

Agenda Item	6.3
Report No	PLN/039/25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee

Date: 11 June 2025

Report Title: 25/00106/S37: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc
Chleansaid Wind Farm, Dalnessie, Rogart

Report By: Area Planning Manager – North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Erection and operation of a 10.5km 132kV overhead electricity line, approximately 3 km to the north of Lairg between Chleansaid Wind Farm and Dalchork Substaion.

Ward: 01 – North West and Central Sutherland

Development category: National Development

Reason referred to Committee: Scottish Government Consultation

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **Raise No Objection** as set out in section 11 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The Highland Council has been consulted by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit on an application made under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) for the construction and operation of a new 132kV overhead transmission line (OHL), supported by wood poles to connect Chleansaid Wind Farm to the existing Dalchork substation. This application comes under the category of "national development" as set out in National Planning Framework (NPF4).
- 1.2 The development comprises of a new single circuit OHL measuring 10.5km in length. The 132 kV OHL would be supported on trident wood poles running from the consented Chleansaid Wind Farm substation to the existing Dalchork substation. Ancillary works include, felling and vegetation clearance, and formation of new access bellmouths from existing roads. Temporary construction access would also be formed using bog mats or trackway, with measures to protect road and water crossings. The route would generally run northward from Dalchork sub-station for 4km within existing forestry woodland, parallel to and east of the A836 from close to its junction with the A838 to a break in the forestry at the Feith Adail burn. From there, the route turns east, utilising a break in the forestry along the route of an existing track for approximately 4.5km, before curving north and northeast for 2km to reach its termination at the location of the Dalnessie Wind Farm substation.
- 1.3 The OHL entry into each substation is anticipated to be directly from terminal pole into substation compound. Any required works within substation compounds would be covered within the separate individual planning application for each substation or via Permitted Development Rights, as required. Should a section of overhead cable would be required to enter either substation for technical reasons, this would be accommodated within the design and using the same pole types as identified above.
- 1.4 The trident wood poles will carry a single circuit with the OHL having a normal height of 9-14m including insulators and supports. The pole design comprises a matched pair of poles erected 2.5m apart with supporting crossarm steelwork linking the poles at the top. The spacing between the poles would vary depending on topography and altitude with the span length ranging from 40m to 90m. The OHL would be composed of a combination of suspension poles, angle / tension poles, failure containment poles and terminal poles. It is estimated that the line would comprise approximately 132 trident poles in total.
- 1.5 A Limits of Deviation (LoD) is proposed that allows for adjustment (micro-siting) of individual pole locations and heights depending on localised sub-surface and geotechnical conditions that would be surveyed in detail following the grant of consent. The LoD are designed to allow flexibility in the final siting of individual poles to reflect engineering and environmental constraints. The following parameters have been identified:
 - 100m horizontal LoD either side of the proposed OHL alignment with this being reduced in certain areas to restrict the environmental impacts. The LoD are also restricted in areas of passing Schedule Monuments in the Feith Osdail valley in the north of the site.

- The pole height may vary from the pole schedule proposed, and will be subject to a vertical LoD, provisionally up to 20% variation based on the pole schedule, but generally all poles would remain between 9m and 14m in height.
- 1.6 It is anticipated that the construction of the proposed development would take approximately 16 months, following the granting of consent. In perpetuity consent is sought, however any future decommissioning or replacement, would be undertaken in line with the best practice processes and methods at that time, and which would be managed through a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan.
- 1.7 Vehicle access routes from construction are still to be finalised and HGV traffic is likely to be relatively low. The currently proposed routes are shown in the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) as being from the A9 to the site, via the A836 (Tain – Bonar Bridge), A949 via Dornoch and over the B9176 (Struie Road) from Alnes. The A836 north of Dalnессie will not be used due to structural constraints on that route. A finalised CTMP is proposed to be prepared if consent is granted. The construction site compound is proposed to be located within the compound area of the consented Chleansaid Wind Farm substation, which the line will serve. Temporary compounds will be required along the route, the details of which are still to be determined. No new permanent access track will be required, and local access to each pole location would come off existing tracks via the use of all-terrain vehicles, using protective panels and bog mats as necessary.
- 1.8 No formal pre-application consultation has been undertaken. The Planning Authority was however consulted on an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Request with the Scottish Minister's 11 August 2023 Screening Opinion concluding that the proposal is not EIA development. This process helped to inform the scope and content of the application's supporting information which comprised of an Environmental Appraisal (EA) report which assesses the development's potential impacts in terms of: Landscape, Ecology, Ornithology, Cultural Heritage, Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soil, and Forestry.
- 1.9 No variations have been made during the assessment of this application.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The proposed development is located on land approximately 3km to the north of Lairg, Sutherland. The site is bounded by the consented Chleansaid Wind Farm to the north, the A836 to the west and commercial forestry land to the south east. The site is surrounded by large areas of coniferous woodland, commercial forestry plantation, habitats adjacent to the area of the commercial forestry and blanket bog with some area of upland heathland and lowland heathland. The line would pass through areas of woodland at various stages of lifecycle; from mature plantation to recently felling and re-stocked land. The OHL is not located within any natural heritage designations.
- 2.2 There are various small watercourses running through the proposed development, as well as the Feith Osdall, which runs close to the northern edge of the site and connects the River Brora to the River Tirry. Loch Beannach is part of the Lairg and Strath Brora Lochs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection

Area (SPA), and is located, at the closest point, approximately 1km to the south of the proposed development.

- 2.3 The OHL passes very few residential properties, the nearest being at Dalchork and Dalnessie, at the southern and northern ends of the line (both being between 200m and 300m from the line).
- 2.4 Related to the project, but not part of the application, is the proposed undergrounding of an existing 5.5km section of 11kv OHL. This existing pole mounted line runs east-west along the “northern” section of the new line’s route, from around 500m east of A836 road bridge over the Feith Osdaill to Dalnessie, close to where the new wind farm’s substation will be located. This is proposed in order to improve primary views of nearby sensitive receptors and lessen the cumulative impact of the OHL in the immediate and wider vicinity.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

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|-----|------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 3.1 | 11.08.2023 | 23/03956/SCRE - Construction and operation of approximately 10.5 km of single circuit 132 kV Overhead line (OHL) supported on wooden trident poles and ancillary works | EIA Not Required |
| | 15.12.2023 | 22/01635/S36 - Chleansaid Wind Farm - Erection and Operation of a Wind Farm comprising 16 turbines 12 turbines at 200 metres and 4 turbines at 180 metres, generating around 96MW and associated infrastructure (access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building) and includes battery energy storage facility 20MW – Approved by Scottish Government | Consented by Scottish Ministers |

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 4.1 As a Section 37 application the public participation process is managed by the Energy Consents Unit. No public comments were received by Energy Consents Unit or The Highland Council.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Consultation undertaken by The Highland Council

- 5.1 **Lairg Community Council** were consulted but did not respond to the application.
- 5.2 **Rogart Community Council** were consulted but did not respond to the application.
- 5.3 **Access Officer** does not object to the proposed development. The track from the A836 to Dalnessie is a public right of way, HS29, and should be accessible for the public’s recreational use at all times during the construction and operation of the development.

- 5.4 **Environmental Health** do not object to the application, subject to a condition to implement a noise mitigation scheme to reduce the construction noise impacts on the nearby residential properties and habitats. Dalnessie is the closest to the proposed route at around 300m. Construction noise is unlikely to be a significant issue and will be transient as work moves along the route, however, prior to commencement, and as a planning condition, a noise mitigation scheme should be submitted to the Council. The applicant has undertaken private water supply risk assessment which has identified one borehole, 250m from the proposed development, however due to the shallow nature of excavations and separation distance, there is no likelihood of it being hydrological connected to the site and the development is unlikely to have any significant impact on the private water supply.
- 5.5 **Transport Planning Team** do not object to the application subject to conditions to secure approval of a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and abnormal load traffic management plan prior to the commencement of the development on site. A Section 96 Agreement will be required as part of any CTMP. Conditions are also requested, requiring an Abnormal Loads Management plan, and a Decommissioning Traffic Management Plan.
- 5.6 **Flood Risk Management Team** does not object to the application and has no further comment.
- 5.7 **Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)** does not object to the application, subject to a condition. Mitigation measures are recommended in advance of and during construction, as set out in the Environmental Appraisal (EA). The applicant needs to demarcate and buffer the designated assets known as SM5300 Cnoc aBreac-leathaid, shielings and cairnfield to avoid the direct impacts to the schedule and non designated assets. Where impacts are impossible to avoid, prehistoric settlement of roundhouse and cairns (ref HA15 of the EA), full excavation and recoding would be necessary. In addition, as there is a high potential for unrecorded, buried features or deposits to survive, areas of watching brief will be required. A condition is recommended to secure a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (or Archaeological Project Design) to agree these works. Additionally, a protocol is required to be established within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in the event of the discovery of a previously unrecorded cultural heritage asset.
- 5.8 **Historic Environment Team (Conservation Officer)** does not object to the application, on the presumption that there are no impacts on the C- Listed Feith Osdail bridge or its setting.
- 5.9 **Ecology Officer** does not object to the application subject to conditions. These require Site Species Protection Plans (SPPs), a Bird Protection Plan (BBPP), and a Habitat Management Plan (HMP). The Environmental Appraisal (EA) concludes that a small temporary loss (304m²) of bog habitat will occur at the footprint of each pole. The extent of peatland degradation predicted to occur under the machinery footprint is not clear. The soil and peatland management plan makes provision for targeted peatland restoration in the vicinity of the proposed development, but no details are provided. The EA's commitment to restoration of existing habitats and monitoring

through a detailed Habitat Restoration Plan (HRP) is welcomed. Peatland protection measures should be included as part of this plan.

- 5.10 **Forestry Team** does not object to the application. The general approach outlined in the Compensatory Planting Management Strategy is acceptable, however a detailed Compensatory Planting Plan should be secured by condition.

Consultation undertaken by the Energy Consents Unit

- 5.11 **BT Group** has no objection to the application as the project should not cause interference with the current and planned radio network.
- 5.12 **Fisheries Management Scotland** does not object to the application. The proposal falls within the catchments relating to the Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board and Rivers Trust and recommended that the Fisheries Management Scotland guidelines are followed through the planning, construction and post completion monitoring phases.
- 5.13 **Historic Environment Scotland** does not object to the application. The proposed development might have visual impacts on the three schedule monuments, such as: Dalnessie, Settlement N of Feith Osdail (SM4563); Loch Beag na Fuaralachd, shielings 1000 m SW of SW end of (SM5159); and Cnoc a'Bhreac-leathaid, shielings and cairnfield 700m NNE of (SM5300). The visual relationship with the valley and with one another is a key aspect of their setting. The visualisations from all three monuments show that the 132kV OHL would be visible in outward views from the monuments looking towards the Feith Osdail valley, and in places would pass close to the scheduled monuments. These impacts on the settings of the monuments are adverse, but not of a severity that raises issues of national importance.
- 5.14 **Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board** were consulted and have no comments on the proposed development.
- 5.15 **Ministry of Defence** has no objection to the application, subject to a condition requiring the developer to provide them with details of timing of implementation and specific co-ordinates of the scheme prior to commencement of works.
- 5.16 **National Air Traffic Control Service (NATS)** does not object to the application as it does not conflict with their safeguarding criteria.
- 5.17 **NatureScot** do not object to the application, subject to the works being undertaken in accordance with mitigation details set out by them. They advise that the Scottish Government must carry out an Appropriate Assessment in respect of impacts on conservation objectives of nearby protected areas and their qualifying species: Firstly, a Breeding Bird Protection Plan (BBPP), including mitigation measures for hen harriers, is advised to ensure they are not disturbed during construction. They require further preventative measures in respect of avoiding and dealing with disturbance of hen harriers within the nearby Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors Special Protection Area (SPA); this would preclude any helicopter flights taking place within the breeding season. Subject to required mitigation measures, the proposals should not adversely affect black-throated divers in the nearby Lairg and Strath Brora Lochs SPA. Impacts on the nearby Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA is

considered not to be adverse. The applicant's peat management plans are agreed and further details of the exact location and nature of compensatory planting is required.

- 5.18 **Office of Nuclear Regulation** were consulted and have no comments to make as the site lies out with their consultation zones.
- 5.19 **RSPB Scotland** does not object to the application, but makes a number of recommendations in respect of line marking of the route, pole height, avoidance of hen harrier disturbance of breeding hen harriers around Pole 1, updating of the desk survey to include black grouse, and reconsidering and redesigning the final span of the OHL linking into the Chleansaid Wind Farm substation to avoid the priority M17 peatland habitat. It requires a Restoration Plan and a Habitat Management Plan (HMP), with sufficient details of commitments for compensation, biodiversity enhancement, and peatland restoration.
- 5.20 **Scottish Environmental Protection Agency** does not object to the application, subject to a condition requiring the location and design of any tracks on peat greater than 1m deep to be agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA.
- 5.21 **Scottish Forestry** does not object to the application. It expects the proposal would have minimal woodland removal and advises that detailed proposals for compensatory planting should be provided before felling takes place.
- 5.22 **Scottish Water** has no objection, however, the OHL route encroaches marginally within the catchment boundary of a drinking water supply at Loch Beannach. Whilst there is a low risk to the drinking water catchment, mitigation measures must be implemented in line with their advice on measures to be taken within a Drinking Water Protection Area) DWPA .
- 5.23 **The Coal Authority** does not object to the application and has no further comment.
- 5.24 **Transport Scotland** has no objection to the application and are satisfied that the proposed development will not have detrimental impacts on the A9 (T).
- 5.25 **Woodland Trust Scotland** does not object to the application and requests an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to ensure that any ancient or veteran trees are identified through review of their Inventory and ground surveying and are taken account of in the design of the scheme.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application:

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4, 2023)

- 6.2 National Development 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
 - Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crisis
 - Policy 2 – Climate mitigation and adaptation

Policy 3 – Biodiversity
Policy 4 – Natural places
Policy 5 – Soils
Policy 6 – Forestry, woodland and trees
Policy 7 – Historic assets and places
Policy 11 – Energy
Policy 13 – Sustainable transport
Policy 20 – Blue and Green Infrastructure
Policy 22 – Flood risk and water management
Policy 23 – Health and safety
Policy 25 – Community wealth benefits

Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012 (HwLDP)

- 6.3 28 - Sustainable Design
 29 - Design Quality and Placemaking
 30 - Physical Constraints
 31 - Developer Contributions
 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside
 55 - Peat and Soils
 56 - Travel
 57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
 58 - Protected Species
 59 - Other Important Species
 60 - Other Importance Habitats
 61 - Landscape
 63 - Water Environment
 66 - Surface Water Drainage
 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
 72 - Pollution
 73 - Air Quality
 77 - Public Access

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan 2018 (CaSPlan)

- 6.4 No specific policies or land use allocations apply.

Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

- 6.5 Biodiversity Planning Guidance (May 2024)
 Developer Contributions (Nov 2018)
 Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
 Green Networks (Jan 2013)
 Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
 Standards for Archaeological Works (Mar 2012)
 Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
 Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
 Trees, Woodland and Development (Jan 2013)

7. OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Other National Policy and Guidance

- 7.1
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 – interim and annual targets replaced by Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, November 2024
 - Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (July 2024)
 - UK Government Clean Power Action Plan (Dec 2024)
 - Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
 - Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency (2023)
 - Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
 - 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)
 - Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, HES (2019)
 - Scheduled Monuments Consents Policy (2019)
 - PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)
 - PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (2008)
 - Developing with Nature Guidance (NatureScot 2023)
 - Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (2010)
 - Community Funds for Transmission Infrastructure: Guidance UK Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero (2025)

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

- 8.1 The application has been submitted to the Scottish Government for approval under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended). Should Ministers approve the development, it will receive deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). While not a planning application, the Council processes S37 applications in the same way as a planning application, as consent under the Electricity Act will carry with it a deemed planning permission.

Planning Considerations

- 8.2 The key considerations in this case are:
- a) Compliance with the Development Plan and other planning policy;
 - b) Construction impact
 - c) Design, landscape and visual Impact;
 - d) Built and cultural heritage;
 - e) Water environment and peat;
 - f) Natural heritage;
 - g) Forestry
 - h) Roads, transport and wider access
 - i) Economic impacts; and
 - j) Any other material considerations.

Development Plan / Other Planning Policy

- 8.3 The Development Plan comprises NPF4, the adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), associated statutory supplementary guidance and the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan.
- 8.4 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) forms part of the Development Plan and was adopted in February 2023. It comprises three parts:
- Part 1 - sets out that there are eighteen national developments to support the spatial strategy and regional spatial priorities, which includes single large-scale projects and networks of smaller proposals that are collectively nationally significant.
- Part 2 – sets out policies for the development and use of land that are to be applied in the preparation of local development plans; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining the range of planning consents. This part of the document should be taken as a whole in that all relevant policies should be applied to each application.
- Part 3 – provides a series of annexes that provide the rationale for the strategies and policies of NPF4. The annexes outline how the document should be used and set out how the Scottish Government will implement the strategies and policies contained in the document.
- 8.5 NPF4 outlines 18 national developments that support the plan's spatial strategy. National developments will be a focus for delivery, as well as exemplars of the Place Principle, placemaking and a Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development. Six of the national developments support the delivery of sustainable places. Among these is national development no. 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, which *"supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply."* National development 3 accords national development status to electricity transmission that includes: b) New and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more, and/or c) New and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations. This proposal aligns with part b) and therefore, is classed as a national development, and as such receives in principle support.
- 8.6 The spatial strategy reflects existing legislation by setting out that decision making requires to reflect the long-term public interest. However, in doing so, it is clear that the decision maker must make the right choices about where development should be located, ensuring clarity is provided over the types of infrastructure that need to be provided and the assets that should be protected to ensure they continue to benefit future generations. To that end, the Spatial Priorities support the planning and delivery of sustainable places, which will reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; create liveable places, where residents can live better,

healthier lives; and create productive places, with a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

- 8.7 NPF4 Policies 1, 2, and 3 now apply to all development proposals Scotland-wide, which means that significant weight must be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals, as required by NPF4 Policy 1. To that end, development proposals are to be sited and designed in accordance with NPF4 Policy 2, while contributing to the enhancement of biodiversity, as required by NPF4 Policy 3.
- 8.8 Policy 3 - Biodiversity aims to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects and strengthen nature networks. Every development proposal has to maintain or improve biodiversity. As detailed in the Natural Heritage section of this report above, a Habitat Management Plan is proposed which includes habitat enhancement.
- 8.9 Policy 4 - Natural Places aims to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. It sets out that development proposals, by virtue of type, location, or scale that have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported. The policy goes on to clarify what that means for different designations. It sets out that proposals that have likely significant effects on European sites (SACs or SPAs) require an appropriate assessment, and that development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area or SSSI shall only be supported where: i) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or ii) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance. The site is not located within any ecological or ornithological designation, nor is it within a National Park or National Scenic Area (NSA) and subject to mitigation measures outlined in the EIAR and conditions requested by consultees the impacts upon any nearby designations will not be significant.
- 8.10 Policy 4 section e) also requires project design and mitigation to demonstrate how the following various impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, and noise, landscape, visual and cumulative impacts, public access, aviation and defence interests, telecommunications and broadcasting installations, traffic and roads, historic environment, hydrology, water environment and flood risk, trees, biodiversity, decommissioning and site restoration are all addressed. The Council's Ecology team and NatureScot have no objections to the proposed Habitat Management Plan.
- 8.11 Policy 5 – Soils, aims to protect carbon rich soils including peatlands. Development proposals on such locations, will only be supported where they relate to essential infrastructure or renewable energy development. As detailed in the Natural Heritage section of this report, SEPA note that the route passes through pockets of deep peat which are not easily avoided. The applicant's proposed method statement for dealing with areas of peat greater than 1m in depth have been assessed and considered acceptable by SEPA and NatureScot.
- 8.12 Policy 7 Historic Assets and Places is intended to protect and enhance historic environment assets, enabling positive change. Policy outcomes include ensuring

the historic environment is valued, whilst supporting the transition to net zero, as well as recognising the social, environmental and economic value of the historic environment to our economy and cultural identity. Policy 7 part a) requires proposals with potential significant impacts to be appropriately assessed; with part h) ii) setting out that development proposals will only be supported where significant adverse impacts on the integrity or setting of a scheduled monument are avoided. Part h) iii) of this policy also enables 'exceptional circumstances' to be demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting, and where impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised. The EA concluded that there will be negligible adverse to slight adverse overall impacts on Dalnессie, settlement N of Feith Osdail (SM4563, HA03) and moderate adverse overall impact on the non-designated heritage assets. HES have confirmed that such impacts do not warrant their objection.

- 8.13 Policy 11 - Energy aims to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure. Section a) notes development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported, including (ii.) enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure. Section c) confirms development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities. Section d) requires development proposals that impact on international or national designations to be assessed in relation to Policy 4. In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.
- 8.14 The principal Highland-wide Local Development Plan policy against which the application requires to be determined is the Policy 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure. This policy offers support for electricity transmission infrastructure, having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Such support is subject to the proposals not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment. As the development would provide upgraded infrastructure for the transmission network and facilitate an increasing proportion of electricity generation from renewable sources, the principle of the development receives support under Policy 69, subject to site selection, design and overcoming any unacceptable significant environmental effects. In this regard, the site is not located within any identified nationally or regionally important areas of built or natural heritage. For features of national importance developments that can be shown not to compromise the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource can be supported. The impact of this development on landscape is primarily assessed in the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report.
- 8.15 HwLDP Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside also applies and sets out that all development in the countryside will be determined on the basis of a number of criteria. Pertinent matters to this proposal include siting and design, being compatible with the existing pattern of development, landscape character and capacity, impact on carbon rich soil, as well as drainage and servicing implications.

- 8.16 The CaSPlan contains no specific policies or land use allocations relevant to this application and instead focusses on growth of larger settlements and supporting growth of smaller settlements in a manner that helps strengthen those communities and support sustainable rural community-led development.
- 8.17 In summary, the principle of development is established in national policy, with the proposed development being of national importance for the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy. NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland's ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address climate change.

Construction Impact

- 8.18 It is anticipated that construction of the project would take place over a 16 month period. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be used, the aim of which is to avoid, minimise and control adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed development and ensure that development is carried out in accordance with best practice. The applicant will also ensure that General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs) are in place for the works. In addition, the applicant has also committed to the appointment of an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) to oversee the project. These provisions are proposed to be secured by condition.
- 8.19 The applicant has sought working hours of 0700 to 1900 Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1300 on Saturday. Any requirement to work outside of these hours requires prior agreement from The Highland Council. The Environmental Health Team notes that the majority of the site is remote from noise sensitive receptors, and as such it is not expected that noise from construction works will have a significant impact. It is expected that the contractor/developer will ensure that the best practicable means for reducing the impact of noise will be employed, this can be secured via the CEMP. In addition, Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 sets restrictions in terms of hours of operation, plant and equipment used and noise levels, amongst other factors, which is enforceable via Environmental Health.
- 8.20 Should the development be granted consent, a condition would require the setting up of a Community Liaison Group, this will help to ensure that the Community Council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before, during and after the construction period.

Design, Landscape and Visual Impact

- 8.21 There are no national, regional or local landscape designations covering the site with the proposal being located predominantly within the NatureScot Landscape Character Type (LCT) 142 - Sweeping Moorland and Flows, and also partially within the LCT 142 - Strath – Caithness and Sutherland.

- 8.22 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) submitted with the application is focused on a study area of 3km, beyond which the development is considered unlikely to result in any adverse effects. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) model has been produced, illustrating the worst-case scenario of the proposed development's theoretical visibility (refer to Figure 6.1).
- 8.23 Landscape and visual character receptors located beyond 3km are considered to be too distant (due to intervening landform and built form and the relative scale and nature of the proposed development) for the proposed development to have an effect on landscape character or visual amenity. The Ben Klibreck-Armine Forest Wild Land Area (WLA) lies within the study area, being only 2km from the northern end of the site. Due to the Reay – Cassley WLA being 6km to the west and the Assynt – Coigach National Scenic Area being 17km further west, effects on these landscape interests have been scoped out.
- 8.24 Several mitigation measures have been incorporated within the design of the proposed development to mitigate the landscape and visual impacts of the scheme. The mitigation by design includes:
- avoidance of the use of steel lattice towers;
 - minimising the number of potential visual receptors and reducing landscape effects by following the existing OHL route through the Feith Osdail Valley;
 - avoiding the requirement to create corridors through forested areas where possible;
 - ensuring the OHL is generally backdropped by existing forestry and / or elevated topography and following the existing topography;
 - accessing pole locations from the existing access roads and tracks and the use temporary bog mats where such routes are not available;
 - works to reconfigure existing OHL where required, including undergrounding 5.5km of existing 11kv OHL;
 - tidy site management to reduce visual clutter associated with the works;
 - use of construction lighting in accordance with best practice to minimise lighting intrusion; and
 - reduction of the OHL's height where possible.

Landscape Effects

- 8.25 The majority of the proposed development is located within the Sweeping Moorland and Flows LCT 134 and partly within the LCT 142 Strath – Caithness and Sutherland therefore direct effects are anticipated upon these landscapes. Due to the development's position close to the existing OHL, which would be removed, it would not affect the perception of the landscape. The proposed development would not introduce any significant new element into the landscape with the line following the route of existing OHLs already in place, for one half of its length, and then following the line of an the existing 11KV overhead line which will be undergrounded for the other half. Whilst the existing lines comprise single telegraph poles and this proposed new line would be constructed using paired poles, the impact of these on the landscape would be somewhat comparable to the existing single pole lines; being existing pole mounted OHLs.

- 8.26 Along the north-south section of the route, running mainly parallel to the A836, from Dalchork to the bridge over the Feith Osdail the development will appear as an additional line, alongside the smaller 11kv pole mounted line, however much of this part of the line will not be visible from the road due to landforms and existing plantation forestry. This part of the line lies largely within LCT142 – Strath – Caithness and Sutherland. The proposal is considered to result in a minor direct adverse landscape effect on this receiving LCT.
- 8.27 The east-west half of the line largely follows the Feith Osdail within a corridor which contains a wide modern gravel track and the existing 11kv OHL. This corridor is framed to the north and south by commercial forestry plantations. This corridor ranges from around 700m – 300m wide, and views within it are framed and contained to that corridor, with longer views only available along the line of the burn, track and OHL. As already noted, the new line would effectively “replace” the existing line within this corridor, with the existing line to be undergrounded. This section lies within LCT134 – Sweeping Moorland and Flow. The proposal is considered to result in a minor direct adverse landscape effect on this receiving LCT.
- 8.28 Some elements of the proposed development may also be seen from the southwestern edge of the Ben Klibreck – Armine Forest WLA; however, this visibility is likely to be mitigated by the rising topography and existing commercial forestry, which serve as a backdrop.

Visual Effects

- 8.29 As per the EA report the visual receptors likely to be affected by the proposed development are categorised as residential, recreational and transport based receptors. The applicant’s representative viewpoints provide context to the judgments of landscape and visual effects. The following residential receptors were included in the visual assessment:
- Viewpoint 1 (View from Dalnessie Estate): The residential users of Dalnessie Estate and residents of Dalnessie Estate are approximately 0.3 km north-east of the proposed development, Figure 6.4, Appendix 6.2. Views are stationary for receptors. The proposed development would be seen in the middle portion of the view. A line of coniferous trees forms the backdrop for the proposed development and some of the proposed development would be viewed against the sky. The addition of the proposed development would appear as a medium-large scale addition, occupying a substantial portion of the horizontal field of view. There would be no seasonal impact to the view as there is no intervening vegetation in front of the overhead lines. Overall, the sensitivity to change is considered to be Medium. The magnitude of change is considered to be Medium - Low. The level of effect is considered as Moderate - Minor (direct, adverse).
 - Viewpoint 5 (View from Tirryside looking east): This is a residential receptor lies approximately 0.9 km north and northwest of the proposed development, Figure 6.8, Appendix 6.2. The proposed development would be seen in the background portion of the view. In places, some of the proposed development would be viewed against the skyline. The addition of the proposed development would appear as a small-scale addition in the background

portion of the view. The overall sensitivity to change is considered to be Medium – Low. The magnitude of change is considered to be Low-Very Low. The overall level of effect is considered to be Minor - Negligible (direct, neutral).

- Viewpoint 7 (View from Saval): The residential receptor is approximately 1.2 km south of the proposed development, Figure 6.10, Appendix 6.2. The proposed development would be seen in the central midground portion of the view. The addition of the proposed development would appear as a small-scale addition in the middle-background portion of the view. The overall sensitivity to change is considered to be Medium. The magnitude of change is considered as Low-Very Low. The level of effect is Minor - Negligible (direct, neutral).

8.30 The following recreational receptors were included in the visual assessment:

- Viewpoint 2 (Scheduled Monument SM4563): The recreational receptor at Scheduled Monument SM4563, located approximately 0.25 km north of the proposed development, offers a view looking south, adjacent to Cnoc na Fuaralachd and Strath Tirry to Badanloch Tracks Heritage Path (Figure 6.5, Appendix 6.2).
- Viewpoint 3 (Strath Tirry to Badanloch Tracks Heritage Path towards Scheduled Monument SM5159): This recreational receptor is situated approximately 0.3 km north/north-west of the proposed development (Figure 6.6, Appendix 6.2).
- Viewpoint 4 (Strath Tirry to Badanloch Tracks Heritage Path): Located approximately 0.2 km north of the proposed development, this viewpoint offers stationary views for receptors (Figure 6.7, Appendix 6.2).
- The above views are stationary. The proposed development is visible in the middle portion of the view, with a line of coniferous trees forming the backdrop for most of the development from the above viewpoints. Some parts of the proposed development are viewed against the background of hills. The overall sensitivity to change is assessed as Medium, with the magnitude of change considered Medium-Low. Consequently, the level of effect is deemed Moderate-Minor (direct, adverse).
- Viewpoint 9 (View from Woodend Caravan and Camping Site): located approximately 1.8 km west of the proposed development, (Figure 6.12, Appendix 6.2). The proposed development would be seen in the middle ground portion of the view. Hills form the backdrop for the proposed development. The addition of the proposed development would appear as a small-scale addition in the middle-background portion of the view. The overall sensitivity to change is considered to be Medium. The Magnitude of change is considered as Low – Very Low. The overall level of effects is considered as Negligible (direct, neutral).
- Viewpoint 10 (View from Strath Tirry to Badanloch Tracks Heritage Path): The recreational receptor is approximately 2 km north / north-west of the proposed development, (Figure 6.13, Appendix 6.2). The proposed development would

be seen in the middle ground portion of the view. Lines of coniferous trees as well as hills form the backdrop for the majority of the proposed development. The addition of the proposed development would appear as a medium-large scale addition, occupying a substantial portion of the horizontal field of view. The overall sensitivity to change is considered as Medium. The magnitude of change is considered as Medium – Low. The level of effects are considered to be Moderate – Minor (direct, adverse).

8.31 The following transportation receptors were included in the visual assessment:

- Viewpoint 6 (View from A836 NCR Looking North): The view for the transport receptor at A836 NCR looking north towards the proposed development are transient, Figure 6.9, Appendix 6.2. The receptor is located 0.9km south / south-east of the proposed development. Views are transient for receptors. The proposed development would be seen in the middle portion of the view to the central and westernmost portions of the view. Mountains and hills form the backdrop for the majority of the proposed development. In places, some of the proposed development would be viewed against the skyline. This would be a small scale addition to the view and will supersede the existing development of the OHL already present with no seasonal impacts on the view. Overall sensitivity to change is considered as Medium - Low. The magnitude of change is considered as Low - Very Low. The overall level of effects are considered to be Minor - Negligible (direct, neutral).
- Viewpoint 8 (View from A836 NCR Looking South): The transport receptor at A836 NCR looking south towards the proposed development is approximately 1 km north of the proposed development, (Figure 6.11, Appendix 6.2). Views are transient for receptors. The proposed development would be seen in the middle ground and background portions of the view. Hills form the backdrop for the proposed development. The addition of the proposed development would appear as a small-scale addition in the background portion of the view. The proposed development will supersede the existing OHL and will have no seasonal impacts on the view. The overall sensitivity to change is considered as Low. The magnitude of change is considered as Very Low – Zero. The level of effects is considered as Negligible – None (direct, neutral).

8.32 The applicant has not identified any other visual impacts above Medium in scale. Following examination, the applicants' assessment findings are accepted. Based on the methodology set out in the EA report, the appraisal of the landscape and visual impacts of the line is considered reasonable. In considering the route alignment options, examination of the mitigation measures built into the design of the scheme, notably the avoidance of the use of traditional lattice steel towers, it is concluded that there would be no significant landscape or visual effects arising from the proposed development.

Built and Cultural Heritage

- 8.33 The applicant has undertaken an assessment of built and cultural heritage within a 1km study area. There are six Scheduled Monuments, and one listed building located within 1km of the proposed development:
- Dalnessie Settlement North of Feith Osdail (HES Ref. SM4563, HA03), located 55 m west of the proposed development;
 - Shieling 1400 m North of Achadh nan Eun (HES Ref. SM5084, HA04), 410 m south of the proposed development;
 - Shielings 1000 m SW of SW end of Loch Beag na Fuaralachd (HES Ref. SM5159, HA05), located 375 m north of the proposed development;
 - Prehistoric settlement 950 m SW of SW end of Loch Beag na Fuaralachd (HES Ref. SM5401, HA06), located 595 m north of the proposed development;
 - Loch Beag na Fuaralachd Cairn and shielings 1175 m ESE of SW end (HES Ref. SM5081, HA07), located 505 m north of the proposed development;
 - Shielings and cairnfield 700 m NNE of Cnoc a' Bhreac-leathaid (HES Ref. SM5300, HA10), located 110 m south of the proposed development; and
 - Feith Osdail Bridge Over Feith Osdail Burn (Listed Building LB8018, HA13), 560 m west of the proposed development.
- 8.34 An Inner Study Area of 250m extending out from the proposed development was also applied for the identification of non-designated heritage assets. Several archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development and the Inner Study Area. Most of the investigations have revealed heritage assets that have since been registered in the Historic Environment Record of Highland Council. The possibility for encountering more prehistoric archaeological remains is high.
- 8.35 Potential effects on heritage assets have been taken into account by the applicant during the route and alignment selection stages and the design of the proposed development. HES has been consulted in order to minimise any effects, including avoiding known heritage assets at the southern end of the proposed development. As a result of the screening stage consultation with HES, the current 11kV overhead line in the Feith Osdail valley will be undergrounded, the proposed pole heights will be lowered, and the line will be moved as far away from the listed monuments as feasible.
- 8.36 HES raised concerns over the proximity to the Cnoc a' Bhreac-leathaid, shielings, and cairnfield 700 m NNE of (SM5300, HA10) to the existing access track. Therefore, mitigation is advised to guarantee that no accidental damage occurs while building is underway. The Dalchork Substation Excavations report states that all of the archaeological remains related to the settlement (HA20) fall under the substation footprint and have been removed so there would be no impact to this heritage asset. The remaining seven non-designated heritage assets are not located within the

proposed development LoD, and no impacts are anticipated on these heritage assets from the proposed development.

- 8.37 Prior to construction, the heritage assets within the proposed development construction and access footprint should be demarcated and avoided where possible. Where avoidance cannot be achieved, archaeological monitoring and investigations will be required for all areas of ground-breaking. Archaeological monitoring is recommended during construction within 50m of the known heritage assets along the route of the proposed development which will ensure to preserve the unknown archaeological remains in areas of high potential.
- 8.38 The Dalnessie settlement N of Feith Osdail (SM4563, HA03) Scheduled Monument consists of a township or complex of foundations of more than 30 small rectangular houses and subcircular enclosures and a modern sheepfold. Through the applicant's consultation with HES, the element of its significance is stated as being the visual relationship with the Feith Osdail valley, the open rural character of the surrounding landscape and the association with a sense of abandonment and clearance. The proposal would clearly be visible in the outward views from the settlement to the west, south and south-west (Figure 9.2a-d). Local topography aids with screening of the poles in several locations within the scheduled area and where the development passes closest to the Scheduled Monument, visibility is negligible from some locations along the edge of the scheduled area due to topographic screening, but would be visible from the higher ground to the north. The proposal would lead to a Minor adverse magnitude of impact to a heritage asset of High value. The overall impact is assessed as Slight Adverse due to the measures taken through the design process to mitigate the potential impacts highlighted by HES, including: the reduction of the pole heights to avoid skylining; maximising the span between the poles to reduce visibility; and locating the OHL as close to the existing OHL as possible.
- 8.39 The Loch Beag na Fuaralachd, shielings 1000 m SW of SW end of (SM5159, HA05) Scheduled Monument consists of at least five structures preserved within a forestry clearing. Again, through consultation with HES, another element of its significance is understood to be the visual relationship with the Feith Osdail valley, the open rural character of the surrounding landscape and the association with a sense of abandonment and clearance. The proposed development would again be visible in the outward views from the settlement to the south (Figure 9.3a-d). It has been appraised that the proposed development would lead to a Negligible magnitude of impact to a heritage asset of High value, due to introducing minor changes within the setting of the settlement, giving rise to a Slight Adverse overall impact.
- 8.40 The Cnoc a' Bhreac-leathaid, shielings and cairnfield 700 m NNE of (SM5300, HA10) Scheduled Monument consists of a small prehistoric cairn field comprising peat covered clearance cairns and a prehistoric hut circle defined by a low wall. Through consultation with HES, another element of its significance is the rural character, but unlike the other nearby Scheduled Monuments the visual relationship with the Feith Osdail valley is not an important element as it is set further from the valley. The development would be present to the north north-east with the commercial forestry forming a backdrop, but it would be more visible in the outward views to the north-east (Figure 9.4a-d). The proposal will lead to a Negligible magnitude of impact to a

heritage asset of High value, due to introducing minor changes within the setting of the settlement, giving rise to a Slight Adverse overall impact.

- 8.41 No mitigation measures for the impacts to the Cnoc a' Bhreac-leathaid, shielings and Cairnfield 700 m NNE of (SM5300, HA10), or the Loch Beag na Fuaralachd, shielings 1000 m SW of SW end of (SM5159, HA05) are recommended as the overall impacts are not anticipated to be material. Strath Tarry Wind Farm was assessed as resulting in a Moderate Adverse impact on the Cnoc a' Bhreac-leathaid, shielings and cairnfield 700 m NNE of (SM5300, HA10), but the Negligible Adverse impact from the proposed development would not result in a higher combined impact.
- 8.42 Overall, the siting and design of the proposal has avoided significant impacts on all known built and cultural heritage features in the locality.

Water Environment and Peat

- 8.43 Section 10 of the EA report includes an assessment of the likely effects on the water environment. There are 4 water crossings within 1km of the proposed development:
- Feith Osdail (ID: 20102) is classified as having an overall status of 'Poor' in 2022;
 - River Tirrey - Loch Shin to Rhian (ID: 20099) is classified as having an overall status of 'Poor' in 2022;
 - Allt Chaiseagail (ID: 20101) is classified as having an overall status of 'Poor' in 2022; and
 - River Brora – Balnacoil to source (ID: 20060) is a heavily modified river classified as having 'Good ecological potential' in 2022.
- 8.44 The SEPA Flood Mapping indicates that the proposed development is situated in areas with 'High' and 'Medium' risks of river flooding, particularly where it intersects or is adjacent to Feith Osdail, the River Tirrey, and Allt Chaiseagail. However, the majority of the development lies outside the identified river flooding zones. Regarding surface water flooding, only very small, isolated areas within the site are classified as 'High' risk, comprising less than 1% of the total area. The Council's Flood Risk Management Team has reviewed the application and has no objections, citing no concerns related to flood risk and drainage. This development is categorised as "Essential Infrastructure" according to SEPA's Flood Risk and Land Use Vulnerability Guidance and NPF4 Policy 22. The proposed development complies with all relevant guidelines outlined in NPF4 Policy 22.
- 8.45 There is one Private Water Supply (PWS) within 1km of the proposed development; PWS Dalnessie (borehole) located approximately 250 m west and downslope of the proposed development which is potentially hydrologically connected. As such, a PWS Risk Assessment (PWSRA) was undertaken. THC's Environmental Health Officer noted that the supply is a borehole extracting water from 60m underground. Given the shallow nature of any excavations associated with the development and the separation distance, there is no likelihood of it being hydrologically connected to the development site. Nevertheless, good practice measures are included in the PWSRA to prevent any adverse impacts on private water supplies, with these provisions expected to be cross-referenced and adhered to within the finalised CEMP.

- 8.46 NVC survey and UK Habitat Classification survey were also undertaken to identify a number of habitats within 250m of the proposed development. The UKhab survey identified degraded blanket bog, upland acid grassland, wet heathland, wet woodland and purple moor grass and rush pastures while the NVC survey identified the wet heath, rush pasture and mire. The identified habitats are located throughout the study area. In the northern section, they are located on the sloping ground and on the valley bottom along the Feith Osdail, and on the sloping ground in the southern section. Variations in groundwater levels and flows may influence Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) and Private Water Supplies (PWS), potentially affecting both the quality and quantity of water supporting these receptors. Most identified potential GWDTE habitats are classified as ombrotrophic or surface water-fed, suggesting they are unlikely to rely on groundwater. However, adopting a precautionary approach, the possibility of GWDTE dependence on groundwater cannot be entirely ruled out.
- 8.47 Overall, no significant effects are identified. The development will require to be carried out in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP will include measures to mitigate against effects of potential contamination of the surrounding water environment. In addition, an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) will be present onsite during the construction phase and will carry out monitoring of works with regards to any ecological and hydrological sensitivities on the site.
- 8.48 In relation to peat, as denoted on Figures in Appendix 10.2 (Soil and Peat Management Plan), parts of the development, in particular, the northern extent of the proposed overhead line, are potentially underlain by Class 1 and Class 2 peatland, which are considered nationally important. The EA reports that approximately 8.8km of the proposed development is located within Class 1, and 500m of the proposed development is located within Class 2 peatland respectively. Consequentially, the application is supported by peat probing results (Technical Appendix 10.1), a Peat Management Plan (PMP) (Technical Appendix 10.2) and a peat landslide hazard risk assessment (Technical Appendix 10.1). The CEMP will also outline measures to ensure that the works minimise the risk to soils including peat.
- 8.49 SEPA note that that peat depths are variable across the site and that areas of deeper peat will not be easily avoided, however the location of the works are generally within commercial forestry where the peat will have been disturbed, and peat quality is likely to be poorer. SEPA welcome the approach to areas of peat deeper than 1m, involving the use of low pressured tracked vehicles and temporary access panels with local access to each pole location from existing access tracks being via the use of all terrain vehicles with the use of temporary track-way or bog mats where necessary. A condition is proposed to also require the location and design of any tracks on peat greater than 1m be agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA.
- 8.50 NatureScot also largely agree with the assessment provided by the applicant in relation to impacts on peatland. Areas of near-natural habitat appear to have been avoided by the line and access routes. In addition, NatureScot advise that this mitigation extends to other sensitive habitats that are present along the line route

which lie on peat/carbon-rich soils e.g. areas of M15 and M25. This is expected to be accommodated within the finalised HMP which is to be conditioned.

- 8.51 Subject to securing the aforementioned mitigation measures, it is considered that the impacts upon the water environment and peat can be carefully managed.

Natural Heritage

- 8.52 The proposed development is not located within any international or national natural heritage designations. Lairg and Strath Brora Lochs SPA and SSSI; the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors SPA and SSSI; and the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC are however within close proximity. There also a number of protected species that are likely to be present in this area, including hen harrier, black throated diver, bat, badger, red squirrel, otter and water vole.
- 8.53 In relation to protected species, RSPB recommend mitigation around the works to one of the proposed pole locations to avoid the hen harrier breeding season, along with a number of other measures to ensure no disturbance to protected bird species. NatureScot acknowledged that the applicant has undertaken survey work for protected species and produced Species Protection Plans (SPPs) for the relevant species. The measures outlined in these SPPs appear broadly appropriate, but should be updated to reflect baseline conditions specific for this proposal and updated once pre-construction surveys have been completed.
- 8.54 Lairg and Strath Brora Lochs SPA and SSSI is located approximately 1.2 km south of the site (Loch Beannach) and is designated for supporting breeding black throated diver. No breeding black-throated diver were recorded at Loch Beannach or any other waterbodies within the survey area. It is noted that two black-throated diver flights were recorded at potential risk of collision with the proposed OHL alignment to the west of Loch Beannach and additional mitigation is therefore proposed by the applicant to reduce collision risk during operation. NatureScot advises that owing to the mitigation measures proposed, the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the aforementioned SPA. This is also due to the proposal being located outside typical disturbance distance for black-throated divers on the SPA and SPA lochs are screened by existing forestry, as well as there being no hydrological connection, and any helicopter deliveries to site being scheduled outwith the breeding bird season.
- 8.55 As mentioned in Table 6.1 of the Appendix 4.1 the applicant considers the impacts upon the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors SPA and Lairg and Strath Brora Lochs SPA through future design stages and assessment works and effects would be minimised through considerate construction design and the implementation of mitigation strategies to protect the environment. In relation to hen harrier, NatureScot also advise that providing that the proposal be carried out strictly in accordance with a Breeding Bird Protection Plan (BBPP), as outlined in the application, which includes specific mitigation appropriate for hen harrier, and is finalised through NatureScot's agreement, the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors SPA.
- 8.56 Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA is located approximately 3.5km west of the site and is designated for supporting a range of upland breeding birds including black-throated diver, hen harrier, merlin and golden eagle. To minimise the

potential for collision the OHL alignment was positioned down slope of the Loch Beannach and in proximity to existing landform which will encourage black throated diver to overfly the OHL. The aforementioned scheduling of helicopter deliveries outwith the bird breeding season also ensures that the proposals would not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- 8.57 Subject to the application of the proposed mitigation measures set out within the EA report and these measures being secured via condition, the Planning Authority concur with the applicant's assessment findings and agree that there would not be any likely significant adverse effects on the natural environment. Such measures are also expected to be set out within Scottish Minister's forthcoming Habitats Regulations Appraisals for each of the aforementioned SPAs. The delivery of compensatory planting and habitat management measures to ensure biodiversity enhancement of at least 10% is also proposed to be secured with the applicant having submitted a Biodiversity Net Gain Report which looks to deliver up to 15% enhancement on site through grassland, mixed scrub planting within the OHL corridor, and areas of broadleaf woodland on site. The delivery of this plan can be conditioned.

Forestry

- 8.58 An OHL Woodland Report has been prepared in Appendix 11.1 of the applicant's EA, along with a Compensatory Planting Management Strategy in Appendix 11.2. The infrastructure requires a 12m wide proposed operational corridor, 6m either side of the line. As much of the line goes through commercial forestry plantation, this corridor is extended to 60m to 72m, 30m to 36m either side to account for tree falling distances. In total 48.5ha of land used for foresting, which includes 1.67ha of native woodland would be removed, all of which would be subject to compensatory planting to be secured by condition. While the location of this is not known, consideration is expected to be given impacts to Protected Areas and protected species.

Roads, Transport and Wider Access

- 8.59 The main strategic network road for the majority of north to south vehicular movements will utilise the A9 Inverness to Thurso Road. It is anticipated that the majority if not all construction HGV's will be travelling north from Inverness direction and will access from the A9 will use the following local network routes:
- A836 – Access from Tain via Bonar Bridge;
 - A949 – Access from Dornoch; and
 - B9176 (Struie Road) – from Alness.
- 8.60 Light vehicle traffic will utilise the local road network predominately the A9, A836 and A949. Access to the main compound is intended to be from the A836, utilising the upgraded access track as part of the wind farm developer's construction work. The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) notes that abnormal loads will be generated and details of this will be required before any works commence. The Highland Council Transport Planning Team stated that the A836 north of the Dalnessie access shall not be used due to structures and is not suitable for any significant increase in HGV traffic volumes (this route was not used by the Creag

Rhibhach Wind Farm for this reason). The routes shall be confirmed in the finalised CTMP.

- 8.61 Transport Planning have stated that the Plan shall identify any sections of road which are sensitive to the proposed HGV volumes (e.g. areas of rutting and over-run), are considered to have a weak subgrade (such as those founded on peat), are single track or are of a width less than 5.5m (for example the A836 north of the Dalchork access). For such sections, a schedule of mitigation works is required which shall consider the need for localised strengthening of the carriageway, improvements to junctions, widening on bends, provision and improvements of passing places and measures to reduce conflict between active travel users and HGVs. The developer will also be required to enter into a Section 96 (Roads Scotland Act) Agreement including lodging of a suitable bond with the council where there is significant increase in HGV traffic (or cumulative increase in traffic due to concurrent construction over length of local public road).
- 8.62 It is accepted that in terms of capacity development traffic can be accommodated on the local road network; however, the direct impact of light vehicles and particularly of heavy goods vehicles on parts of the network may be significant and should be mitigated. Detailed assessment is required prior to any abnormal load movement. The developer is advised to progress this element promptly, in consultation with the Council's Structures Team.
- 8.63 In terms of wider public recreational access rights, the track from the A836 to Dalnessie is a public right of way, HS29, and should be accessible for the public's recreational use at all times during the construction and operation of the development. This can be secured via condition.

Economic Impact

- 8.64 The development of grid infrastructure has been identified as a national priority together within investment in renewable energy. The development presented within this application are not only beneficial in strengthening the robustness of the country's grid network, but also result in further job and investment opportunities through the development of associated supply chains.
- 8.65 The development is required to facilitate the connection of the consented Chleansaid Wind Farm to the national grid, which will allow the export of electricity generated to consumers. The relationship of the development to the economic and social benefits of renewable energy developments is therefore relevant, in a positive way.
- 8.66 The Highlands is experiencing significant construction activity in the transmission network. The approval of the proposed development would have a positive economic impact, particularly during the construction period, although significantly less impact at the operational stage. There is also likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction disruption and construction traffic. These adverse impacts are most likely to be within the service sector particularly during the construction phase when additional traffic, HGVs and / or abnormal loads are being delivered to site. These will be temporary in nature.

- 8.67 NPF4 Policy 11, in particular paragraph c), notes that development proposals should only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities. Additionally, NPF4 Policy 25 provides support for development that is consistent with local economic priorities and where they contribute to local and/or regional community wealth building strategies. A condition can be attached requiring the submission of a Local Employment Scheme prior to the start of works to maximise the socio-economic benefits of the proposed development.
- 8.68 Since the application has been submitted, the Council has also published, in June 2024, its Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment. This has been brought to the applicant's attention. Owing to the nature of this document relating to community benefit, which is voluntary in nature, whilst the applicant has not provided a response to the charter to date, this is not deemed to be a material planning consideration. In addition, the UK Government has since published further guidance on Community Funds for Transmission Infrastructure which the applicant is expected to follow.

Other Material Considerations

- 8.69 There are no other material considerations.

Non-Material Considerations

- 8.70 None raised.

Matters to be secured by Legal Agreement

- 8.71 If any compensatory planting or habitat enhancement is to take place on land located outside the application site and not under the ownership of the applicant we may require a tri-party legal agreement to first be secured between the applicant, the landowner and the Planning Authority. This requirement is subject to progress being made with the applicant concluding a Memorandum of Understanding with The Highland Council.
- 8.72 A condition is also required to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) supported by a formal "Wear and Tear Agreement" in accordance with Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposed development consists of the construction of a new 132 kV OHL connection supported on trident wood poles approximately 10.5 km in length running from the consented Chleansaid Wind Farm to the existing Dalchork substation. Subject to the application of appropriate conditions, it is considered that the impact of the proposed development can be appropriately managed.
- 9.2 The Highland Council has determined its response to this application against the policies set out in the Development Plan, principally NPF4 Policy 11 and HwLDP Policy 69. Given the above analysis, the environmental impacts of the development are considered to be acceptable and can be adequately mitigated or off-set by

appropriate planning conditions. As such, the proposal has been found to be in accordance with the Development Plan.

- 9.3 Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act requires sets out what an applicant shall do in relation to the preservation of amenity. It is considered that the proposal has had regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty of the local area and through the design process, has sought to mitigate effects of the development wherever possible.
- 9.4 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

10. IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 10.2 Legal: If the committee determine that an objection should be raised to the application, the application may be subject to a Public Local Inquiry prior to determination by Scottish Ministers.
- 10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The project has the potential to enable the development of renewable energy.
- 10.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued N

It is recommended to **RAISE NO OBJECTION** to the application subject to the following conditions.

Conditions and Reasons

1. Time Limit for the Implementation of Planning Permission

In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), the development to which this planning permission relates must commence within FIVE YEARS of the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period, then this planning permission shall lapse.

Reason: In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

2. Implementation in Accordance with Approved Plans

Except as otherwise required by the terms of the Section 37 consent and deemed planning permission, the Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the

application including the approved Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR), received by the Planning Authority in February 2025.

Reason: To ensure that the Development is carried out in accordance with the approved details and mitigation contained in the EAR.

3. **Elevations, Materials and Finishes**

- a) No development shall commence until elevation drawings of the proposed above ground infrastructure, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, specifying external materials, colours and finishes of all external structures and site fencing with a non-reflective finish to be specified throughout;
- b) No element of the development shall have any text, sign or logo displayed on any external surface of the facility, save those required by the applicant's safety systems and law under other legislation; and

Thereafter, the development shall be built out in accordance with these approved details and, with reference to part (a) above, the site shall be maintained in the approved colour, free from rust, staining or discolouration.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

4. **Limits of deviation and micro-sighting**

All poles shall be constructed in the locations shown in Figure 3.1 – of the proposed development Environmental Appraisal received by the Planning Authority on Febru2025.

- a) No pole shall be positioned more than 100m on the horizontal axis of the proposed overhead line alignment; and
- b) No pole shall be more than a height of 14m in height inclusive of all steel work and insulators, with the average height of all proposed poles not exceeding 12m, with an overall vertical limit of Deviation (LoD) of 20%.

No later than one month after the date of final commissioning of the development, an updated drawing must be submitted showing the final position of the overhead line, including the positioning and height of all poles and associated infrastructure forming part of the development must be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The updated drawing requires to specify areas where micro-siting has taken place and, for each instance, be accompanied by copies of the EnvCoW approval or other technical justification.

Reason: To control environmental impacts while taking account of local ground conditions.

5. **Pre-construction survey**

- i. A pre-construction survey is required to be undertaken not more than 3 months prior to works commencing and a report of the survey has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority.
- ii. The survey shall cover both the application site and an appropriate buffer from the boundary of application site and the report of survey shall include mitigation measures where any impact, or potential impact, on protected species or their habitat has been identified.
- iii. Development and work shall progress in accordance with any mitigation measures contained within the approved report of survey and the timescales contain therein.

Reason: To properly control environmental impacts of the development prior to any construction taking place.

6. **Species Protection Plans (SPPs)**

Updated Species Protection Plans must be submitted for approval to the Planning Authority for approval prior to the commencement of work. These should include:

- a) Otter
- b) Water vole
- c) Red Squirrel
- d) Pine Marten
- e) Any other protected species identified on site during the pre-construction surveys

Reason: To ensure that all construction and operation of the proposed development has a limited impact on the aforementioned protected species, and to ensure that the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Appraisal Report which accompanied the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented.

7. **Breeding Bird Protection Plan**

There shall be no Commencement of Development until a Breeding Bird Protection Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot.

- i. The Plan should include the following as a minimum:
 - i. details of baseline breeding conditions for hen harrier, greenshank and barn owl.
 - ii. Details of works scheduled to be undertaken during the breeding bird season (April to August inclusive) avoiding helicopter deliveries within the bird breeding season.
 - iii. Survey and monitoring requirements.
 - iv. Details of mitigation to be implemented during works.
 - v. Further mitigation specific to hen harrier: No works will be undertaken within 750 m of Pole 1 during the period 1st April to 1st June inclusive. Following the 1st of June, works can proceed provided survey and monitoring does not identify active nests within 750 m of Pole 1.

- vi. Pre-construction surveys for black grouse, and standard mitigation (timing constraints) if needed: no construction works, or tree felling should take place within 750m of an identified black grouse lek during the lekking season (15th March to 15th May). Use of access tracks within 750m of leks should be restricted to the period between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset.
- vii. A nesting bird survey should be made, not more than 24 hours prior to the commencement of development if this coincides within the main bird breeding season (March - August inclusive) and throughout the breeding bird season if new areas are being developed or there has been a break in construction.
- viii. Line marking to reduce collision risks to birds, as per NatureScot guidance "Assessment and mitigation of impacts of power lines and guyed meteorological masts on birds".
- ii. Thereafter, the approved Plan shall be implemented in full within the timescales set out in the approved Plan.

All of the above pre-construction checks should be carried out by a competent and suitably qualified ornithologist.

Reason: In the interests of protecting ornithological interests through the construction and operation of the Overhead Line Connection.

8. **Environmental Clerk of Works**

No development or any works shall commence unless and until the terms of appointment of an independent Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) by the Company have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. This must include a EnvCoW schedule, detailing when the EnvCoW shall be present on site. The EnvCoW shall be appointed as a minimum for the period from the commencement of development to the final commissioning of the development and their remit shall, in addition to any functions approved in writing by the Planning Authority, include (but not be limited to):

- a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the environmental commitments provided in the EIA Report as well as the following (the EnvCoW works):
 - i. the Limits of deviation and microsting under Condition 4;
 - ii. the Pre-Construction Ecological Survey under Condition 5
 - iii. the Species Protection Plans under Condition 6;
 - iv. the Breeding Bird Protection Plan under Condition 7;
 - v. Peat Management Plan under Condition 9;
 - vi. the Habitat Management Plan under Condition 10;
 - vii. the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan under Condition 11; and
 - viii. the Construction Environmental Management Plan under Condition 13.
- b) Require the EnvCoW to report concurrently to the nominated construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the EnvCoW works at the earliest practical opportunity; and

- c) Require the EnvCoW to concurrently submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site.

Reason: To secure effective and transparent monitoring of and compliance with the environmental mitigation and management measures associated with the development during the construction, decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases.

9. **Peat Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a works specific finalised Peat Management Plan (PMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation SEPA. The PMP shall include:

- a) Exact details of the location and design of any tracks on peat greater than 1m, to be agreed with the planning authority in consultation with SEPA.
- b) Demonstration of adhering to recognised best practice including microsites, limiting the footprint, and use of mog mats / temporary trackway to reduce disturbance;
- c) Confirming the volumes of peat that will be disturbed as a result of the above work, demonstrating that no waste peat will be generated by the development and peat is reused in an appropriate manner with demonstration that peatland restoration achieves at least a 1:10 ratio of loss to offsetting;
- d) Proposed mitigation is undertaken and incorporated into the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Storage areas, laydown areas and pulling stations are planned to avoid areas of sensitive peatland habitat, to further reduce impacts; and
- e) Mitigation extending to other sensitive habitats that are present along the line route which lie on peat/carbon-rich soils (areas of M15 and M25).

The PMP shall thereafter be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure that a plan is in place to deal with the storage and reuse of peat within the application site.

10. **Habitat Management Plan**

- a) There shall be no commencement of development until an updated Habitat Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with NatureScot. This shall quantify and map the extent and quality of habitat and peat losses, direct and indirect areas of disturbance, and biodiversity impact associated with the finalised development proposals, taking account of the limit of deviation and microsites allowances to be utilised. This shall also account for any additional intended storage areas, laydown areas, and all other temporary construction areas, identifying existing habitat features and vegetation to be retained.
- b) Within 18 months of the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a finalised Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot. The finalised HMP shall set

out proposed habitat management of the site including all mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, during the period of construction and operation, and shall detail the long term management regimes of the compensation and enhancement measures required of the site. All planting, seeding or turfing as may be comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the commencement of development, unless otherwise stated in the approved scheme.

- c) The HMP shall include provision for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken against the HMP objectives and measures for securing amendments or additions to the HMP in the event that the HMP objectives are not being met. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, for whatever reason are removed or damaged shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of the same size and species.

Unless and until otherwise agreed in advance in writing with the Planning Authority, the approved HMP (as amended from time to time with written approval of the Planning Authority) shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of the protection of the habitats and species identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

11. **Biodiversity Enhancement Plan**

Within 18 months of the commencement of development a finalised Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The BEP must include;

- a) details of compensation and enhancement measures, to ensure the development results in at least 10% biodiversity net gain;
- b) management, maintenance and monitoring strategies of the compensation and enhancement measures, that ensure longevity of the proposals; and
- c) GIS Shapefiles of the biodiversity loss, compensation and enhancement areas.

The approved BEP shall be implemented in full and in accordance with the approved timing, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure biodiversity enhancement and allow the compensation and enhancement areas to be mapped to ensure no developments occur on these sites for a minimum of 30 years.

12. **Compensatory Woodland Plan**

a) Within 18 months of the commencement of development a woodland planting scheme to compensate for the removal of 48.5 hectares of existing woodland ("the Replanting Scheme") has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the planning authority.

b) The Replanting Scheme shall provide:

- i. details of the location of the area(s) to be planted, including a map and description of current land use, giving consideration to the potential for planting

- to be located between the proposed development and the A836 should this area not already be earmarked for planting by Scottish Forestry;
 - ii. the nature, design/layout, species composition, purpose and specification of the proposed woodland to be planted;
 - iii. the phasing and associated timescales for implementing the Replanting Scheme;
 - iv. proposals for reporting to the Planning Authority on compliance with timescales for obtaining the necessary consents and thereafter implementation of the Replanting Scheme;
 - v. proposals for the maintenance and establishment of the woodland to be planted, including annual checks, replacement planting, fencing, ground preparation and drainage; and
 - vi. details evidencing compliance with The UK Forestry Standard and the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (as amended or replaced from time to time).
- c) The Replanting Scheme approved under part (a) of this condition shall be implemented in full, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity to aid screening of the Development as well as to protect Scotland's woodland resource.

13. **Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)**

There shall be no Commencement of Development unless and until a finalised Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) containing site specific details of all on-site construction works, post-construction reinstatement, drainage and mitigation, together with details of their timetabling, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot. The CEMP shall include (but is not limited to):

- a) an updated Schedule of Mitigation highlighting amendments made to the existing schedule of mitigation set out in the Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR), received by the Planning Authority in February 2025, and the conditions of this consent;
- b) Updated General Environmental Management Plans;
- c) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction-type activities on the environment;
- d) Mitigation to protect the ecological resources on site, including GWDTE, biodiversity protection zones, location and timing of works;
- e) Species and Habitat Protection Plans;
- f) A Pollution Prevention Plan including drainage management strategy and mitigation measures, demonstrating how all surface water run-off and waste water arising during and after development is to be managed and prevented from polluting any watercourses or sources, including any private water supplies. The plan shall also include arrangements for the storage and management of oil and fuel on the site;
- g) Site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the construction period other than peat), including details of contingency

planning in the event of accidental release of materials which could cause harm to the environment;

- h) Details of the formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing;
- i) Details of measures to be taken to prevent loose or deleterious material being deposited on the local road network including wheel cleaning and lorry sheeting facilities, and measures to clean the site entrances and the adjacent local road network;
- j) Mitigation to protect and minimise disturbance to archaeological interests, including the demarcation implantation of a buffer from known cultural heritage assets and a protocol in the event of the discovery of a previously unrecorded cultural heritage asset;
- k) Details of temporary site illumination; and
- l) Construction Method Statement for any watercourse crossings.

The approved CEMP shall be implemented throughout the construction, post-construction site reinstatement and operational phases in full unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that all construction operations are carried out in a manner that minimises their impact on road safety, amenity and the environment, and that the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Assessment Report (received by the Planning Authority February 2025) which accompanied the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented.

14. **Construction Noise Mitigation Scheme**

Prior to construction commencing, the applicant shall submit, for the written approval of the planning authority, a construction noise mitigation scheme which demonstrates how the applicant/contractor will ensure the best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction noise. The assessment should include but is not limited to the following:

- i. A description of the most significant noise sources in terms of equipment; processes or phases of construction;
- ii. The proposed operating hours and the estimated duration of the works for each phase;
- iii. A detailed plan showing the location of noise sources, noise sensitive premises and any survey measurement locations if required; and
- iv. A description of noise mitigation methods that will be put in place including any proposals for community liaison. The best practice found in BS5228 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites should be followed. Any divergence requires to be justified.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved Noise Mitigation Scheme and all approved mitigation measures shall be in place prior to construction commencing or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To reduce the impact of construction noise.

15. Construction Traffic Management Plan

No development shall commence until an updated Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to manage all construction traffic has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the local Roads Authority, and any affected local Community Councils. The CTMP shall include this development with consideration also given to any other major development proposals intending to use the same access routes. The CTMP should be submitted including all of the standard issues generally covered (identification of construction routes, safety of vulnerable road users, public and communities, junction upgrades, measures to keep the public road clean, protocol for abnormal load deliveries etc). The CTMP shall include:

- a) A schedule of a schedule of mitigation works which shall consider the need for localised strengthening of the carriageway, improvements to junctions, widening on bends, provision and improvements of passing places and measures to reduce conflict between active travel users and HGVs;
- b) A detailed review of the preferred route to the site for all the abnormal indivisible loads (AILs) that will be required including the port of entry, swept path assessment and consideration of the structures along the route and details of mitigation where required.
- c) Scheduling and timing of movements, respecting any large public event taking place in the local area which would be unduly affected or disrupted by construction vehicles using the public road network. Avoiding the movement of commercial goods vehicles along the local public road network during the drop-off and pick-up times of the local schools;
- d) Traffic management measures on the routes to site for construction traffic. Measures such as temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings and the use of speed activated signs and banksman/escort details should be considered. During the delivery period of construction materials any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any loads being delivered or removed must be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant, to be approved by the impacted Roads Authority before delivery commences;
- e) Appropriate steps to effectively coordinate traffic movements with other developments that could be impacting on the same construction access route as this proposal, avoid convoying of larger / heavier commercial goods vehicles along local public roads and avoid convoying;
- f) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period;
- g) Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;
- h) Ensure that effective access can be provided to all existing properties and businesses who are also reliant on the roads impacted by this development;
- i) The provision of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 under which the developer will be responsible for the

repair of any damage to the local road network attributable to construction related traffic. As part of the agreement, pre-start and post construction road condition surveys must be carried out by the developer to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority;

- j) Provisions for emergency vehicle access;
- k) A timetable for implementation of the measures detailed in the CTMP;
- l) Identification of quarries/suppliers for materials such as aggregate and concrete;
- m) Estimate of volume of and type of materials that must be imported for each site;
- n) Estimate of load size for each type of material;
- o) Estimate of the number of HGVs for each stage of construction;
- p) Number and type of any abnormal loads;
- q) Clarification of construction routes and port of entry if applicable;
- r) Dates for key activities within construction programmes for the proposed works along with the other schemes noted;
- s) Measures to ensure that the track from the A836 to Dalnessie, a public right of way - HS29, remains accessible for the public's recreational use at all times; and
- t) Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred and measures for keeping the Community Council informed and dealing with queries and any complaints regarding construction traffic ensuring: effective lines of communication with existing residents, businesses and appropriate local representation.

The Plan shall thereafter be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure adequate road safety measures are in place and the efficient operation of the public road network.

16. **The Abnormal Load Traffic Management Plan (ALTMP)**

There shall be no Commencement of Development until an Abnormal Load Traffic Management Plan (ALTMP), has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, Police, the respective roads authorities and, as required, community representatives. It shall include the following:

- a) A risk assessment for transportation of abnormal loads during daylight hours and hours of darkness;
- b) Proposed traffic management and mitigation measures on the abnormal load access route. Measures such as temporary speed limits, road closures, suitable temporary signage and diversions, road markings and the use of speed activated signs should be considered;
- c) A contingency plan prepared by the abnormal load haulier. The plan shall be adopted only after consultation and agreement with the Police and the respective roads authorities. It shall include measures to deal with any haulage incidents that may result in public roads becoming temporarily closed or restricted;

- d) A detailed protocol for abnormal load movements, prepared in consultation and agreement with interested parties. The protocol shall identify any requirement for convoy working and/or escorting of vehicles and include arrangements to provide advance notice of abnormal load movements in the local media. Temporary signage, in the form of demountable signs or similar approved, shall be established, when required. All such movements on Council maintained roads shall take place outwith peak times on the network, including school travel times, and shall avoid local community events;
- e) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period; and
- f) Details of appropriate upgrading works at the junction of the site access and the public road for the abnormal load movements. Such works may include suitable drainage measures, improved geometry and construction, measures to protect the public road, and the provision and maintenance of appropriate visibility splays.

Reason: To ensure adequate road safety measures are in place and the efficient operation of the public road network.

17. **Archaeology**

No works in connection with the development hereby approved shall commence unless an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and a programme of archaeological works has been carried out in accordance with the approved WSI.

- i. The WSI shall include details of how the recording and recovery of archaeological resources found within the application site shall be undertaken, and how any updates, if required, to the written scheme of investigation will be provided throughout the implementation of the programme of archaeological works. The WSI and programme of archaeological works shall be implemented as approved; and
- ii. Should the archaeological works reveal the need for post excavation analysis the development hereby approved shall not be occupied or brought into use unless a Post-Excavation Research Design (PERD) for the analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The PERD shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to protect the archaeological and historic interest of the site.

18. **Aviation Charting and Safety Management**

At least 14 days prior to the commencement of the works, the undertaker must notify the Ministry of Defence in writing of the following information:

- a) the date of the commencement of the erection of the poles;
- b) the maximum height of any construction equipment to be used in the erection of the poles;

- c) the date the poles and overhead lines are brought into use;
- d) the latitude and longitude and maximum heights of the poles.

The Ministry of Defence must be notified of any changes to the information supplied in accordance with these requirements and of the completion of the construction of the development.

Reason: To maintain aviation safety.

19. **Community Liaison Group**

No development shall commence until a community liaison group is established by the applicant, in collaboration with the Planning Authority and affected local Community Councils.

The group shall act as a forum for the community to be kept informed of project progress and, in particular, should allow advanced dialogue on the provision of all transport related mitigation measures and to keep under review the timing of the delivery of abnormal loads and performance of the Construction Traffic Management Plan.

This should also ensure that local events and tourist seasons are considered and appropriate measures to co-ordinate deliveries and work with these and any other major projects in the area to ensure no conflict between construction traffic and the increased traffic generated by such events / seasons / developments.

The liaison group, or element of any combined liaison group relating to this development, shall be maintained until the construction of the development and all site infrastructure becomes fully operational.

Reason: To assist project implementation, ensuring community dialogue and the delivery of appropriate mitigation measures for example to minimise potential hazards to road users, including pedestrians, travelling on the road networks.

20. **Planning Monitoring Officer**

No development shall commence until the Planning Authority has approved in writing the terms of appointment by the applicant of a suitably qualified environmental specialist to assist the Planning Authority in monitoring compliance with the planning permission and conditions attached to this consent. The terms of Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO) appointment shall:

- a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the planning permission and conditions attached to this consent;
- b) Require the PMO to submit a report at least every three months to the Planning Authority, or monthly at the further written request of the Planning Authority, summarising works undertaken on site; and
- c) Require the PMO to report to the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the planning permission and conditions attached to this consent at the earliest practical opportunity.

The PMO shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the period from the commencement of development to completion of post construction restoration works.

Reason: To enable the development to be suitably monitored to ensure compliance with the consent issued.

21. **Local Employment Scheme**

Prior to the Commencement of Development, a Local Employment Scheme for the construction and operation of the development shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by The Highland Council. The submitted Scheme shall make reference to the Environmental Appraisal Report received by the Planning Authority February 2025. The Scheme shall include the following:

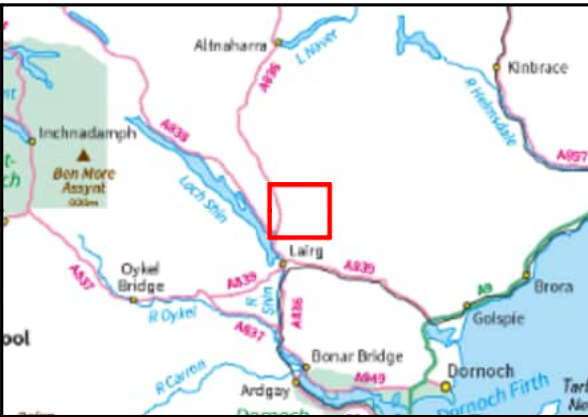
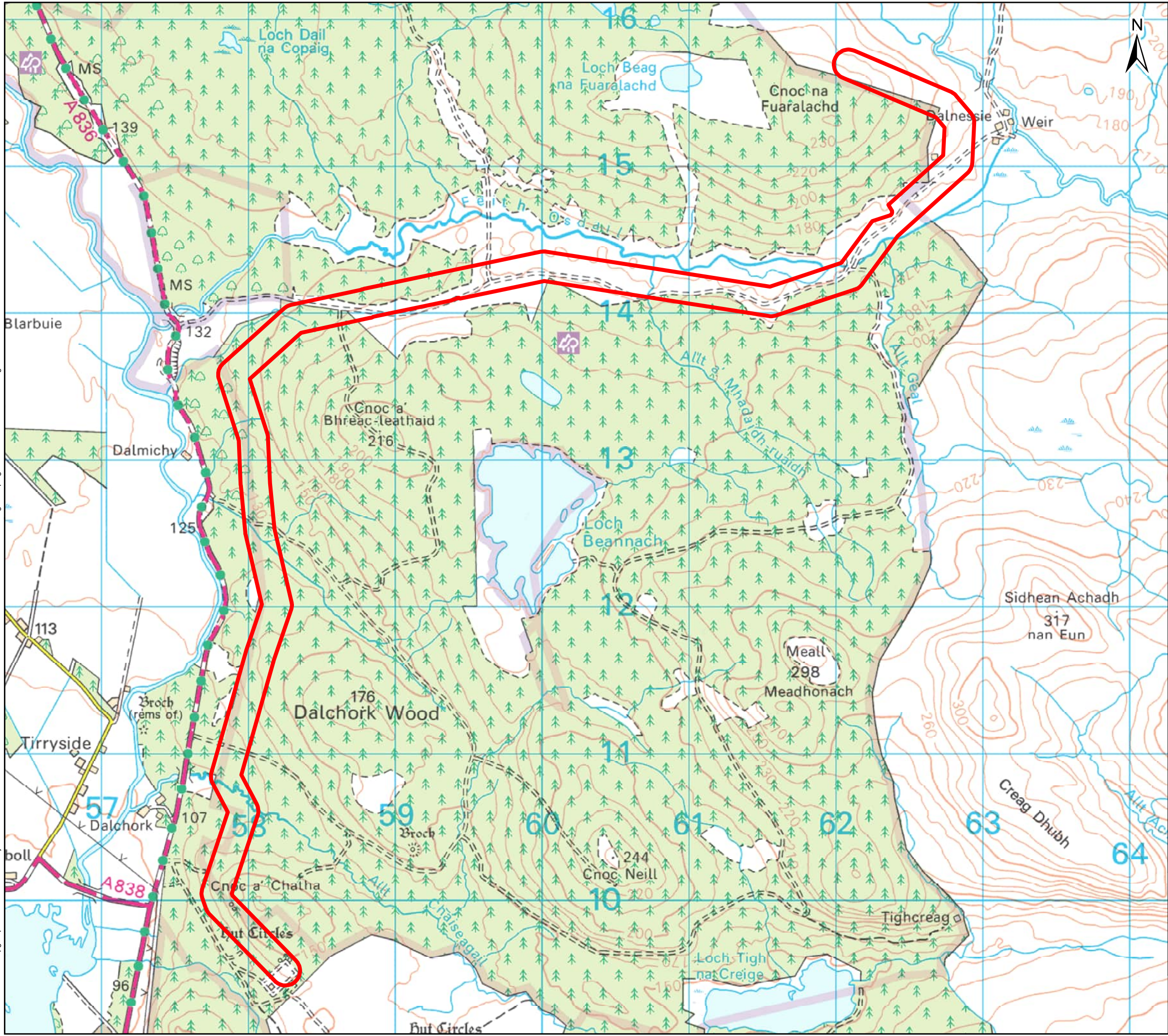
- a) Details of how the staff/employment opportunities at the development will be advertised and how liaison with the Council and other local bodies will take place in relation to maximising the access of the local workforce to information about employment opportunities;
- b) Details of how sustainable training opportunities will be provided for those recruited to fulfil staff/employment requirements including the provision of apprenticeships or an agreed alternative;
- c) A procedure setting out criteria for employment, and for matching of candidates to the vacancies;
- d) Measures to be taken to offer and provide college and/or work placement opportunities at the development to students within the locality;
- e) Details of the promotion of the Local Employment Scheme and liaison with contractors engaged in the construction of the development to ensure that they also apply the Local Employment Scheme so far as practicable having due regard to the need and availability for specialist skills and trades and the programme for constructing the development;
- f) A procedure for monitoring the Local Employment Scheme and reporting the results of such monitoring to The Highland Council; and
- g) A timetable for the implementation of the Local Employment Scheme.

Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: In order to ensure compliance with NPF4 Policy 11c) and to maximise the local socio-economic benefits of the development to the wider community. To make provision for publicity and details relating to any local employment opportunities.

Signature:	Dafydd Jones
Designation:	Area Planning Manager – North
Author:	Peter Wheelan
Background Papers:	Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans:	Plan 1 Figure 1.1 – Location Plan Plan 2 Figure 3.1 – Proposed Development Layout Plan (Pages 1 through to 8)

Date Saved: 7/18/2023
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\\Central Data\\Data\\Projects\\70099xxx\\70099990 - Chleasaid Wind Farm Connection\\03 WIP\\3E- GIS\\MXD\\EIA Screening - Scoping\\CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118 Figure 1.1 - Location Plan.mxd



Legend

 Red Line Boundary

0 0.5 1 km

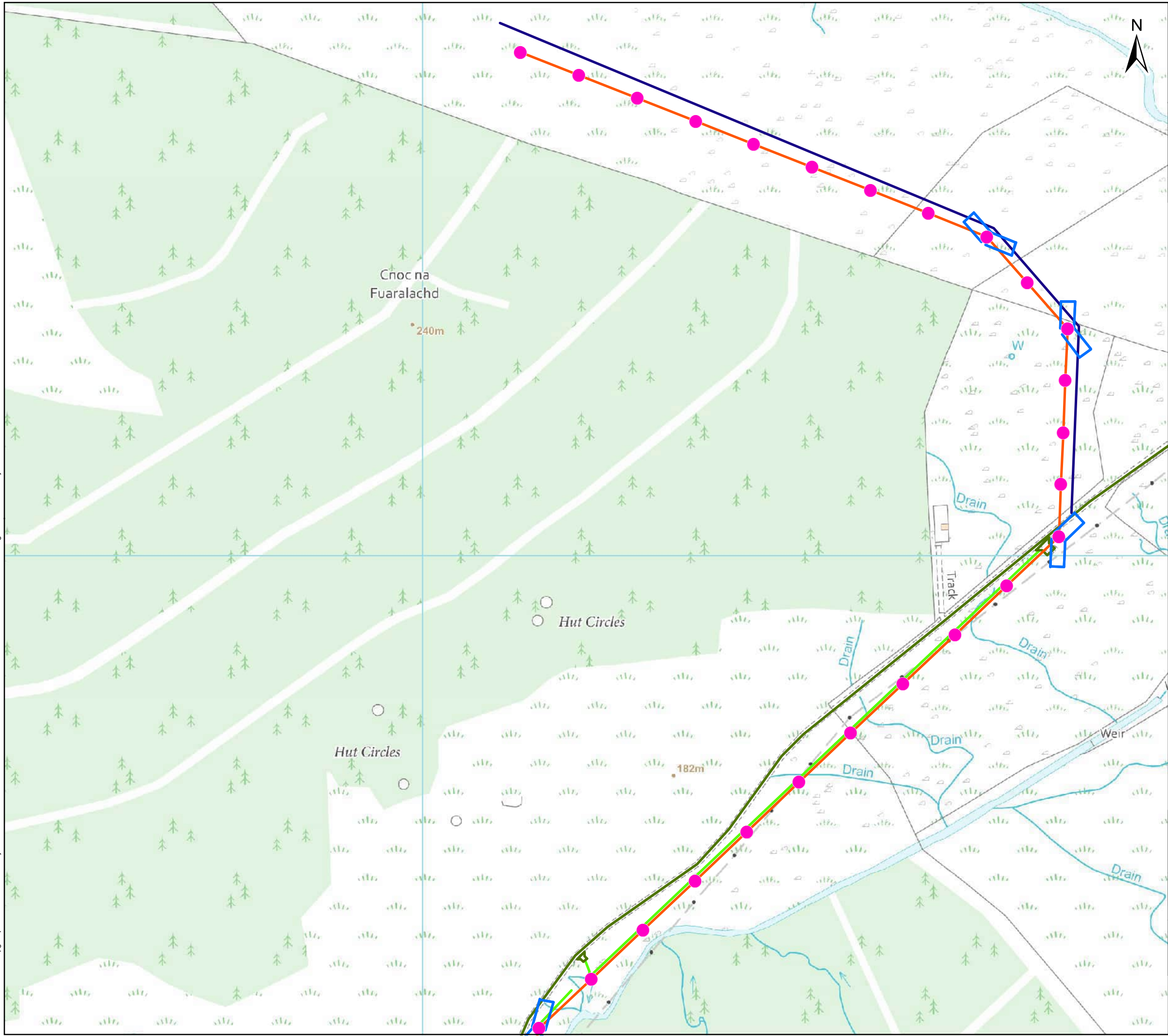
Client:  Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

Project: Chleasaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection

Title: **Figure 1.1 - Location Plan**

Date: 19/07/2024 Scale: 25,000 @ A3
Drawn: CB Checked: BS Approved: JB
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118

Date Saved: 20/09/2024
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\\central data\\Projects\\70109xxx\\70109477 - Chleasaid WF Connection EIA\\03 WPIE&E (CRC GISMXD)\\Figure 3.1 - Site Layout.mxd



Legend

- Proposed Pole Position
- Proposed OHL Alignment
- Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trakway system)
- Existing Access
- Proposed Chleasaid Windfarm Developer Access
- Proposed Pulling Position

0 125 250
Metres

Client: 

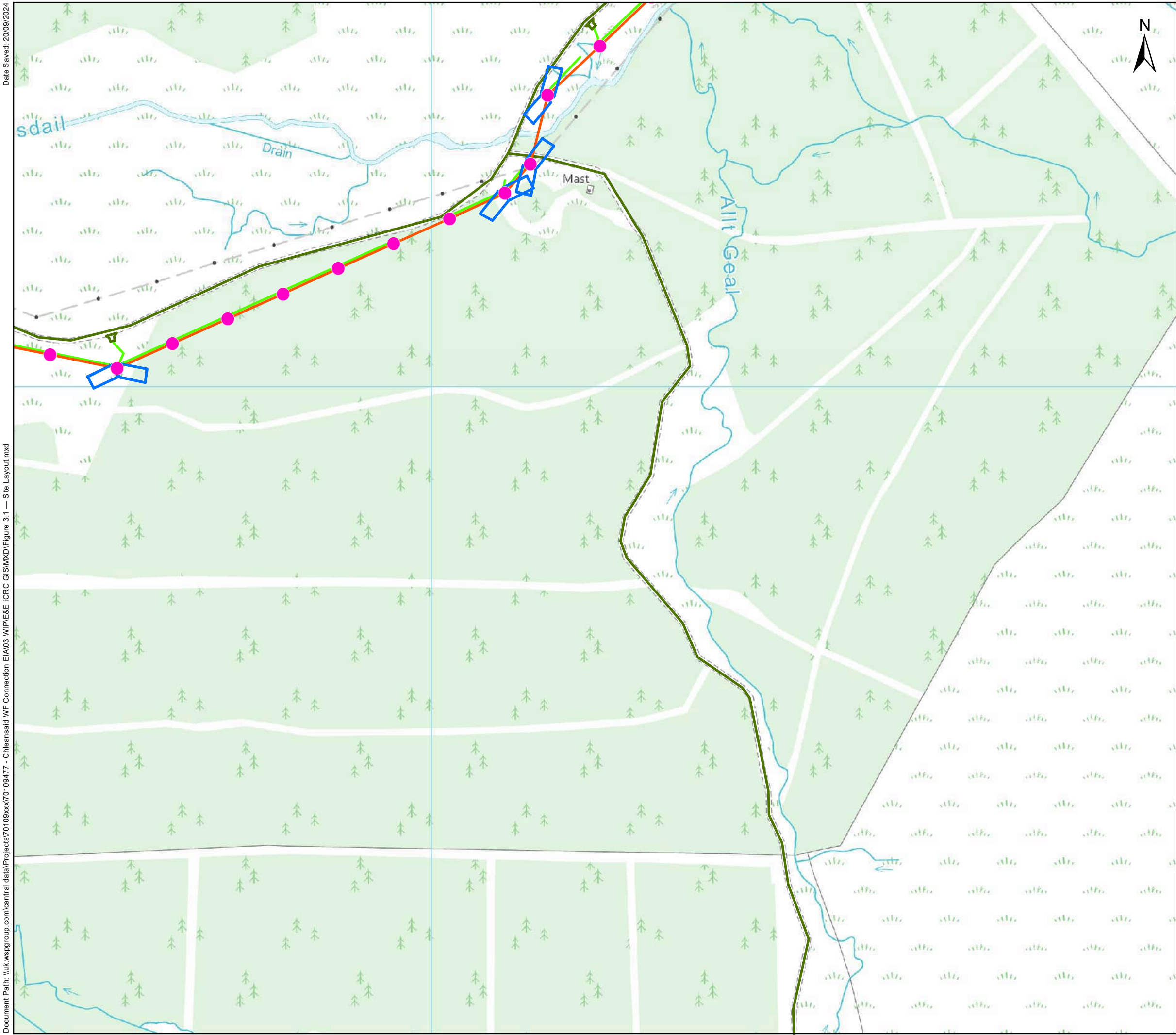
Project: Chleasaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection

Title: Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan

Date: 20/09/2024 Scale: 4,800 @ A3
Drawn: PB Checked: CE Approved: MR
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118

Page 1 of 8

Date Saved: 20/09/2024
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central\data\Projects\70109xxx\70109477 - Cleansaid WF Connection EIA\03 WPI\E&E (CRC GISMXD)\Figure 3.1 - Site Layout.mxd

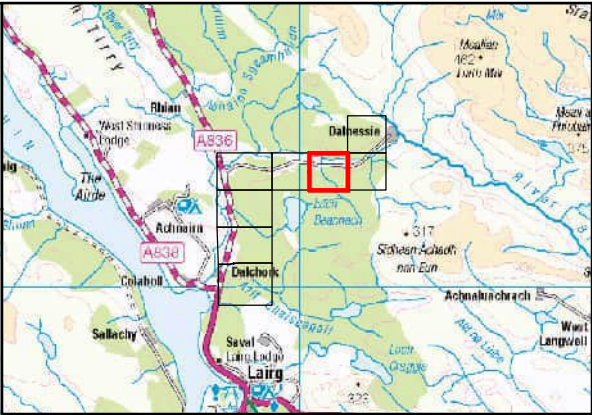
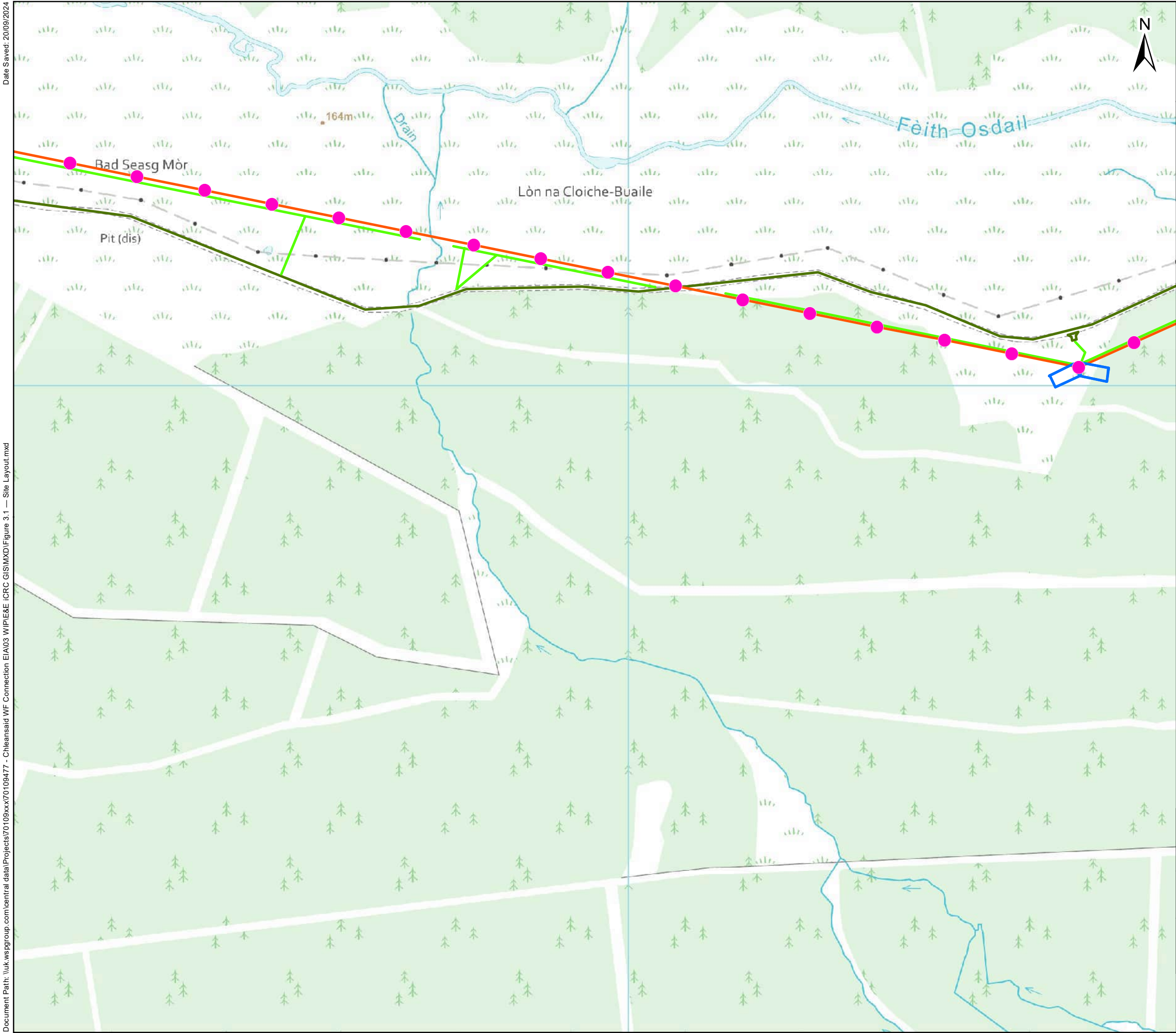


- Legend**
- Proposed Pole Position
 - Proposed OHL Alignment
 - Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trackway system)
 - Existing Access
 - Proposed Pulling Position



Client:	
Project:	Cleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection
Title:	Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan
Page 2 of 8	
Date:	20/09/2024
Scale:	4,800 @ A3
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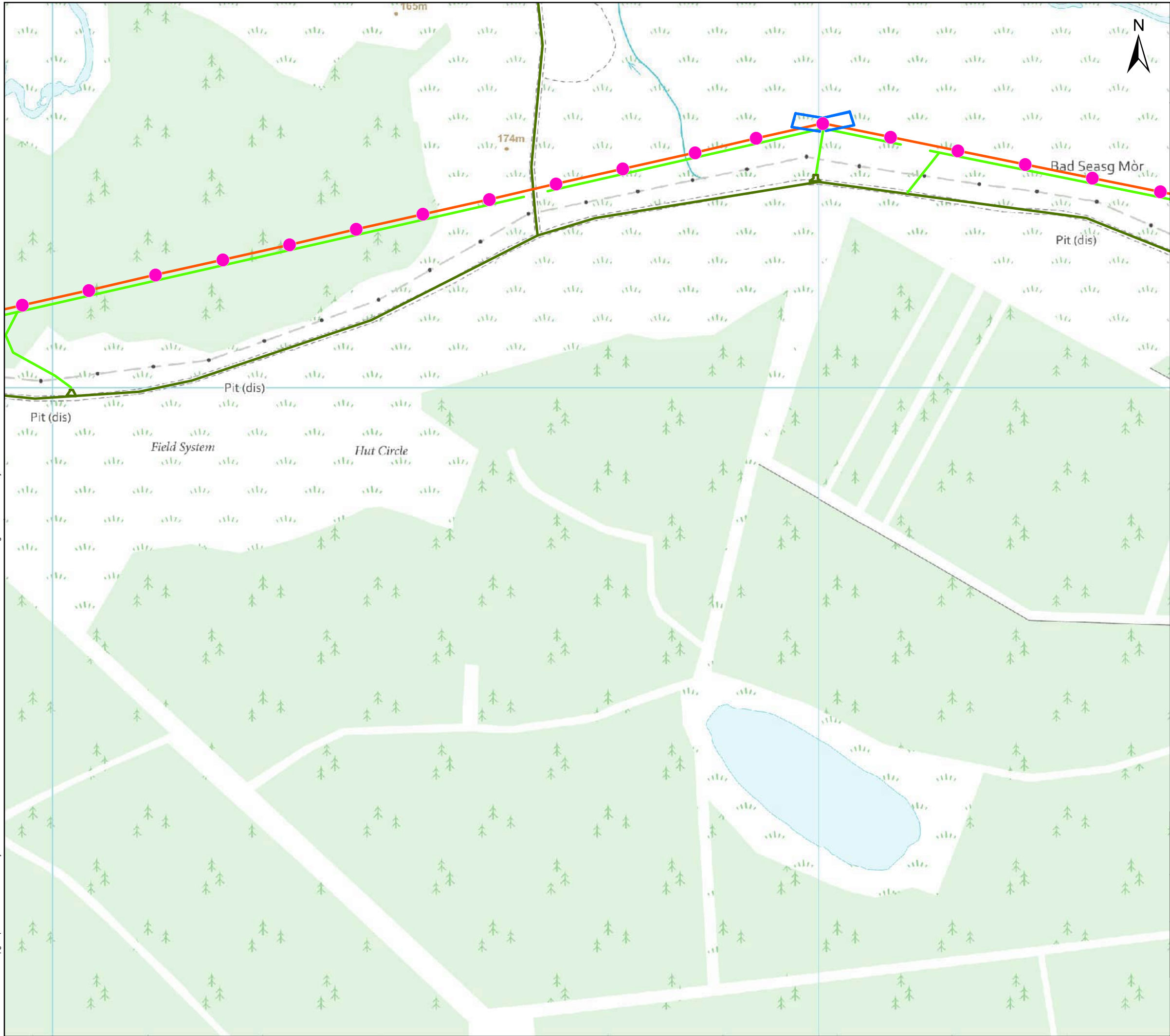


- Legend**
- Proposed Pole Position
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 - Existing Access
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Client:		
Project:	Cleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection	
Title:	Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan	
Page 3 of 8		
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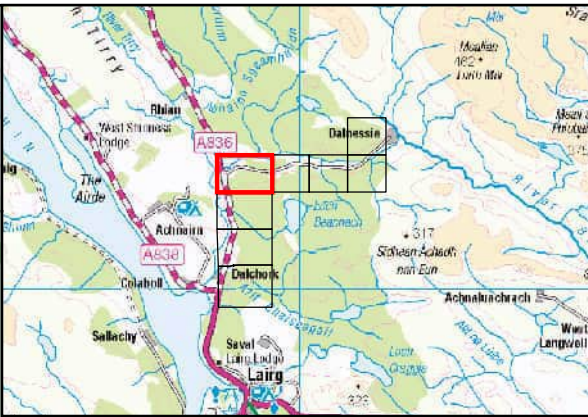
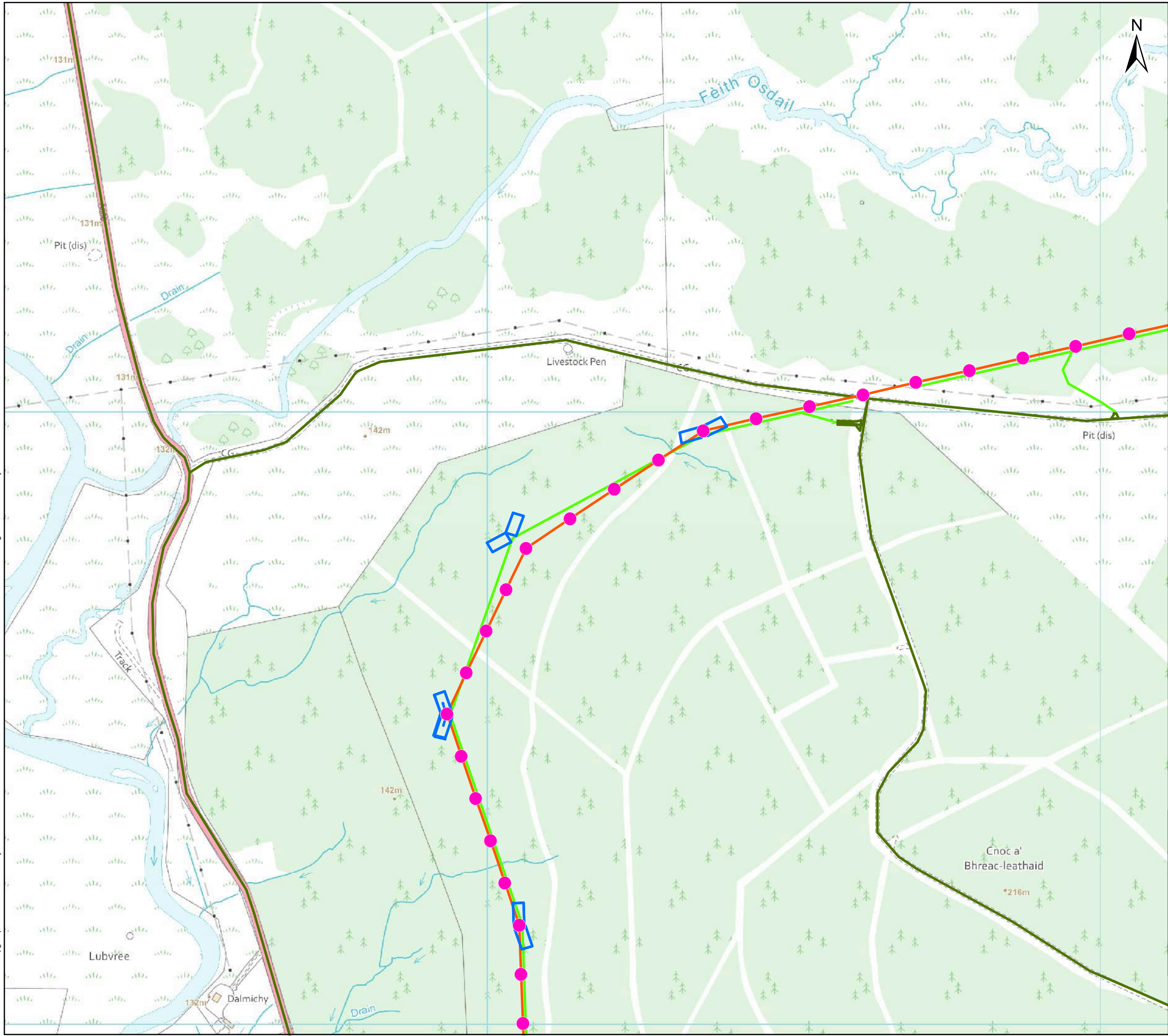
Date Saved: 20/09/2024
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\\central data\\Projects\\70109xxx\\70109477 - Cleansaid WF Connection EIA\\03 WPIE&E (CRC GISMXD)\\Figure 3.1 - Site Layout.mxd



- Legend**
- Proposed Pole Position
 - Proposed OHL Alignment
 - Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trakway system)
 - Existing Access
 - Proposed Pulling Position



Client:			
Project:	Chleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection		
Title	Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan		Page 4 of 8
Date:	20/09/2024	Scale:	4,800 @ A3
Drawn:	PB	Checked:	CE
		Approved:	MR
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118			



Legend

- Proposed Pole Position
- Proposed OHL Alignment
- Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trakway system)
- Existing Access
- Proposed Pulling Position

0 150 300 Metres

Client: Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

Project: **Cleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection**

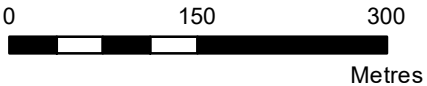
Title: **Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan**

Date: 20/09/2024 Scale: 6,000 @ A3
Drawn: PB Checked: CE Approved: MR
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118

Date Saved: 20/09/2024
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central\data\Projects\70109xxx\70109477 - Cleansaid WF Connection EIA\03 WPIE&E (CRC GISMXD)\Figure 3.1 - Site Layout.mxd

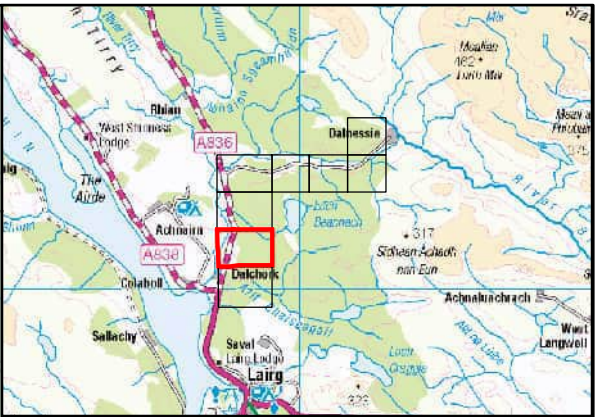
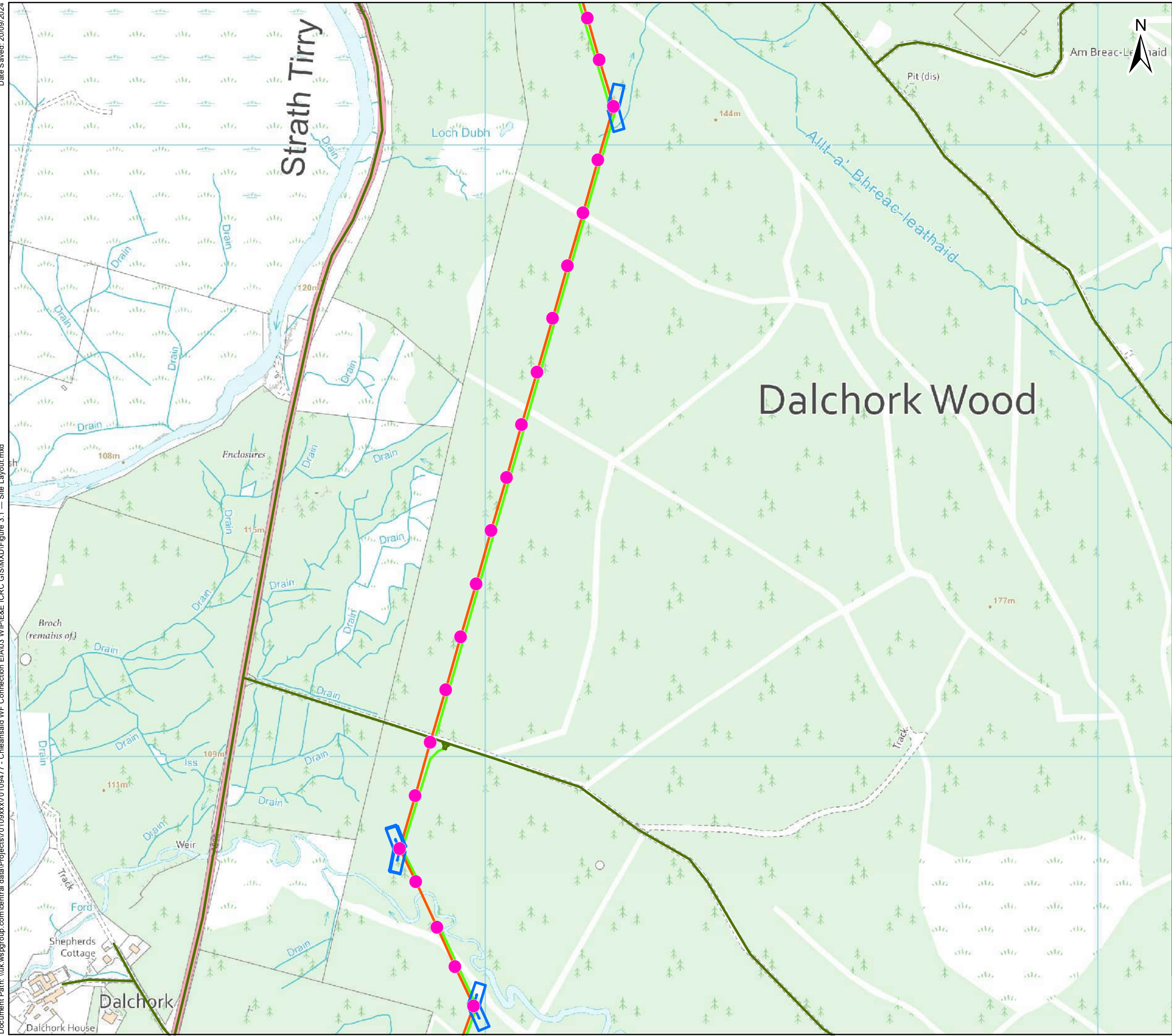


- ### Legend
- Proposed Pole Position
 - Proposed OHL Alignment
 - Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trakway system)
 - Existing Access
 - Proposed Pulling Position



Client:			
Project:	Chleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection		
Title	Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan		Page 6 of 8
Date:	20/09/2024	Scale:	6,000 @ A3
Drawn:	PB	Checked:	CE
		Approved:	MR
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118			

Date Saved: 20/09/2024
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central data\Projects\70109xxx\70109477 - Cleansaid WF Connection EIA\03 WPIE&E (CRC GISMXD)\Figure 3.1 - Site Layout.mxd



Legend

- Proposed Pole Position
- Proposed OHL Alignment
- Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trakway system)
- Existing Access
- Proposed Pulling Position

0 150 300 Metres

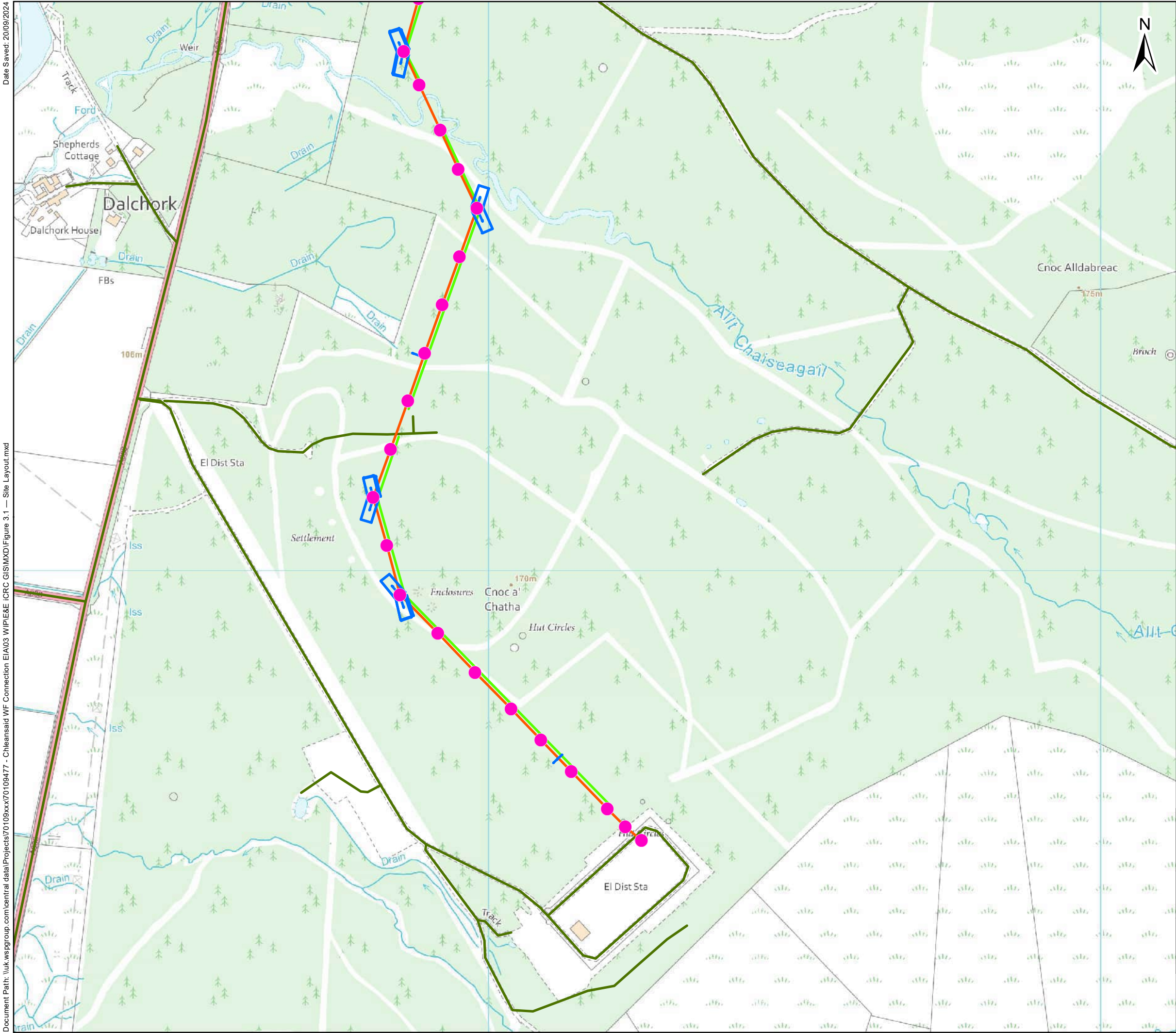
Client: 

Project: Chleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection

Title: Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan

Date: 20/09/2024 Scale: 6,000 @ A3
Drawn: PB Checked: CE Approved: MR
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118

Date Saved: 20/09/2024
Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central data\Projects\70109xxx\70109477 - Cleansaid WF Connection EIA\03 WPIE&E (CRC GISMXD)\Figure 3.1 - Site Layout.mxd



Legend

- Proposed Pole Position
- Proposed OHL Alignment
- Temporary Access (proposed open ground/temporary trakway system)
- Existing Access
- Proposed Pulling Position

0 150 300 Metres

Client: 

Project: **Cleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection**

Title: **Figure 3.1 Proposed Development Layout Plan**

Date: 20/09/2024 Scale: 6,000 @ A3
Drawn: PB Checked: CE Approved: MR
Drawing Number: CWFC-WSP-DA-GIS-118

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