, including UK and Scottish guidance on good practice for construction of infrastructure projects. These are established and effective measures to which the applicant will be committed to throughout the planning consent and duration of the Proposed Development.

13.6.5.3 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be prepared and submitted to the Scottish Borders Council for approval Prior to the commencement of construction works on

Site. **Chapter 11: Transport Statement** provides details of the likely measures to be included in the CTMP, including in relation to the management of core paths.

13.6.5.4 No further mitigation is proposed to address the effects assessed in this chapter.

13.6.6 Residual Effects

13.6.6.1 It is not expected that there would be any residual significant land use, socio-economics, tourism or recreation effects.

13.7 Summary and Conclusions

13.7.1.1 The construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development would create employment and GVA, both directly and within the supply chain, which would benefit the local economy within the Scottish Borders. While operational employment would be small, the jobs created would be for the duration of the operational phase, i.e. 40 years, and would therefore be a long-term benefit to the local economy.

13.7.1.2 There would be temporary loss of agricultural land within the site boundary for a period of 40 years, however this would be reversible on decommissioning and it is not expected that there would be any significant adverse effect on food production or the wider agricultural sector. There may be opportunities for some grazing to continue around the solar array during the lifespan of the project.

13.7.1.3 There would also be minor adverse effects on amenity for users of core paths and the SUW. These would not be significant and there would be no significant adverse effect on the tourism sector as a whole, including as a result of additional demand from construction workers for tourist accommodation.

13.7.1.4 During construction, there could be socio-cultural effects associated with the temporary changes in demographics, additional demand for services, changes in local identity and sense of place, however the magnitude of these impacts would be small to negligible and there would therefore be no significant adverse effects.

13.7.1.5 The findings of the assessment are summarised in **Table 13.10**.

TABLE 13.10 SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

SCOPE	POTENTIALEFFECTS	STUDY AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	
			CONTRUCTION	O&M
Socio-economic	Direct, indirect, and induced employment created by the project	Local	Minor beneficial	Negligible
		National	Negligible	Negligible
	Direct, indirect, and induced productivity gains measured as GVA	Local	Negligible	Negligible
		National	Negligible	Negligible
Land use	Temporary loss of agricultural land	Site area	Negligible	N/A
Tourism and recreation	Effects on tourism and recreation receptors (quality and access) including core paths, open spaces, and accommodation	Site area plus 5km	Minor adverse	Negligible
Wider socio-economic	Effects on industries arising from socio-economic impacts, specifically agriculture and food production	Neighbourhood	Minor adverse	N/A
		Local	Minor adverse	N/A
	Effects on industries arising from socio-economic impacts, specifically tourism	Neighbourhood	Negligible	N/A
		Local	Negligible	N/A
Socio-cultural	Local population change and impacts on access to local services	Neighbourhood	Negligible	N/A
		Local	Negligible	N/A
		Neighbourhood	Minor adverse	Minor adverse

SCOPE	POTENTIALEFFECTS	STUDY AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	
			CONTRUCTION	O&M
	Change in local identity and sense of place, and impacts on community wellbeing	Local	Minor adverse	Minor adverse