

Agenda Item	<b>6.1</b>
Report No	<b>PLS/32/25</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** South Planning Applications Committee

**Date:** 18 June 2025

**Report Title:** 24/01235/FUL: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc  
Land 380M SW Of Deanie Power Station, Deanie, Strathfarrar, Kiltarlity

**Report By:** Area Planning Manager – South

### **Purpose/Executive Summary**

**Description:** Deanie Substation - construction and operation of a 132kV replacement substation, platform, plant and machinery, access, laydown/work compound area(s), drainage, landscaping, and other ancillary works

**Ward:** 12 – Aird and Loch Ness

**Development category:** National Development

**Reason referred to Committee:** National Development

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 **GRANT** the application as set out in section 11 of the report.

## 1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 This application is for the construction and operation of a new 132kV/11kV single transformer substation to replace the existing substation at the Deanie Hydro Electric Power Station, which is coming to the end of its operational life, comprising:
- 63 m x 63 m concrete platform;
  - control building measuring 26 m x 11 m and maximum height of 5.9 m;
  - external air insulated switchgear (AIS) measuring up to 40 m x 20m and maximum height of 8 m;
  - landscaping and biodiversity enhancement;
  - site drainage;
  - 2.4 m high security palisade perimeter fencing, deer fencing around the development perimeter; and,
  - new access track form, and junction with, the private Glen Strathfarrar Road along with upgrades and improvements along the private Glen Strathfarrar Road.
- 1.2 As part of the development, the OHL tower connection, grid transformer, and other elements of the existing substation will be decommissioned and removed. The extant substation platform will be reused as a cable sealing end compound for switch gear and associated infrastructure as required for the function and control of supply between the new underground cable, substation, and existing power station. Underground cabling to connect the Deanie Hydro Electric Power Station to the new substation will be undertaken using the applicant's permitted development rights.
- 1.3 The application forms part of the West of Beaully Asset Replacement Project, which replaces the existing substations of Deanie, Culligran, Aigas, and Kilmorack Hydroelectric Power stations as part of the Affric/Beaully Hydroelectric scheme. The project runs concurrent with the Glen Strathfarrar Visual Impact of Scottish Transmission Assets (VISTA) Project to underground a section of overhead transmission line (OHL) within the Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area (NSA).
- 1.4 The applicant requested pre-application advice through the Highland Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments for this proposal jointly with the proposed substation replacement at Culligran Power Station (22/03238/PREMAJ). The response outlined the in principle support for the proposals subject to appropriate siting, design, and landscaping with Council officers emphasising the importance of responding to the unique context of each site to help embed each proposal into its receiving landscape.
- 1.5 The applicant also conducted a series of pre-consultation events, the first in person event was held at both Kilmorack Hall on 31 October 2022 and Cannich Village Hall on 01 November 2022, with these venues hosting follow up events in October 2023 following further design refinement. The applicant also provided opportunity for the

public to give feedback online through a dedicated webpage on its website. These events covered all four of the of Beauly Asset Replacement substations. The Pre-application Consultation Report (PAC) Report submitted with the application outlines how concerns over the visual impact of the proposal as well as road impacts during construction works have informed the mitigation by design proposals.

- 1.6 A formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion was submitted in December 2022 to the Council with it confirmed in February 2023 that the proposal does constitute EIA development, which means the planning application, under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is required to be accompanied by an EIA Report (EIAR). The Council confirmed the scope of the EIA report in January 2024 following the applicant's request in August 2023.
- 1.7 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), containing chapters relating to the describing the proposed development, consideration of alternatives, EIA methodology and consultation, landscape and visual impacts, ecology and ornithology, hydrology, hydrogeology, geology and soils, noise and vibration, socio-economics, recreation and tourism, cumulative effects, and mitigation. The application is also accompanied by a Non-Technical Summary, Design And Access Statement, an Outline Access Management Plan, a Planning Statement, Transport Statement, and all associated Technical Appendices, as well as the aforementioned PAC Report.
- 1.8 The scheme has not changed materially during the course of the application's consideration however the applicant has clarified landscaping, biodiversity enhancement, and road improvement proposals as well as proposals to maintain and enhance public access along the Glen Strathfarrar (private) Road and Core Path.

## **2. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The 17ha application site extends from the 4ha development area at its eastern extent westward for 12km along the private Glen Strathfarrar Road to where the road is publicly adopted as the U1355 at Inchmore (around 725m west of its junction with the A831) and takes in the existing Deanie Hydro Electric Power Station. The development area where the new substation is proposed is on an area of undeveloped rough pasture / moorland between the private road and the River Farrar to the south. This location is approximately 250m southwest of the existing Deanie Hydro Electric Power Station west of Loch Beannacharan, east of Loch a'Mhuillidh and within the remote Glen Strathfarrar unit of Wooded Glen – Inverness Landscape Character Type (LCT), LCT226 as mapped and described by NatureScot.
- 2.2 There is an existing rough track running through the development area from the private road to the river while an area of more recently established woodland marks its southeast boundary. Although remote, the private residences of Cambussorray

and Benachran Lodge are approximately 550m east of the developable area on the opposite side of the river and 950 m northeast of the proposal respectively. There is also an agricultural building southeast of this woodland while the grid transmission overhead line (OHL) runs along the lower northern slopes of the glen.

- 2.3 The Strathfarrar road is also a Core Path (IN26.01) and public right of way, while the site area is subject to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 where members of the public may reasonably exercise their rights to public access. There are no Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments in the vicinity of the site but there are several non-designated entries on the Highland Historic Register including the existing power station and transformer compound while the wider area has known archaeological potential.
- 2.4 The development area lies wholly within the Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA), while the Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Glen Strathfarrar Special Area of Scientific Interest (SSSI) designations take in the River Farrar less than 200m to the south of the main development area and the access. There is also a section of Class 1 - nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland at this location and designated Ancient Woodland in the wider area.
- 2.5 In terms of landscape and scenic designations, the site is within the regional Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch Special Landscape Area while the Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area lies just over 200m to the east.
- 2.6 Sections of the Glen Strathfarrar Road are at 1:200 year plus climate change flood risk from the River Farrar and Loch Beannacharan according to SEPA's Flood Risk Mapping.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- |     |            |  |                        |
|-----|------------|--|------------------------|
| 3.1 | 21.12.2022 | 22/0840/PAN Replacement of existing Deanie Substation comprising: access track, fenced platform area (not exceeding 50x95m) incorporating control building, transformers, plant and infrastructure, associated ancillary facilities, temporary construction compound and laydown area(s), alongside drainage and landscaping requirements. | Reported to Committee  |
| 3.2 | 21.12.2022 | 22/05548/PNO Application under Regulation 62 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 for ground investigation works for sub-station   | Prior Approval Granted |

#### 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Edinburgh Gazette for EIA, and Inverness Courier for EIA, Unknown Neighbour, and Schedule 3

Date Advertised: 10 May 2024 for Unknown Neighbour and Schedule 3, 17 May 2024 (EIA).

Representation deadline: 31.05.2024

Timeous representations: One objection, one general comment

Late representations: None

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

- a) proposal will disturb undeveloped land;
- b) whether the West of Beaulay Asset Replacement Project is a single EIA development;
- c) landscape impacts; and,
- d) visual impacts.

4.3 All letters of representation are available for inspection via the Council's eplanning portal which can be accessed through the internet [www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam](http://www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam).

#### 5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Strathglass Community Council (host)** were consulted but did not respond.

5.2 **Glenurquhart Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.3 **Kilmorack Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.4 **Kiltarlity Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.5 **Maryburgh Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.6 **Muir of Ord Community Council** did not respond to the consultation request.

5.7 **Access Officer** does not object subject to a condition to ensure public access along the Core Path is maintained favourably during construction works.

5.8 **Contaminated Land Officer** does not object and has no project or site specific comments.

5.9 **Ecology Team** does not object to the application subject to conditions to secure a Habitat Management Plan with full details of biodiversity enhancement measures, and to ensure that all construction works are undertaken in accordance with a

Construction Environmental Management Plan under the supervision of an Environmental Clerk of Works.

- 5.10 **Environmental Health** does not object subject to conditions to limit noise impacts on sensitive receptors and to secure an assessment of impacts on private water supplies in the area.
- 5.11 **Flood Risk Management Team** does not object on flood risk or drainage grounds.
- 5.12 **Forestry Team** does not object subject to a condition to secure a Tree Planting and Maintenance Plan.
- 5.13 **Historic Environment Team – Archaeology** does not object subject to a condition to secure prior approval of an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation prior to the commencement of construction.
- 5.14 **Transport Planning** does not object and has been working directly with the applicant to ensure that the Construction Traffic Management Plan will be appropriate and informed by concurrent projects, and to agree preconstruction upgrades to maintain the integrity and safety of the public road network.
- 5.15 **Historic Environment Scotland** does not object and has no specific comments to make on matters within its remit.
- 5.16 **NatureScot** does not object. It has considered the proposal's likely impacts on the Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area, the Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation, the Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area, and the Central Highlands Wild Land Area and does not consider that these would be adversely affected by the proposal. These issues are considered in the body of the report.
- 5.17 **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)** does not object and provides advice on flood risk and regulatory context of the proposal.
- 5.18 **Scottish Water** does not object and advises on drinking water protected areas and surface water drainage noting that further action may be required by the applicant.
- 5.19 **Transport Scotland** does not object subject to conditions to secure prior approval of the Construction Traffic Management Plan, the Abnormal Loads Route and AIL Management Plan, as well as any roads and road safety mitigation measures required for the safe movements of construction and abnormal load vehicles on the trunk road network.

## **6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY**

6.1 Appendix 1 of this report provides details of the documents which comprise the adopted Development Plan, including details of pertinent planning policies as well as adopted supplementary guidance.

## **7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 Appendix 1 of this report also sets out all other material considerations which are relevant to the assessment of the application.

## **8. PLANNING APPRAISAL**

8.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Planning Considerations**

8.2 The key considerations in this case are:

- a) Compliance with the Development Plan and Other Planning Policy
- b) Energy and Carbon Saving
- c) Construction Impacts
- d) Siting, Layout and Design, Landscape and Visual Impacts
- e) Built and Cultural Heritage
- f) Water Environment
- g) Natural Heritage
- h) Biodiversity Enhancement
- i) Roads, Transport and Wider Access
- j) Economic Impacts
- k) Any Other Material Considerations.

### **Development Plan / Other Planning Policy**

8.3 The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), Highland-wide Local Development Plan, the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2), and their associated Supplementary Guidance documents.

8.4 Appendix 2 of this report provides an assessment of compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy.

- 8.5 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. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.

### **Energy and Carbon Saving**

- 8.6 The EIAR at section 1.2 advises that the four Affric/Beaully Hydroelectric Scheme substations at Deanie, Culligran, Aigas, and Kilmorack are coming to the end of their operational lives and as such there is an operational need for their replacement. In that way, the proposal will allow the electricity generated at their respective hydroelectric power stations to continue to supply renewable energy to the National Grid's transmission and distribution network. By avoiding the costly need to dismantle the generating stations or leaving them unused, replacing the substations with modern energy saving equipment is intrinsically carbon saving as it is a less carbon intensive than demolition, which would release the embodied carbon. Moreover, energy losses and energy use at the substations are substantially reduced thus reducing generating stations' greenhouse gas emissions overall. The proposal is, therefore, considered to comply with NPF4 Policies 1 and 2 for Climate and Nature Crises as well Climate Mitigation and Adaptation.

### **Construction Impacts**

- 8.7 As set out above, some unavoidable intermittent impacts are to be expected during construction works from construction traffic and Abnormal Indivisible Load (AIL) delivery, noise, dust, and waste etc. To manage and mitigate against such impacts, the applicant has committed to ensure that all works will be undertaken in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to be finalised in consultation with, and implemented by, the contractor and a suitably qualified Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) with support from other environmental professionals as required. Chapter 11 of the EIAR provides a Schedule of Mitigation which sets out the principles of environmental management that will be adhered to through the CEMP. The finalised versions of both the CEMP and Schedule of Mitigation should be secured by Condition.
- 8.8 The Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has no objection to the proposal and advises that any impacts resulting from construction issues would be controlled through Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. It is expected that the



developer will employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise and dust from construction activities with schemes demonstrating how this will be achieved required as part of the CEMP. Timing of HGV and abnormal load deliveries should also be agreed through the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with construction traffic avoiding school travel times and identified community events.

- 8.9 The EHO advises that generally, people are more tolerant of construction noise during typical working hours between 8am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. Any works for which noise is not audible at the curtilage of any noise sensitive property could still be carried out out-with these times. Should the development be granted consent however, a condition should be included to require the developer to set up of a Community Liaison Group to ensure the Community Council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted on construction activities before, during, and after the construction period.
- 8.10 The applicant has also identified five private water supplies (PWS) that may be hydrologically connected to the development site and states that further investigation is required to identify the source for these supplies. The applicant will therefore be required to further investigate these impacts and mitigate potential contamination or physical disruption to pipework or PWS infrastructure. Details of these measure should be secured by condition prior to construction commencing on site, with the submission required to include monitoring of PWS impacts prior to, during, and following construction works as well as contingency measures in the event of an incident.

### **Siting, Layout and Design, Landscape and Visual Impacts**

- 8.11 In terms of site selection, the applicant undertook an assessment of six potential locations for the replacement substation following its own site selection criteria (including consideration of environmental and engineering factors, distance from the generating station and costs) and a consideration of environmental constraints. While the proposal is submitted under the Town and Country Planning Act (Scotland) 1997 (as amended), the applicant has also had in mind its obligations under the Electricity Act 1989 as a licence holder and due to its connection with the related VISTA project to have a regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest, and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interests, and, to reasonably mitigate effects on such features.
- 8.12 The location of the current application site was the preferred option since an early stage from engineering and technical perspectives (see EIAR paragraph 3.3.9) and by virtue of likely resulting in fewer impacts on the Special Qualities of the Glen Strathfarrar NSA. Following the subsequent pre-application process, Council officers advised that the development would likely be accommodated within the preferred

site subject to the proposal being acceptable in all other aspects. The applicant has since refined the substation location by moving it further south of the Glen Strathfarrar Road to allow for additional landscaping to mitigate landscape and visual effects and to provide additional biodiversity enhancements.

- 8.13 The applicant has further sought to mitigate landscape and visual effects through changing the substation platform dimensions from 70m x 55m to 63m x 63m, as well as lowering and tiering the platform by cutting it into the receiving ground to reduce the overall height of the built substation elements. The largest of these elements is the Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) (with Gas Insulated Switchgear being discounted, EIA paragraph 3.4.3) at up to 40m x 20m in area and up to 8m in height, followed by the control building with an area of up to 26m x 11m and height of up to 6m. The layout of the substation is dictated in part by access and internal movement requirements, connection to the grid, and safety standards including separation distances however the higher elements are set back further from the road, which is appropriate.
- 8.14 As noted earlier in the report, the applicant was strongly encouraged to incorporate bespoke design elements that reflect both the vernacular of the Highland and the architectural vocabulary of the Affric/Beauly Hydroelectric scheme. To that end, the visualisations show deliberately positioned stone walls on the road side of the development (front and sides) to not only counter an otherwise overtly utilitarian design, but also help screen the lower elements of the proposal and embed it into its setting in combination with new woodland planting. The walls are not included in the site layout plan but should be secured by condition (along with a finalised site layout plan) so that they are in place by the final commissioning of the proposal. The finalised colour, finish and materials of the proposal's other elements can be secured by condition noting that officers have advised that a slate grey finish to the control building may be more appropriate for the setting and changing seasons.
- 8.15 The applicant has assessed significant landscape effects at the development site as is to be expected given the direct physical impacts of the development and on local landscape character up to 1km from the site. However, the key characteristics of the Wooded Glen – Inverness LCT would very much remain intact and appreciable overall from all external locations.
- 8.16 In terms of impacts on the NSA, the applicant has concluded that the proposal results in no risk to its 'An archetypal Highland Glen', 'Ancient Caledonian pine forest amidst rocky slopes', 'A sinuous, fast moving river emerging out of a peaceful loch', and the 'The contrasts in colour, light and views' Special Landscape Qualities. However, the EIA identifies a medium risk to the 'A sense of peace and Tranquillity' Special Landscape Quality in the first years of operation reducing to low risk once the planting is established. No risk to the Wild Land Qualities of WLA 24 – Central Highlands is identified in the EIA. In its response to the proposal, NatureScot

advises that it does not consider the proposal to impact on the qualities of either the NSA or WLA in manner that would raise issues of national interest by virtue of the low-lying elevation of the development and its partial containment and screening by landform along with it being read in combination with existing manmade structures such as the Over Head Lines (OHL).

- 8.17 The site is also within the Glen Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch Special Landscape Area (SLA) with identified Special Landscape Qualities of 'Grand Mountain Ridges, Long Glens and Wide Strath', and 'Wildness and Remoteness'. The stated Sensitivities to Change include buildings and infrastructure, including those related to hydroelectric schemes, that would erode the sense of wildness and remoteness while there are opportunities to (re)establish native vegetation. Many of the factors that contribute to the two qualities are experienced sequentially by receptors travelling through the glen, especially from east to west, and the applicant has concluded that there would be a low and localised risk to the first quality, and no risk to the second, due to the introduction of additional manmade structures being experienced within the context of existing surrounding manmade structures at the location of generating station. The overall significance of these effects is not disputed and the proposal is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the Special Landscape Qualities or the integrity of the SLA overall.
- 8.18 Similarly, significant visual effects are predicted within 1km of the site which will effect recreational users of the Glen Strathfarrar and hillwalkers on higher slopes more than residential receptors. As mentioned, securing the stone wall and proposed additional tree planting will further reduce the visual intrusion of the development in the long term. However, visual impacts are considered to be within acceptable limits overall in any case.

### **Built and Cultural Heritage**

- 8.19 The development area is not within any built or cultural heritage designation nor are there any scheduled monuments or known historic records within the development area, nor along the wider route, with the exception of the existing transformer compound which is not listed and is due to be partially dismantled and reconfigured. Details of the final treatment of the original stone walling at this compound are not included with the submission and should be conditioned to ensure that it is sensitively handled to maintain historic continuity and visual amenity.
- 8.20 Given the non-designated historic records in the area however, the Council's Archaeologist requires any permission to include a further condition to ensure that works are undertaken in accordance with an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation to secure the recording, recovery, and analysis where required of any unrecorded archaeology found during works. Historic Environment Scotland has not commented on the application.

## **Water Environment**

- 8.21 Chapter 7 of the EIAR provides an assessment of the proposal's effects on the hydrology and hydrogeology of the receiving environments and is supported by several appendices including a Flood Risk Management Plan (FRA), Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA), and Drainage Strategy Report (DSR).
- 8.22 In terms of the flood risk to the site, both the Council's Flood Risk Management Service and SEPA are satisfied that the risk from the River Farrar is low, as demonstrated by FRA modelling.
- 8.23 The drainage strategy to the site required the realignment of a minor watercourse through the site. SEPA has not objected to the proposal subject to works being carried out in compliance with the 'Diversion and Realignment Flood Risk Best Practice' Section of the Controlled Activities Regulations (Flood Risk Standing Advice for Engineering, Discharge and Impoundment Activities), which will be controlled by SEPA through the CAR Licensing process.
- 8.24 The proposal site is identified as being within a Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA) for ground but not surface water however Scottish Water has confirmed that there are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources that would be affected by the proposed activity.

## **Natural Heritage**

- 8.25 Chapter 6 of the EIAR for Ecology and Ornithology and the accompanying Appendices include assessments of the proposal's likely impacts on, designated sites, protected species and birds, and habitats.

## **Designated Sites**

- 8.26 As stated, the site is wholly within the Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA), while both the Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Glen Strathfarrar Special Area of Scientific Interest (SSSI) designations take in the River Farrar less than 200m to the south of the main development area and the access. With the exception of the SSSI, the effects on these designations mean that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) are engaged. Given that the proposal is not necessary to site management for nature conservation and that NatureScot advises that the proposal is likely to result in significant effects on both the SPA and SAC, the Council as the competent authority is required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment which is appended to this report at Appendix 3 and summarised below.
- 8.27 With regards the Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA, the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the breeding golden eagles qualifying interests of the SPA unless

a pre-construction golden eagle survey is undertaken and a buffer of at least 1km is established around any active nest sites in addition to the implementation of a detailed mitigation plan, which should be prepared and agreed with NatureScot prior to commencement of construction works within the breeding season. With this mitigation in place, which should be secured by condition, the proposal is not considered to adversely affect the integrity of the Special Protection Area.

- 8.28 For the Strathglass Complex SAC, there is potential for the construction works to result in pollution/contamination of the River Farrar which could have negative consequences for the SAC's aquatic habitats and associated qualifying species. However, provided the mitigation included in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan, which must include best practice measures for pollution prevention to be implemented during the works, the integrity of the site will not be adversely impacted. The CEMP should be secured by condition.
- 8.29 The woodland and upland habitat interests of the Glen Strathfarrar SSSI, as well as its breeding birds, otter, and dragonfly assemblages, largely overlap with the interests of the SAC and as such its integrity is not considered likely to be adversely impacted provided the pollution prevention mitigation measures outlined above are implemented.

### **Protected Species**

- 8.30 Appropriate protected species surveys were undertaken in 2022 and 2023, which identified habitats suitable for supporting bats, water vole, badger, otter, red squirrel and pine marten. Common lizard and common frog were also recorded incidentally.
- 8.31 The mitigation for each of the noted species is detailed within the outline Species Protection Plans (SPPs) appended to the EIAR (Appendix 2.2) for badger, bats, otter, and pine marten. Measures follow the mitigation hierarchy to avoid disturbance in the first instance, and include appropriately timed pre-construction surveys, timings of works, controlling light pollution, capping exposed pipes, providing exit ramps in exposed trenches and holes, emergency procedures in the event works encounter protected species and/or their habitation. Finalised SPPs should be secured by condition while habitat management should also include additional mitigation and enhancements. Overall, impacts on protected species can be appropriately managed.

### **Ornithology**

- 8.32 Breeding bird surveys and targeted species surveys were conducted in May – July 2022, which identified two passerine bird species, meadow pipit and willow warbler, breeding within the development area. Both of these species are Amber Listed Birds of Conservation Concern. A further two passerine species, whinchat and wren, were

recorded breeding within 100m perimeter buffer breeding bird survey area. No black throated divers were recorded during the targeted surveys.

- 8.33 EIA Appendix 2.2 also includes an outline Bird Species Protection Plan (BPPs) that also follows the mitigation hierarchy to avoid disturbance in the first instance, and includes requirements for appropriately timed pre-construction surveys, and general specific mitigation measures for timings of works, use of dissuasion techniques and procedures for appropriately dealing with disturbance if this is unavoidable. The finalised BPPs should be secured by condition while habitat management should also include additional mitigation and enhancements. Overall, it is considered that impacts on bird species can be appropriately managed.

### **Habitats and Peat**

- 8.34 The development area is predominantly acid grassland within its central area surrounded by wet heath while the western edge is formed of mire and bog pool mosaic with ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystem (GWDTE) potential. The EIA has concluded however that the proposal is not likely to impact GWDTE as these habitats are likely to be dependent on water from other sources. There is some dry heath in the far southwest corner while more recently planted native woodland forms the southeast part of the application site boundary and there are pockets of woodland and scrub in the wider area. Notwithstanding this tree cover however, there are no anticipated impacts on trees including a pine with basal cavity close to the proposed site access junction.
- 8.35 There is also some Class 1 Nationally Important Carbon Rich Soils, Deep Peat and Priority Peatland Habitat to the northwest of the development area, and a smaller adjacent area of Class 2 Priority Peatland Habitat. The outline Peat Management Plan (oPMP) advises that zero peat will be disturbed by any part of the development (the substation platform, road layout, drainage, earth works, and the temporary construction compound - see Table 1-2 of EIA Volume 4, Appendix 7.1: Peat Management Plan) as peat has been avoided in line with the mitigation hierarchy. However, the peat depth survey results figure (plate 1 of the same document) shows that the access junction with the private Glen Strathfarrar Road is likely to disturb a small part of each Class 1 and 2 Priority Peatland Habitat areas, which could be avoided by micrositing. Additionally, the oPMP advises that the area to the south of the proposed drainage design / watercourse realignment intersects with an area of peat greater than 0.5m in depth can also be avoided by micrositing to be informed by further probing. A Micrositing condition is suggested to ensure that construction works avoid or minimises impacts on peat and that any disturbed peat is handled, stored, and re-used in line with a finalised PMP which should accord with the principles contained within oPMP.
- 8.36 In addition to the above, an outline General Environmental Management Plan (GEMP) that covers matters such as oil storage and refuelling, soil management,

working in and near the water environment, amongst other issues is included with the submission along with an outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and a Schedule of Mitigation included with the submission and must be implemented in full during the construction process

### **Biodiversity Enhancement**

8. 37 Further to the above, the applicant has assessed the biodiversity baseline value of the development area as 12.57 biodiversity units (BU) using SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Net Gain Toolkit User Guide and the SSEN Transmission Assessment Methodology and Associated Guidance. The BU averages out as 8.22 BU per hectare, and 9.78ha across the wider enhancement area averaging to 8.63 BU/ha across this part of the application site. An Outline Landscaping Plan is included with the submission which advises that 0.54ha of upland acid grassland and an additional 0.08ha of neutral grassland will be created, along with 0.08ha of mixed scrub and 0.32ha of mixed woodland whilst leaving intact habitats in place including the peat-stained pond.
- 8.38 Additionally, deer proof fencing is proposed to surround the enhancement area to allow existing habitats in poor condition opportunity to reach good condition along with the replacement of an area of bracken with upland grassland habitat. Given that the development will change existing habitat to urban infrastructure, the EIAR predicts the proposal will result in 25.80 BU overall averaging at 9.91 BU per hectare, which represents 15% increase in biodiversity at the site. Final biodiversity enhancement measures should be secured through a condition for a Habitat Management Plan, which should include landscaping and tree planting along with a maintenance programme.

### **Roads, Transport and Wider Access**

8. 39 As stated, the development area is located off the private Glen Strathfarrar Road, the first 740m from the Council maintained A831 of which is adopted as the U1533. It is noted here that public vehicular access to the private section of the road is already restricted and managed privately by the estates via a locked gate. The U1355 (the adopted section road) is single track with a substandard width and several substandard passing places in terms of size, geometry, and surfacing while its junction with the A831 is severely substandard with restricted visibility to the south. In addition, the A831 is a narrow single track for a 3km section west of this junction.
- 8.40 Around 50-60% of construction traffic is anticipated to approach this route from the north via Tore Roundabout, 15-20% from the south via Inverness, and the remainder anticipated to approach from Wester Balblair for aggregate and concrete.
- 8.41 In addition to regular construction traffic, the proposal will require an abnormal indivisible load (AIL) delivery for the transformer. This delivery will follow a route from

Inverness Harbour via Longman Drive to the A9(T) before leaving the A9 at the Tore Roundabout to join the A835(T) before turning left on the Council maintained B9169. The route then takes in the Council maintained A862 and A831 before joining the Glen Strathfarrar Road.

- 8.42 Construction works on the substation replacements are likely to run concurrently with each other and, at least in part, with the aforementioned VISTA project, while the wider area is subject to applications for other much larger transmission developments and offshoot energy storage systems. As such, Transport Planning has required the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to include detail on likely cumulative impacts including impacts on road condition and an assessment of any preliminary upgrades to the road network that would be required.
- 8.43 To that end, the CTMP includes a works programme for the Deanie and Culligran substations along with the VISTA project, which anticipates a work programme of 30 months for the three schemes. The busiest months for HGV movements are anticipated to be month 7 through month 16 and month 19 through month 25.
- 8.44 The applicant has proposed improvements to the public road network including upgrading and/or installing new passing places along the A831 and using traffic control measures at the U1355 only during greater flows of construction traffic. It is acknowledged that widening this section of road would require major civil engineering works that may be disproportionate to the scale of the project.
- 8.45 Transport Planning has advised the applicant that the finalised CTMP should focus on the publicly adopted road and detail how large volumes of the construction traffic including HGVs would be managed to prevent convoys on the Council maintained roads. Particular focus should be given to locations where the distance between passing places does not meet Council standards of a maximum distance of 150 m between passing places, using appropriate holding areas, stacking lanes, and temporary traffic lights, and locations for temporary speed restrictions.
- 8.46 The applicant is also required to demonstrate that any improvements to the public road such as new and upgraded passing places and road widening are achievable, particularly where these require the agreement of third-party landowners. Transport Planning also notes that the adopted section of the Glen Strathfarrar Road will require a full structural overlay as well as the upgrading of its junction with the A831 before construction begins.
- 8.47 Conditions are suggested to secure a finalised CTMP prior to works beginning on site along with a separate condition to ensure that public road improvements, which are essential to protect integrity and safety of the road network, are also carried out prior to works beginning on site. A further condition is suggested for an AIL delivery strategy to be approved prior to the delivery of AIL. There will also be a continued cumulative impact of construction traffic arising on the A831 for a prolonged period



as a result of transmission related project infrastructure. As such, further mitigation is necessary to address the impacts of these developments on active travel (predominantly cyclists) using this promoted tourist route. A proportionate contribution to the delivery of active travel projects is therefore necessary, with this to be secured through the CTMP condition and finalised in consultation with Transport Planning.

- 8.48 In terms of wider public access, the proposal will impact recreational routes and wider public access for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian users in combination with the Culligran scheme. Specifically, access to the Beinn a' Bha'ach Àrd Trail, the Glen Strathfarrar Munros Circuit, the An Sidhean summit from Loch Monar, as well as Core Path IN26.01 which corresponds with the Glen Strathfarrar Road will be affected with the private road providing access to these routes. As such, there will likely be some conflict between recreational users and HGVs, AIL deliveries, and other construction traffic, as well as disruption during road upgrading works. Public access will not be allowed to working areas during construction or the development site post construction.
- 8.49 Consequently, the applicant has committed, through the outline Recreational Access Management Plan, to undertake consultation with affected stakeholders including the local community, the Council's Access Officer, and Mountaineering Scotland, prior to commencement on site to agree the extent of information and mitigation required. These measures will include signage to warn visitors of heavy plant movements and provide guidance in the event of meeting construction traffic or construction works, as well of any diversions. Private construction staff vehicles will not be allowed beyond the construction compound at Inchmore (included in the application for Culligran) to reduce conflict between construction traffic, residents and recreational users.
- 8.50 The Council's Access Officer is satisfied with the outline Recreational Access Management Plan subject to a condition to secure that access to the Core Path is not obstructed or deterred during or after construction works.

### **Economic Impacts**

- 8.51 The development of grid infrastructure has been identified as a national priority together with investment in renewable energy. The replacement of older substations as 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. The benefits of the development to social and economic outcomes are therefore relevant to the assessment of the application in accordance with NPF4 Policy 25 for Community Wealth Building.

8.52 The Council is working with public, private, and community partners to develop its priorities through the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan, while a Community Wealth Building Strategy was approved by The Council in September 2024. The ongoing Local Place Plans initiative will likely identify other local opportunities too. The Council's position on Community Benefits was also updated with the approval of a new 'Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment' (June 2024). The charter sets out the Council's expectations from developers wishing to invest in renewables related projects in the Highland area and what the Highland partnership will do to support and enable this contribution, namely:

- embed an approach to community wealth building into Highland;
- maximise economic benefits from our natural environment and resources;
- engage and involve relevant stakeholders to understand how we can continually improve our impact; and,
- unlock economic opportunities for the area.

8.53 To that end, the EIAR Chapter 9: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism has assessed the proposal's impacts on each of those factors in turn. For the first, the applicant has focussed on employment impacts in a local study area, that is the Highland Council administrative area as it is not considered that meaningful employment generation will extend to the regional or national levels as a result of the development.

8.54 The applicant has not assessed indirect job creation however the EIAR anticipates that five site staff and 15 construction operatives will be directly employed by the contractor during the construction period of up to 15 months. The applicant itself has also directly recruited a new construction site manager and construction assistant project manager. It should also be acknowledged that the company is a major employer across Scotland and already has an existing workforce in place to carry through the project and undertake routine operational inspections and maintenance once the site is brought into use. Due to the temporary nature of the construction jobs and the relatively high employment rates in the study area in general therefore, the proposal is not considered to result in significant socio-economic impacts in terms of employment generation overall, although any employment generation is considered beneficial, and it is reasonable to assume additional positive effects on employment in the supply chain.

8.55 For recreational and tourist receptors, the chapter notes the area's high recreational value for cyclists, walkers, fishing, shooting and stalking and has considered recreational paths (i.e., Glen Strathfarrar Road Core Path and public right of way, the Sgòrr na Diollaid, Glen Cannich Walking Route, and the Glen Strathfarrar Munros Circuit) separately to activities (i.e., stalking at the Braulen Estate). Tourist assets include the Glen Strathfarrar NSA, Loch Beannacharan, Loch a' Mhuillidh and Loch

Monar as well as on visitor numbers, accommodation, access and amenity. The main direct non-landscape and visual (which are considered separately) impact will be during construction works on the Glen Strathfarrar Road where access will be impeded but not blocked. Indirect effects on all receptors are anticipated through noise and other construction impacts such as vibration and dust however the proposal is not considered to result in any significantly adverse effects on any receptor overall.

- 8.56 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 proposed 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.
- 8.57 Scenery and the natural environment within the Highlands are important factors for many visitors when choosing the area as a holiday destination. Any impact of the proposed development on tourism, whether visually, environmentally or economically should be identified and considered in full. In this instance, the proposed development, will add electricity transmission equipment into an area which has had to accommodate a substantial amount of transmission infrastructure already. This addition is however well sited with appropriate mitigation to help limit these impacts to an acceptable degree. In light of NPF4 Policy 11 section c), a condition can also be secured to commit to the delivery of a Local Employment Scheme.
- 8.58 In addition to the above, the UK Government updated its published guidance Community Funds for Electricity Transmission Infrastructure (Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero) in April 2025. The guidance advises that funds of £530,000 will be available for up to 15 years for delivering local priorities in locations impacted by new and upgraded infrastructure, although with the caveat that the upgraded infrastructure will be an EIA development and/or extend the footprint of the existing operational substation by at least 1ha. As an EIA development this proposal is eligible, albeit that any contribution is deemed community benefit which is not a material planning consideration and therefore cannot be attributed any weight in the decision making process.

### **Other Material Considerations**

- 8.59 The application is assessed as an EIA development. Given that construction of each of the substation replacements can be carried out on an individual basis, it is not

considered reasonable to conclude that the individual EIARs for the current and Culligran application are salami slicing the EIA development.

### **Non-material considerations**

- 8.60 A general comment submitted on behalf of Communities Before Power Companies states its concerns that the substation replacements may be used a 'trojan horse' for more wind farms in the area. This concern is not material to the assessment of this application.

### **Matters to be secured by Legal Agreement / Upfront Payment**

- 8.61 Similarly, proportionate mitigation in the form of physical provision, or an equivalent financial contribution, towards the delivery of active travel is also required. Should a financial contribution be the outcome, this can be secured by way of condition and an upfront payment or legal agreement under Section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.
- 8.62 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 Scottish Government and the Council each have policies offering support to projects which increase the capacity of the grid network to serve renewable energy projects. NPF4 offers strong support for such development highlighting upgraded infrastructure supporting onshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors and this is classed as a development of national importance.
- 9.2 Highland has been successful in attracting inward investment in renewables, enabled in part by a significant level of investment in the improvement of the electricity transmission network. This success has led to the Highlands having a good understanding of this type of project and Highland Council having appropriate policies and guidance to assist in its assessment, and to effectively manage their implementation on the ground.
- 9.3 Statutory and other consultees responding to this application have not raised any fundamental concerns. There are no other outstanding objections subject to conditions.
- 9.4 The Council is satisfied that environmental effects of this development can be addressed by way of mitigation. The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission.

- 9.5 There are clear impacts that might be expected from this development, particularly during its construction. These can be managed through best practice construction management techniques to ensure surrounding interests, particularly road access and the amenity of local communities is safeguarded from the key impacts of the development. The attached planning conditions will strengthen and clarify the plans and supporting environmental information provided by the applicant. The proposal will also be overseen by an appointed Environmental Clerk of Works with any permission requiring regular compliance monitoring and ongoing engagement by means of the Community Liaison Group.
- 9.6 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: Not applicable
- 10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The project has the potential to enable the continued generation of renewable energy.
- 10.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

## 11. RECOMMENDATION

### **Action required before decision issued** N

Recommended to **GRANT** the application subject to the following conditions and reasons, with authority for the finalised condition wording to be delegated to the Area Planning Manager:

#### 1. **Commencement of Development**

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. **Final Layout and Design**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development on the substation and cable sealing end compound until final details of the location, layout, external appearance, dimensions, and surface materials of the substation and control room buildings, any above ground electrical equipment, associated compounds, construction compound, fencing, stone walls (which shall be incorporated as shown in the LVIA visualisations), external lighting and parking areas have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the details of the sub-station shall not exceed the parameters assessed in the EIA Report.
- (2) Thereafter, the substation and control room buildings, any above ground electrical equipment, associated compounds, fencing, external lighting and parking areas shall be constructed in accordance with the details approved under part (1) and maintained as such in perpetuity.

**Reason:** To ensure that the environmental impacts of the sub-station and ancillary development forming part of the Development conform to the impacts assessed in the EIA Report and in the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

## 3. **Signage**

No part of the Development shall display any text, logo, sign or advertisement (other than health and safety signage as required by law) or be illuminated unless otherwise approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interests of health and safety on site and the visual amenity of the area.

## 4. **Implementation of Mitigation Measures**

- (1) No development shall commence until a finalised Schedule of Mitigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This Schedule shall encompass a list of all mitigation measures from the EIA Report, any other commitments made by the applicant and all relevant mitigation secured by conditions attached to this permission with defined timescales for implementation of each mitigation measure.
- (2) Thereafter, the approved Schedule of Mitigation shall be implemented in full unless otherwise approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** to ensure that the identified mitigation through the EIA Report and supporting documents is carried out in accordance with the approved details.

## 5. **Planning Monitoring Officer**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until the terms of appointment by the Company of an independent and suitably qualified consultant as Planning Monitoring Officer (“PMO”) have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The terms of appointment shall:
  - (a) impose a duty to monitor compliance with the terms of the deemed planning permission and the conditions attached to it;
  - (b) require the PMO to submit a quarterly report to the Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site, matters of compliance or otherwise with the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to it, alongside a summary of the incidents recorded and reported by the EnvCoW; and,
  - (c) require the PMO to report to the Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the terms of the deemed planning permission and conditions attached to it at the earliest practical opportunity, and no later than 10 working days following the incidence of non-compliance.
- (2) The PMO shall be appointed on the approved terms throughout the period from Commencement of Development to completion of construction works and post-construction site reinstatement works.
- (3) the PMO shall be appointed on the terms approved under part (1) throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development.

**Reason:** to ensure compliance with the planning permission and the conditions attached to it.

## 6. **Environmental Clerk of Works**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development 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. The terms of appointment shall:
  - (a) impose a duty to monitor compliance with the ecological and environmental commitments provided in the: EIA Report, including any micro-siting; the Construction and Environmental Management Plan; the Habitat Management Plan, and Species and Habitat Protection Plans;
  - (b) require the EnvCoW to report to the nominated construction project manager any incidences of non-compliance with the EnvCoW works at the earliest practical opportunity;

- (c) require the EnvCoW to submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site.
- (2) Prior to the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development or the expiration of the operational period of the consent (whichever is the earlier), details of the terms of appointment of a suitably qualified, experienced, and independent EnvCoW by the Company throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
- (3) the EnvCoW shall be appointed on the terms approved under part (1) throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development.

**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

## 7. **Construction Environmental Management Plan**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until a 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. The CEMP shall be informed by the site and ground investigation works and best practice guidance. The CEMP shall include:
  - (a) a site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the construction period other than peat and other carbon rich soils), including details of contingency planning in the event of accidental release of materials which could cause harm to the environment, evidencing that all proposals comply with SEPA's guidance and the requirements of the waste management licensing regime as appropriate;
  - (b) details of the location, layout, formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil, fuel and chemical storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing required for the construction period;
  - (c) site specific details for management and operation of any concrete batching plant (including disposal of pH-rich waste water and substances);



- (d) a Pollution Prevention and Incident Plan incorporating a Pollution Prevention Plan, Pollution Incident Plan and a Pollution Control Monitoring Plan, which shall provide measures to protect watercourses, groundwater, management of natural surface hydrological flows (flushes, springs, etc.) and protection of peatland/soils, arrangements for the storage and management of oil and fuel and other chemicals on the site and sewage disposal and treatment;
- (e) a drainage management strategy, demonstrating how all surface and waste water arising during and after construction is to be managed and prevented from impacting on the water environment and to mitigate flood risk;
- (f) a surface water and groundwater management and treatment plan, including details of the separation of clean and dirty water drains, and location of settlement lagoons for silt laden water;
- (g) details of temporary site illumination, including measures to ensure light spill/pollution is minimised and avoids habitats within the site and does not extend beyond the immediate working area, and not beyond the site boundary;
- (h) Species and Breeding Bird Protection Plans which shall be informed by protected species surveys and pre-construction surveys including for, but not limited to, golden eagle, badger, breeding birds, otter, roosting bats, reptiles and amphibians and any other identified species as appropriate. The Plans shall provide mitigation measures to protect protected species and breeding birds, as required, and a timetable for implementation;
- (i) details of the construction of the access into the site, including associated drainage and the creation and maintenance of associated visibility splays;
- (j) details of post-construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas not required during the operation of the Development;
- (k) A Construction Noise Management Plan including details of the management of noise and vibration during construction and post-construction restoration, including that caused by construction traffic, to the lowest practicable levels and in accordance with BS 5228:2009 "Code of Practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Part 1: Noise and Part 2: Vibration" (or any updated version/document which superseded this document) and how any properties likely to be affected by construction noise will be kept informed;
- (l) Construction Method Statements for all roads/tracks to be altered/formed within the development site including their width, likelihood of widening or passing places, means of drainage (which

shall have regard to SUDS principles), means of construction, and edge reinstatement including verge width. The specification shall be accompanied by relevant plans at a sufficient scale;

(m) A phasing plan for the construction works; and,

(n) A written scheme which details the methodology for dealing with any revisions to any of the documents required under this part (1) of the condition. Any revised documents will require to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the revisions being implemented on site.

(2) Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with the CEMP approved under part (1) of this condition unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot.

**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 EIA Report accompanying the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented.

#### 8. **Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan**

(1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) taking account of the Outline Landscape and Habitat Management Plan (EIA Report Appendix 5.5, and Figure Annex D REV P01: Outline Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plan), has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

(2) The HMP shall set out proposed habitat management of the site during the period of construction, operation, and decommissioning, restoration and aftercare, and shall provide for the maintenance, monitoring and reporting of site-specific details or particular species, habitats or wetlands on site.

(3) The HMP shall include a Tree Planting Plan and Maintenance Programme which shall be implemented in full during the first planting season following commencement of development or as otherwise prior agreed in writing with the Council.

(4) The HMP shall provide provision and details for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken against the HMP objectives and reasonable measures for securing amendments or additions to the HMP in the event that the HMP objectives are not being met.

(5) The HMP shall include GIS Shapefiles of the HMP area including the location of the proposed deer fence.

(6) Until otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority, the approved HMP (as amended from time to time with written approval of

the Planning Authority) shall be implemented in full in line with the timescales set out in the approved plan.

**Reason:** In the interests of biodiversity enhancement, good land management and the protection of habitats and to allow the HMP area to be appropriately mapped on the Council's electronic systems.

9. **Peat and Carbon Rich Soils Management Plan**

- (1) No development shall commence until a finalised Peat and Carbon Rich Soils Management Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing to, the Planning Authority. The Peat and Carbon Rich Soils Management Plan shall draw upon the findings of the EIA Report and;
  - (a) take account of site and ground investigations to minimise the loss of peat and other carbon rich soil and minimise carbon loss;
  - (b) include actions, including micro-siting, to minimise excavated peat and other carbon rich soils volumes;
  - (c) encourage use of excavated peat and other carbon rich soils in an appropriate manner; and,
  - (d) follow good practice for handling, storing and reinstating peat and other carbon rich soils.
- (2) Thereafter the Plan shall be implemented as approved upon commencement of development.

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

10. **Archaeology**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development unless an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The WSI shall provide 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 shall also detail how any requirement for reporting, post-excavation analysis, archive deposition, publication of results, and the delivery of public benefit (including how this will be recorded and reported) will be undertaken.
- (2) A programme of archaeological works must be carried out in accordance with the approved WSI, and any addendums to it, as agreed under part (1).

- (3) Should the archaeological works carried out under part (2) 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, including additional public engagement, 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:** To ensure the protection or recording of archaeological features on the site.

## 11. **Construction Traffic Management Plan**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority [in consultation with The Roads Authorities. The CTMP shall provide:
  - (a) the routing of all traffic associated with the Development on public roads including identification of any local quarries and suppliers that will be used in the construction of the development;
  - (b) details of the volume of material quantities to be imported and removed from the site;
  - (c) details of the number and type of vehicle movements that will be generated;
  - (d) a risk assessment for construction traffic during daylight hours and hours of darkness with reference to the peak tourist season.
  - (e) an assessment of the suitability of the proposed routes including identification of any sensitive receptors such as schools and lengths of road (outwith those which are to be upgraded) which are susceptible to damage due to extra-ordinary construction traffic or abnormal loads;
  - (f) an assessment of any structures along the public road which are susceptible to damage due to extra-ordinary construction traffic or abnormal loads;
  - (g) measures to ensure that the specified routes are adhered to, including monitoring procedures of HGV movements, the establishment of 'acceptable' levels of HGV activity manage HGV movement levels on the public road network;
  - (h) details of all proposed traffic management and mitigation measures including but not limited to temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings, and speed activated signs to be put in place;

- (i) consideration of any concurrent construction traffic from other developments where there is significant (greater than 10%) trip generation;
- (j) provisions for emergency vehicle access;
- (k) a procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period;
- (l) measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;
- (m) provision for the submission of a Section 96 agreement (which may require to be entered in to with additional developers should development that also generates significant traffic on the identified road network) including of a roads condition survey pre-and post-construction accompanied by an appropriate agreement between the Planning Authority and the Company to ensure the delivery of any post-construction public road restoration that may be required; and
- (n) mitigation in the form of physical provision, or an equivalent financial contribution, towards the delivery of active travel improvement scheme to serve users of the A831;
- (o) An up to date review of road accidents; and,
- (p) identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred.

The approved Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be implemented in full, unless otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interests of road safety and amenity.

## 12. **Public Road Improvements**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until the following has submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Council:
  - a. an engineering assessment of the public road to identify sections of road with historic verge damage and provide proposals for widening and/or strengthening on these sections;
  - b. proposal to provide a full structural overlay of the U1335 to be accompanied by an engineering assessment of the public road to identify sections of road that also require a full structural overlay;
  - c. an engineering assessment of the public road network up to where it meets the private Glen Strathfarrar Road with proposals for road widening, which shall be to a minimum of 3.5 metres and include a detailed design of how the road will be widened, and the provision

- of passing places for use by HGV. For the avoidance of doubt, the assessment shall demonstrate that the upgrades are achievable and have the agreement of third party landowners;
- d. full details including detailed layout drawings of all upgrades required to any junctions on the public road network;
  - e. A programme for the delivery of the proposals for the public road mitigation measures as set out in Part (1) of this condition.
- (2) All works on the public road network shall comply with the Council's 'Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments'.
- (3) Thereafter, all works as set out in Part (1) shall be completed in full to the satisfaction of the Council and made available for use in accordance with the agreed delivery programme.

**Reason:** In the interests of road safety and amenity.

### 13. **Abnormal Loads**

- (1) There shall be no abnormal load deliveries to the site until an Abnormal Load Route Assessment Report, including proposed trial runs, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with Transport Scotland. The Abnormal Load Route Assessment Report shall provide:
- (a) Details of a communications strategy to inform the relevant communities of the programme of abnormal load deliveries;
  - (b) Details of any accommodation measures required for the local road network including the removal of street furniture, junction widening and traffic management;
  - (c) Any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary on the trunk road network due to the size or length of any loads being transported must be undertaken by a recognised QA traffic management consultant, to be approved by Transport Scotland.
  - (d) Details of the route for abnormal loads on the local and trunk road networks and any recommendations for delivery of abnormal loads;
  - (e) An assessment of the capacity of any bridge crossings on the route to cater for abnormal loads, and details of proposed upgrades and mitigation measures required for any bridge crossings; and
  - (f) A plan for access by vehicles carrying abnormal loads, including but not limited to the number and timing of deliveries and the length, width and axle configuration of all such traffic associated with the Development.
- (2) Prior to the first delivery of an abnormal load, a programme for abnormal load deliveries shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by the

Planning Authority in consultation with Transport Scotland which shall avoid peak times on Council maintained roads including school travel times, and scheduled community events.

- (3) Prior to any movement of abnormal loads (including trial runs) the Company must complete any mitigation works set out in in the scheme approved under part (1) of this condition, and maintain such measures during the period of abnormal load deliveries.
- (4) The trial-run shall be undertaken in accordance with the details approved under part (1) prior to the movement of any abnormal loads.
- (5) The details in the approved report shall thereafter be implemented in full prior the first delivery of an abnormal load.

**Reason:** to ensure that abnormal loads access the site in a safe manner in the interest of road safety and amenity.

#### 14. **Community Liaison Group**

- (1) No development shall commence until a West of Beaulieu Asset Replacement and VISTA Projects Community Liaison Group has been established in collaboration with local Community Councils and stakeholders to the satisfaction of the Council. The purpose of the liaison group shall be to allow advanced dialogue between the developer and stakeholders on:
  - a. the programme and timing of construction activities including construction related traffic and AIL deliveries;
  - b. the provision of all transport and public outdoor access related mitigation measures; and
  - c. project progress.
- 2) The timing and delivery of AIL components shall be kept under review in order to ensure that local events, tourist seasons, and other developments in the wider area are considered and appropriate measures to co-ordinate deliveries are undertaken.
- 3) Thereafter, the liaison group shall be maintained until the West of Beaulieu Asset Replacement and VISTA Projects have been completed and are fully operational.

**Reason:** to reduce conflicts between all construction traffic and other road users and recreational outdoor access users, in the interests of safety and amenity.

15. **Drainage**

All drainage provision associated with the proposal shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans and the final drainage layout brought in to use prior to the final commissioning of the development and maintained thereafter in perpetuity.

**Reason:** to ensure that drainage infrastructure is provided timeously for the development to protect the water environment.

16. **Operational Noise**

- (1) Any noise arising from the operation of this development shall not exceed 30 dB at the curtilage of any noise sensitive premises when measured and/or calculated as an LZeq, 5min, in the 100Hz one third octave frequency band. The Rating Level of noise arising from this development, as determined in accordance with BS4142 Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound, shall not exceed 31dB LAeq 15 mins at the curtilage of any noise sensitive receptor.
- (2) The Rating Level of noise arising from operational land of the substation, as determined in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound, shall not exceed 28 dB LAeq 15 mins at the curtilage of any noise sensitive receptor.
- (3) For the purposes of this condition, "noise-sensitive premises" includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any building, structure or other development the lawful use of which a) falls within Classes 7 (Hotels & Hostels), 8 (Residential Institutions) or 9 (Houses) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997 (as amended), or b) is as a flat or static residential caravan.

**Reason:** In the interests of residential and community amenity.

17. **Public Outdoor Access**

Public access to Core Path IN26.01, the Beinn a' Bha'ach Àrd Trail, the Glen Strathfarrar Munros Circuit, the An Sìdhean summit from Loch Monar, and any other areas where the public can reasonably exercise its rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 shall at no time be obstructed or deterred by construction-related activities, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Council's Access Officer as a temporary measure required for health and safety or operational purposes. Under such circumstances, any temporary obstruction or determent shall cover only the smallest area practicable and for the shortest duration possible, with waymarked diversions provided as necessary. Any disturbance or damage to IN26.01 shall be reported to the



Council's Access Officer as soon as is practicable and thereafter repaired and made good to a standard satisfactory to the Council within an agreed time.

**Reason:** In order to safeguard public access during and after the construction phase of the development.

## 18. **Private Water Supplies**

- (1) There shall be no Commencement of Development until a private water supplies method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, detailing all contingent mitigation measures to be delivered to secure the quality, quantity and continuity of water supplies to all properties that are served by private water supplies at the date of this planning permission which may be affected by the Development.
- (2) The method statement shall set out:
  - a) details of the methodology for water quality and quantity sampling for a period of 12 months prior to construction (including abstraction points);
  - b) details of the methodology and programme for undertaking water quality and quantity sampling during the construction period (including abstraction points); and
  - c) details of the methodology for water quality and quantity sampling for a period of 12 months post construction (including abstraction points).
- 3) The approved method statement shall thereafter be implemented in full upon the Commencement of Development.

**Reason:** To maintain a secure and adequate water supply to all properties with private water supplies that may be affected by the Development.

## 19. **Lighting**

No development shall commence until full details of any external lighting to be used within the site and/or along its boundaries and/or access have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Council. Such details shall include full details of the location, type, angle of direction and wattage of each light which shall be sensor activated and so positioned and angled to prevent any direct illumination, glare or light spillage outwith the site boundary. Thereafter only the approved details shall be implemented.

**Reason:** to ensure that the site is not normally illuminated during the hours of darkness and that any lighting does not spill beyond the intended target area, does not impact adversely upon the qualifying interests of the Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation of adjacent properties and does not result in 'sky glow'.

## 20. Local Employment Scheme

- (1) 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 Impact Assessment received by the Planning Authority (April 2024). 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.
- (2) 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 local community.

### REASON FOR DECISION

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.

## **REASONED CONCLUSION**

The Council is in agreement with the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report that the replacement substation for the Culligran Hydro Electric Scheme is unlikely to give rise to any new or other significant adverse impact on the environment. The Council is satisfied that all environmental effects of this development can be addressed by way of mitigation. The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission. Monitoring of operational compliance has been secured through Conditions 4 (Implementation of Mitigation Measures), 7 (Construction Environment Management Plan), and monitoring of construction and operational compliance secured through conditions 5 (Planning Monitoring Officer) and 6 (Environmental Clerk of Works) of this permission.

## **INFORMATIVES**

### **Accordance with Approved Plans & Conditions**

You are advised that development must progress in accordance with the plans approved under, and any conditions attached to, this permission. You must not deviate from this permission without consent from the Planning Authority (irrespective of any changes that may separately be requested at the Building Warrant stage or by any other Statutory Authority). Any pre-conditions (those requiring certain works, submissions etc. prior to commencement of development) must be fulfilled prior to work starting on site. Failure to adhere to this permission and meet the requirements of all conditions may invalidate your permission or result in formal enforcement action.

## **Protected Species - Ground Nesting Birds**

Construction/demolition works have the potential to disturb nesting birds or damage their nest sites, and as such, checks for ground nesting birds should be made prior to the commencement of development if this coincides with the main bird breeding season (April - July inclusive). All wild bird nests are protected from damage, destruction, interference and obstruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Some birds (listed on schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act) have heightened protection where it is also an offence to disturb these birds while they are in or around the nest. For information please see: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/dealing-construction-and-birds>

## **Protected Species - Halting of Work**

You are advised that work on site must stop immediately, and NatureScot must be contacted, if evidence of any protected species or nesting/breeding sites, not previously detected during the course of the application and provided for in this permission, are found on site. For the avoidance of doubt, it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or disturb protected species or to damage or destroy the breeding site of a protected species. These sites are protected even if the animal is not there at the time of discovery. Further information regarding protected species and developer responsibilities is available from NatureScot: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-species>

Signature: Bob Roberston  
Designation: Acting Area Planning Manager – South  
Author: Mark Fitzpatrick  
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.  
Relevant Plans: Plan 1 - Location Plan  
Plan 2 - Site Layout Plan  
Plan 3 - Elevation Plan  
Plan 4 - General Plan  
Plan 5 - Drainage Layout  
Plan 6 - Elevation

## **Appendix 1 – Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations**

### **National Planning Framework 4**

#### A1.1 National Development 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure

Policy 1 - Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

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 18 - Infrastructure First

Policy 20 - Blue and Green Infrastructure

Policy 22 - Flood Risk and Water Management

Policy 23 - Health and Safety

Policy 25 - Community Wealth Building

Policy 29 - Rural Development

Policy 33 - Minerals

### **Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012**

#### A1.2

28 - Sustainable Design

29 - Design Quality and Place-making

30 - Physical Constraints

36 - Development in the Wider Countryside

51 - Trees and Development

53 - Minerals

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

62 - Geodiversity

63 - Water Environment

64 - Flood Risk

65 - Waste Water Treatment

66 - Surface Water Drainage

68 - Community Renewable Energy Developments

69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

73 - Air Quality

74 - Green Networks

77 - Public Access

**Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) and West Highland Local Development Plan (WestPlan)**

A1.3 There are no site-specific policies however the following subject policies are relevant:

1 – Low and Zero Carbon Development

2 – Nature Protection, Restoration and Enhancement

5 – Green Networks

In accordance with Policy 2 - Nature Protection, Preservation and Enhancement. Developments proposals for national, major and EIA development will only be supported where it is demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks within and adjacent to the site, so that they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention, including through future management.

**Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance**

A1.4 Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)  
Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010)  
Developer Contributions (March 2018)  
Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)  
Green Networks (Jan 2013)  
Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)  
Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)  
Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (May 2006)  
Managing Waste in New Developments (March 2013)  
Physical Constraints (March 2013)  
Public Art Strategy (March 2013)  
Small-Scale Wind Turbine Proposals: Interim Supplementary Guidance (Nov 2012)  
Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)  
Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)  
Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)  
Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

## **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Other National Policy and Guidance**

- A1.5 A Vision for Scotland's Electricity and Gas Networks (2019)
- Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure: Government Response, UK Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero (2024)
- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
- Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency (2023)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (2018)
- Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021 – 2026 (2022)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, HES (2019)
- PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)
- PAN 60 - Planning for Natural Heritage (2008)
- Circular 4/1998 - The use of Conditions in Planning Permissions
- Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)

## Appendix 2 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy

### National Policy

- A2.1 At the high level, NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, which includes converter-, switching- and substations supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, 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 (NPF4 page 26).
- A2.2 Part 3 at Annex B of the document describes several National Developments with provides statements of need to set out the rationale for each in terms of how they deliver the Spatial Strategy. This proposal falls under the third National Development descriptor, Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure by virtue of being for an upgraded substation directly supporting onshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors 'of a scale or type that would otherwise have been classified as 'major' by 'The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009' (NPF4 Page 103).
- A2.3 Since its adoption, 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 must be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as is practicably possible in accordance with NPF4 Policy 2, while proposals for national and major developments must conserve, restore, and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks, so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention, as required by NPF4 Policy 3 b).
- A2.4 NPF4 Policy 4 compliments the above policies by setting out the developer and officer requirements for ensuring that protected species are given adequate consideration prior to an application's determination. NPF4 Policy 5 for Soils seeks to protect carbon-rich soils, and restore peatlands, and minimise disturbance to soils from development. To that end, the application requires to demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been followed in siting the facility. In other words, that the proposal has sought to avoid carbon-rich soils and peat in the first instance, and then minimise disturbance where this is unavoidable, and to include adequate mitigation, compensation, and enhancement measures for any disturbance. Similarly, NPF4 Policy 6 for Forestry, woodland and trees aims to protect and expand forests, woodland and tree coverage. Similarly for built and cultural resources, Policy 7 seeks to protect and enhance historic environment assets and



places and, relevant for this proposal, sets out the developer requirements for dealing with archaeology resources.

- A2.5 Policy 18, Infrastructure First, seeks to ensure that infrastructure considerations are integral to the design and decision making process so that any impacts on infrastructure are adequately and timeously understood and addressed as required at Part b). NPF4 Policy 20 for Blue and Green Infrastructure supports facilities that design protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure and their networks by making climate mitigation, nature restoration, biodiversity enhancement, flood prevention and water management (as per Policy 22 for Flood Risk) integral to design.
- A2.6 Policy 23 for Health and safety is also relevant to the assessment as it seeks to protect people and places from environmental harm, mitigate risks arising from safety hazards, and encourage, promote, and facilitate development that improves health and wellbeing. Furthermore, NPF4 Policy 25 for Community Wealth Building sets out at Part a) that development proposals should contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and be consistent with local economic priorities.
- A2.7 While the above policies are salient for the application's assessment, the principal policy for developments related to energy generation and distribution is Policy 11 Energy, which aims to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development and the infrastructure that supports it (at Part a) ii.). Part c) of the policy confirms that development proposals should maximise net economic impacts, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment along with associated business and supply chain opportunities. Section d) requires impacts on international or national designations to be assessed in relation to Policy 4, while at the same time requiring decision makers to give significant weight to the proposal's contribution to renewable energy generation targets and targets for greenhouse gas emissions. In this instance it is noted that the replacement substation will directly support a longstanding hydroelectric renewable energy generator.
- A2.8 Indeed, national guidance supplements the in principle support for the proposal with both A Vision for Scotland's Electricity and Gas Networks (2019) and the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan acknowledging that significant investment is required in Scotland's transmission system to ameliorate constraints and ensure a secure and resilient network so that energy from renewable sources can be reliably transmitted and distributed to where it is consumed no matter how remote.

## **Local Development Plan Policy**

- A2.13 Although the proposal site is not allocated for the specific proposed land use or any land uses in the LDP (HwLDP and IMFLDP2), meaning that there are no site specific policies that would apply, the in principle support in favour of the proposal is still reinforced within the LDP under HwLDP Policy 69 for Electricity Transmission Infrastructure. The policy requires the assessment of the proposal to have regard to the strategic importance of the proposal taking account of appropriate siting and mitigation of environmental impacts by design. This policy is supplemented by several HwLDP policies including for Sustainable Design (Policy 28) and for Development in the Wider Countryside (Policy 36), as well as the remaining subject policies listed in paragraphs 6.2 - 6.3, which set out key environmental and social considerations against which the application requires to be assessed. These policies are considered to supplement those described for NPF4 above (paragraphs 8.5 – 8.10) with no relevant policy conflicts identified.
- A2.14 As described above, subject to the proposal being satisfactory in all other aspects, the proposal benefits from in principle support in the Development Plan.

## **Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)**

- A2.19 The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan has been published for consultation. Limited weight can however be applied to the document given its draft status. Unsurprisingly, the material on in the document reflects in large part that contained in NPF4 and the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (OWPS) 2022. A fundamental part of the Strategy is expanding the energy generation sector. The draft Strategy specifically addresses energy networks (page 36) and states “significant infrastructure investment in Scotland’s transmission system is needed to ameliorate constraints and enable more renewable power to flow to centres of demand.” It states that National Grid has identified the requirement for over £21 billion of investment in GB electricity transmission infrastructure to meet 2030 targets and that over half of this investment will involve Scottish transmission owners SPEN and SSEN. Overall, the draft Energy Strategy forms part of the new policy approach alongside the OWPS and NPF4 and confirms the Scottish Government’s policy objectives and related targets reaffirming the crucial role that onshore wind and enabling transmission infrastructure will play in response to the climate crisis which is at the heart of all these policies.

## **Appendix 3 – Habitats Regulations Appraisal**

### Appropriate Assessment

Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area

Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation

Construction of 132 kV replacement substation, to replace existing Deanie Substation, comprising: access track, fenced platform area (not exceeding 50x95m) incorporating control building, transformers, plant and infrastructure, associated ancillary facilities, temporary construction compound and laydown area(s), alongside drainage and landscaping requirements.

THC Ref. 24/01235/FUL

### **CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS AFFECTING EUROPEAN SITES**

The status of both the Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA), while both the Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the ‘Habitats Regulations’) or, for reserved matters the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended apply.

The above means that where the conclusion reached by the Council on a development proposal unconnected with the nature conservation management of a Natura 2000 site is that it is likely to have a significant effect on those sites, it must undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the conservation interests for which the areas have been designated. The need for Appropriate Assessment extends to plans or projects out with the boundary of the site in order to determine their implications for the interest protected within the site.

This means that the Council, as competent authority, has a duty to:

- Determine whether the proposal is directly connected with or necessary to site management for conservation; and, if not,
- Determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or in combination with other plans or projects; and, if so, then
- Make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications (of the proposal) for the site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.

The competent authority can only agree to the proposal after having ascertained that it will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the sites. If this is not the case and there are not alternative solutions, the proposal can only be allowed to proceed if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which in this case can include those of a social or economic nature.

## **Screening in Likely Significant Effects**

### **Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA)**

It is evident that the proposal is not connected with or necessary to site management for conservation, hence further consideration is required. The development may impact on the SPA's breeding golden eagles qualifying interests due to construction works taking place during the breeding season (early February to the end of August). The Council is therefore required to undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal on the SPA.

### **Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

It is evident that the proposal is not connected with or necessary to site management for conservation, hence further consideration is required. The development may impact on the upland and woodland habitats, and the aquatic habitats of the River Farrar and associated species as well as otter qualifying interests due to pollution and contamination of the River Farrar during construction works. The Council is therefore required to undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal on the SAC.

## **APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

While the responsibility to carry out the Appropriate Assessment rests with the Council, advice contained within Circular 6/1995 is that the assessment can be based on the information submitted from other agencies. In this case, the Appropriate Assessment is informed by information supplied by NatureScot, the applicant and various published information.

### Appraisal Summary

#### Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA)

In its initial response to the Council, NatureScot advised that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the breeding golden eagles qualifying interests of the SPA but that provided that a pre-construction golden eagle survey is undertaken and a buffer of at least 1km is established around any active nest sites, and that a detailed mitigation plan is prepared and agreed with NatureScot prior to commencement of construction works within the breeding season, the proposal is not considered to adversely affect the integrity of the Special Protection Area.

#### Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

In its initial response to the Council, NatureScot advised that there is potential for the construction works to result in pollution/contamination of the River Farrar which could have negative consequences for the SAC's aquatic habitats and associated qualifying species. However, provided the mitigation included in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan including that best practice measures for pollution prevention are adopted, NatureScot does not consider that the integrity of the site will be adversely impacted.

## **HIGHLAND COUNCIL APPRAISAL OF THE PROPOSAL IN RESPECT OF STRATHCONON SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA)**

- The proposal is not directly connected with or necessary to site management for conservation;
- The proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or in combination with other plans or projects; therefore;
- An Appropriate Assessment of the implications (of the proposal) for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives is provided below.

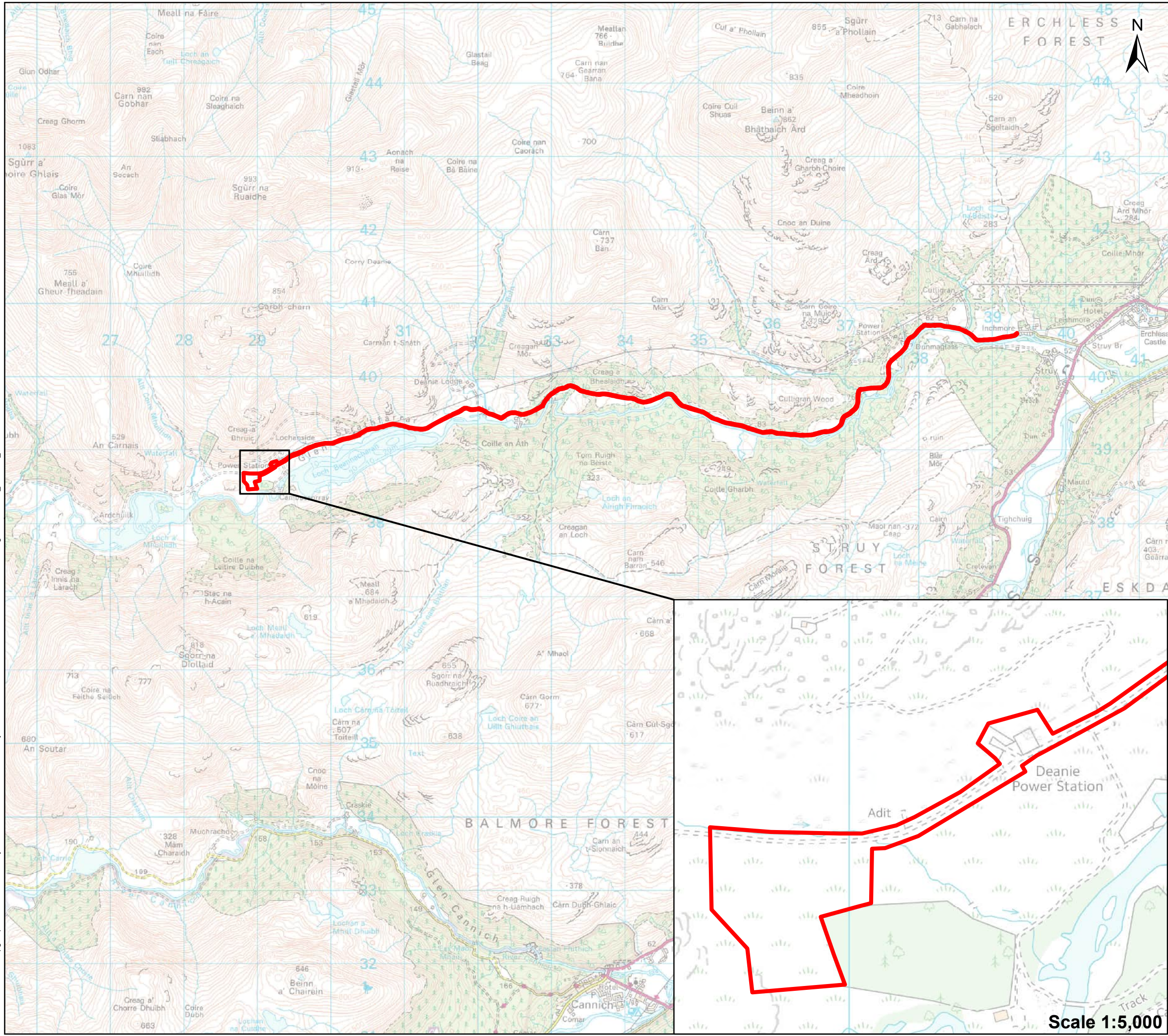
The impacts on the SPA are considered in terms of the different components of the development which may impact on the SPA's breeding golden eagles qualifying interests due to construction works taking place during the breeding season (early February to the end of August). However, NatureScot advises that in its opinion, provided works are undertaken in accordance with the following mitigation measures, the integrity of the designated site will not be adversely affected:

- Pre-construction surveys for golden eagle shall be undertaken if works are carried out within the breeding season (early February to the end of August);
- A minimum buffer of 1 km shall be established around all active nest sites; and,
- A detailed mitigation plan shall be prepared and agreed with NatureScot prior to the commencement of construction works within the breeding season.

## **HIGHLAND COUNCIL APPRAISAL OF THE PROPOSAL IN RESPECT OF THE STRATHGLASS COMPLEX SAC**

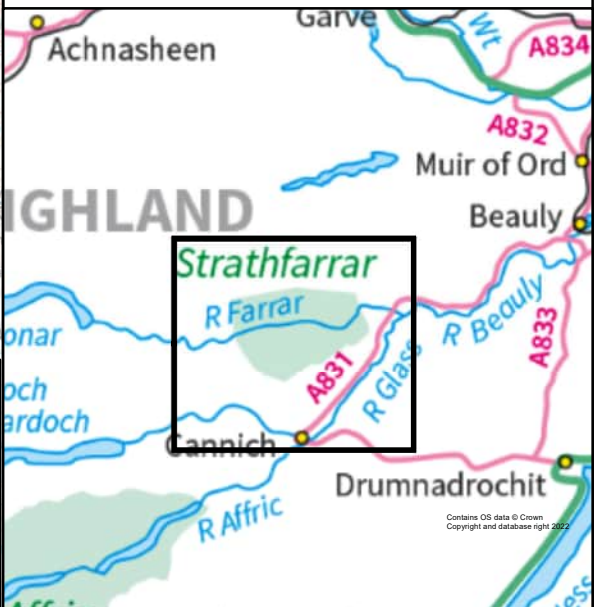
- The proposal is not directly connected with or necessary to site management for conservation;
- The proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or in combination with other plans or projects; therefore;
- An Appropriate Assessment of the implications (of the proposal) for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives is provided below.

The impacts on the SAC are considered in terms of the different components of the development which may impact on the upland and woodland habitats, and the aquatic habitats of the River Farrar and associated species as well as other qualifying interests due to pollution and contamination of the River Farrar during construction works. However, provided the mitigation included in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan including that best practice measures for pollution prevention are adopted, the integrity of the site will not be adversely impacted.



# Legend

 Site Boundary



Client:   
TRANSMISSION

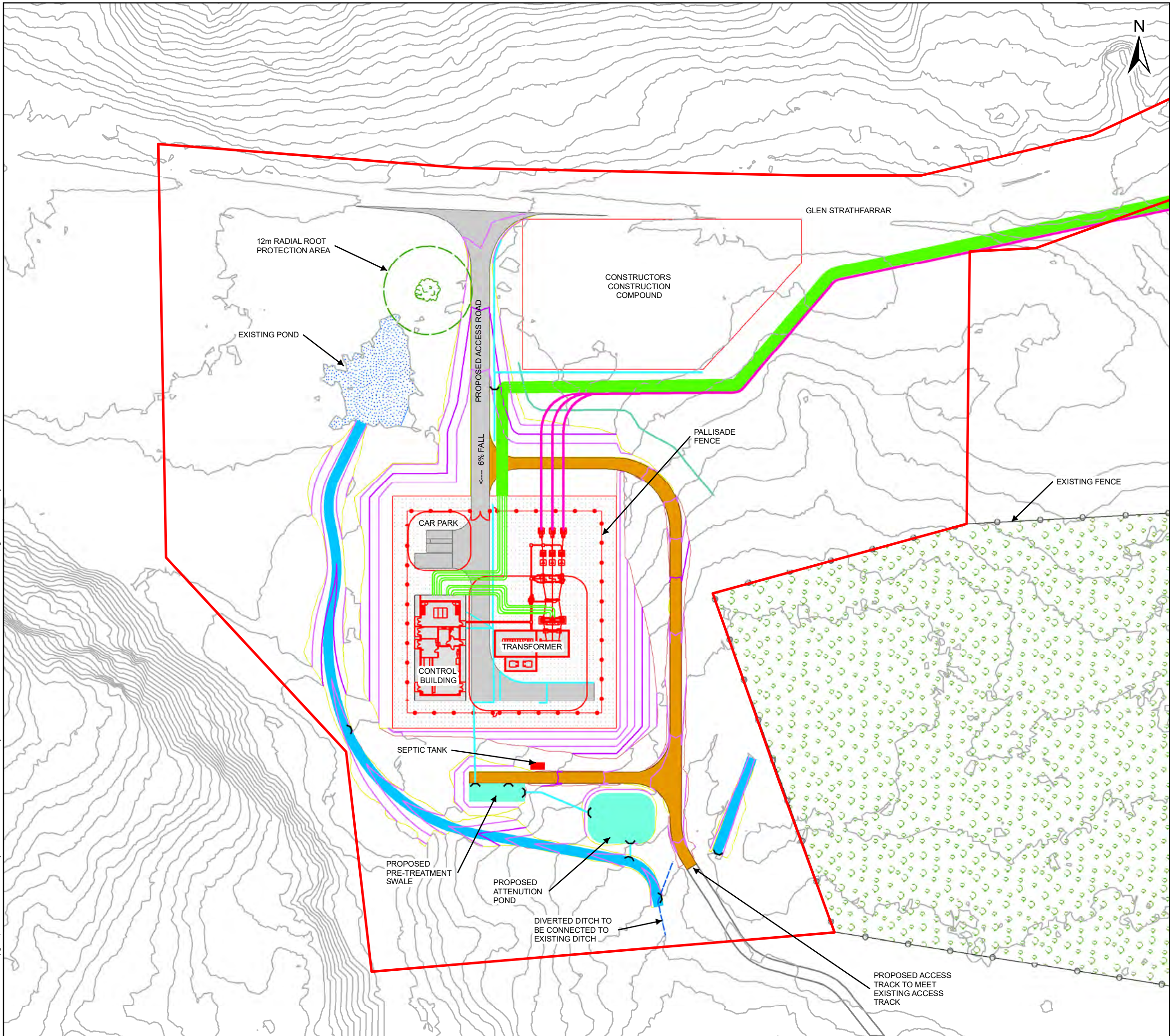
Project: **Deanie 132 kV Substation**

Title: **Figure 1.1 - Site Location Plan**

Date: 21/11/2023 Scale: 50,000 @ A3  
 Drawn: SH Checked: IM Approved: JW  
 Drawing Number: 70102187-WSP-DNE-GIS-0001

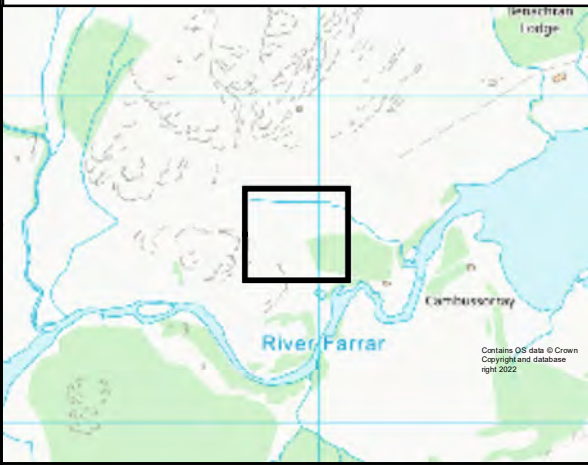
**Scale 1:5,000**





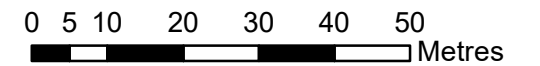
**Legend**

- Site Boundary
- Proposed Cable 11kV
- Proposed Cable 132kV
- Area of Proposed Impermeable Infrastructure
- Permeable Granular Platform Surface Area
- Permeable Granular Access Track
- Existing Access Track
- - - Existing\_Stream
- Existing Pond
- Existing Plantation Area
- Surface Water Drainage
- Proposed Drainage Ditch
- Drainage Headwalls
- Earthworks Cut
- Earthworks Fill



**INFORMATION**

The design detail provided in this figure has been provided by Tony Gee.



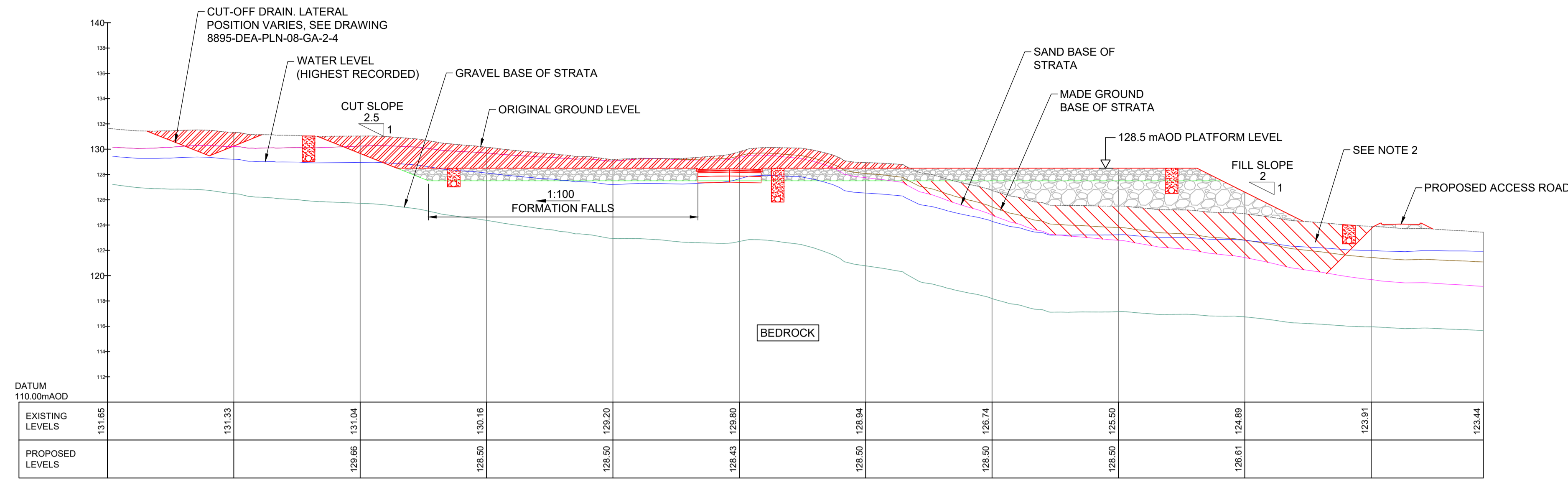
Client: **Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks**  
Project: **Deanie 132 kV Substation**

Title: **Site Layout Plan**

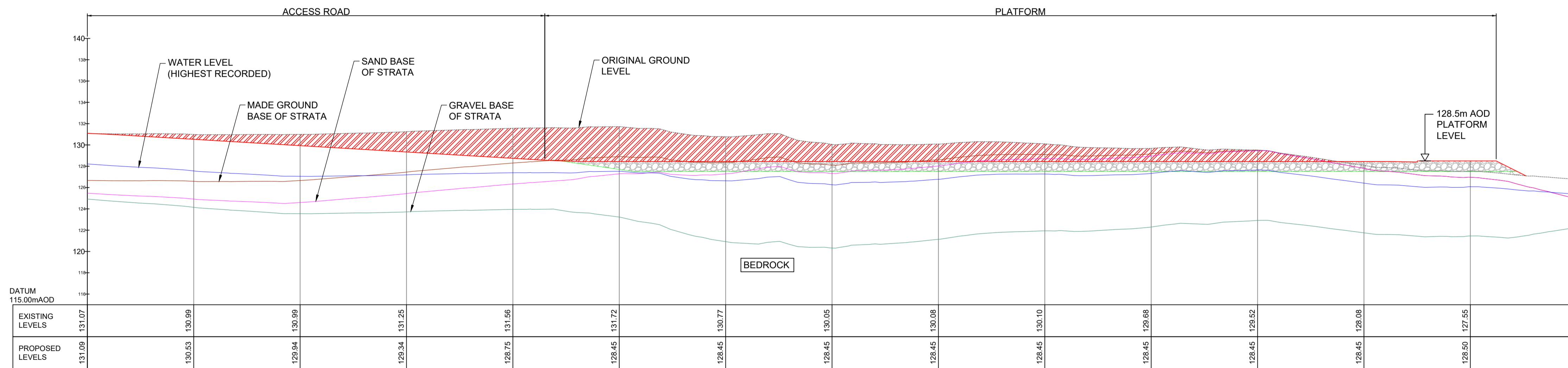
Date: 15/03/2024      Scale: 1,000 @ A3  
 Drawn: SH      Checked: IM      Approved: EC  
 Drawing Number: 70102187-WSP-DNE-GIS-0003

- NOTES
- FOR SECTION LOCATIONS REFER TO DRAWING 8895-DEA-PLN-08-GA 2-4
  - SOME EXCAVATION AND GROUND REPLACEMENT WILL LIKELY BE REQUIRED (SEE LEGEND) TO PREVENT EXCESS SETTLEMENT OF THE PLATFORM AND TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT BEARING CAPACITY. THIS IS TO BE CONFIRMED AT DETAIL DESIGN (SEE EARTHWORKS STRATEGY REPORT 8895-DEA-RPT-08-ES).

- LEGEND :
- CUT EXTENTS
  - FILL EXTENTS
  - EXCAVATION & GROUND REPLACEMENT EXTENTS



SECTION A - A VERTICAL 04  
(REFER TO DWG 8895-DEA-PLN-08-EW1)  
SCALE: H 1:200,V 1:200



SECTION B - B  
(REFER TO DWG 8895-DEA-PLN-08-EW1)  
SCALE: H 1:200,V 1:200

REV.	BY	CHKD	APPD	DATE	DESCRIPTION
P03	HT	AD	PC	27/10/23	FOR REVIEW
P02	HT	AD	PC	24/08/23	FOR REVIEW
P01	TWR	AD	TA	19/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN

CODE: S3 DRAWING STATUS: FOR PLANNING

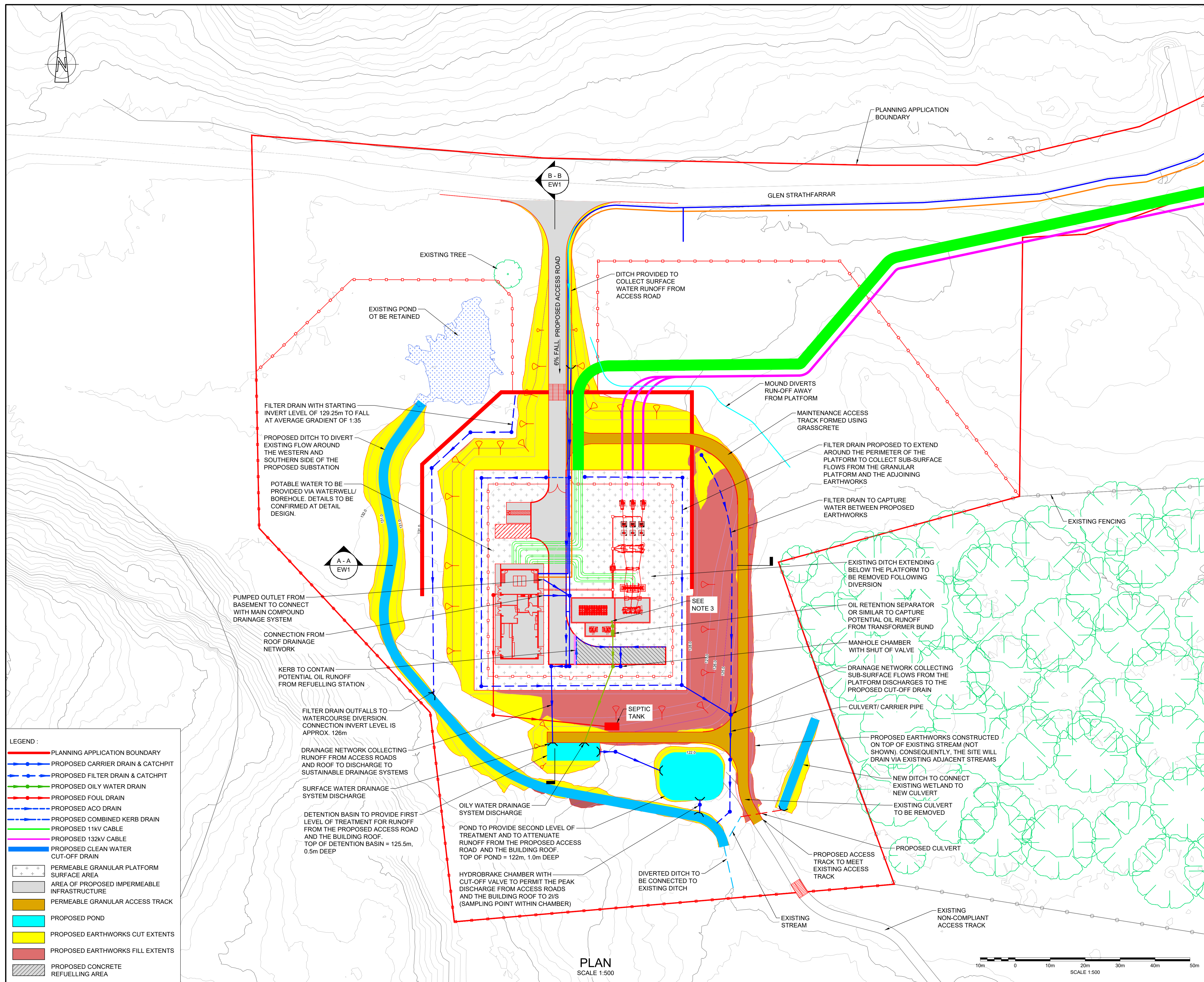
**Tony Gee and Partners LLP**  
301 Stonehouse Park  
Sperry Way  
Stonehouse, Gloucestershire  
GL10 3UT  
Tel: 01453 826773  
www.tonygee.com  
Consulting Engineers

ON BEHALF OF  
**SSE**

DEANIE 132kV Substation

DEANIE EARTHWORKS SECTIONS  
SHEET 1 OF 1

DRAWING No. 8895-DEA-PLN-08-EW1		
DRAWN : GM	DESIGNED : AD	REVISION
SCALE : AS SHOWN	ORIGINAL SIZE : A1	PL1



PLAN  
SCALE 1:500

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING

NOTES  
 1. ALL LEVELS ARE IN METRES UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.  
 2. REFER TO DRAINAGE STRATEGY 8895-DEA-RPT-08-DS-P02  
 3. TRANSFORMER TO BE BUNDED AND SURFACE WATER FLOWING FROM THESE AREA TO BE DIRECTED THROUGH FULL RETENTION INTERCEPTORS OR EQUIVALENT TREATMENT MEASURES TO PREVENT CONTAMINATES FROM ENTERING THE SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE NETWORK.  
 4. PROVISION OF FIRE-FIGHTING STORAGE TANK IS NOT REQUIRED.

REV	BY	CHKD	APPD	DATE	DESCRIPTION
P09	WW	AD	TA	08/03/24	FOR REVIEW
P08	CCL	AD	TA	22/12/23	FOR REVIEW
P07	HT	AD	TA	12/12/23	FOR REVIEW
P06	HT	AD	PC	27/10/23	FOR REVIEW
P05	HT	AD	PC	24/08/23	FOR REVIEW
P04	HT	AD	TA	22/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN INCLUDING DRAINAGE
P03	HT	AD	TA	21/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN
P02	HT	AD	TA	19/05/23	DRAFT, NEW COMPOUND LAYOUT
P01	HT	AD	TA	25/04/23	FIRST ISSUE

CODE	DRAWING STATUS
S3	FOR PLANNING

**Tony Gee and Partners LLP**  
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 Consulting Engineers

ON BEHALF OF  
**SSE**

**DEANIE 132 kV SUBSTATION**

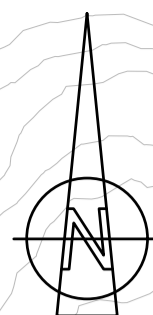
**DEANIE EARTHWORKS & DRAINAGE GENERAL ARRANGEMENT (inc Sections AA/BB)**

DRAWING No. 8895-DEA-PLN-08-GA 2-4

DRAWN	DESIGNED	REVISION
HT	AC	PL1

SCALE: 1:500 ORIGINAL SIZE: A1







- LEGEND :
- PLANNING APPLICATION BOUNDARY
  - PROPOSED CARRIER DRAIN & CATCHPIT
  - PROPOSED FILTER DRAIN & CATCHPIT
  - PROPOSED OILY WATER DRAIN
  - PROPOSED FOUL DRAIN
  - PROPOSED ACO DRAIN
  - PROPOSED COMBINED KERB DRAIN
  - PROPOSED 11kV CABLE
  - PROPOSED 132kV CABLE
  - PROPOSED CLEAN WATER CUT-OFF DRAIN
  - + PERMEABLE GRANULAR PLATFORM SURFACE AREA
  - AREA OF PROPOSED IMPERMEABLE INFRASTRUCTURE
  - PERMEABLE GRANULAR ACCESS TRACK
  - PROPOSED POND
  - PROPOSED EARTHWORKS CUT EXTENTS
  - PROPOSED EARTHWORKS FILL EXTENTS
  - PROPOSED CONCRETE REFUELLING AREA

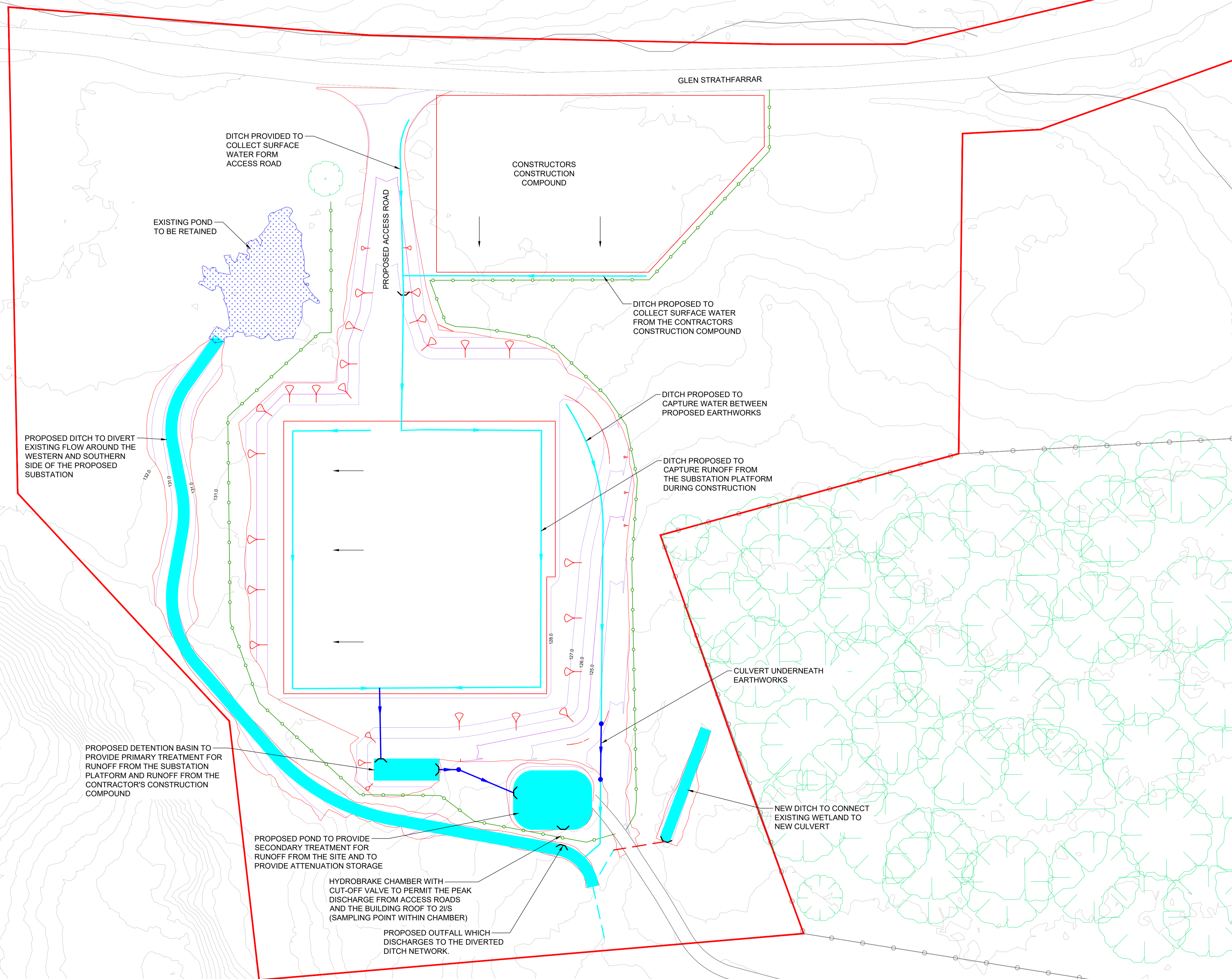


DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING

- NOTES
1. ALL LEVELS ARE IN METRES UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.
  2. TEMPORARY DRAINAGE TO COMPRISE DITCHES 1000mm WIDE, 300mm DEEP BELOW FORMATION LEVEL. ONCE PLATFORM IS BUILT-UP, TRENCH TO BE EXCAVATED IN REGION OF DITCHES TO ALLOW FOR CONSTRUCTION OF FILTER DRAINS (SEE SECTIONS ON DRAWINGS 8895-DEA-PLN-08-EW1 AND 8895-DEA-PLN-08-GA-3-4)
  3. THIS DRAWING SHOWS THE DRAINAGE ARRANGEMENT AT PLATFORM FORMATION LEVEL (PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION OF THE GRANULAR PLATFORM)

LEGEND :

-  EXISTING WOODED AREA
-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  PROPOSED STORM WATER DITCH
-  PROPOSED CARRIER DRAIN & CATCHPIT
-  PROPOSED SILT FENCING
-  PROPOSED SWALE / POND / DETENTION BASIN



REV.	BY	CHKD	APPD	DATE	DESCRIPTION
P05	HT	AD	TA	12/12/23	FOR REVIEW
P04	HT	AD	PC	27/10/23	FOR REVIEW
P03	HT	AD	PC	24/08/23	FOR REVIEW
P02	HT	AD	TA	30/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN
P01	HT	AD	TA	19/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN

CODE	DRAWING STATUS
S3	FOR PLANNING

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ON BEHALF OF  
**SSE**

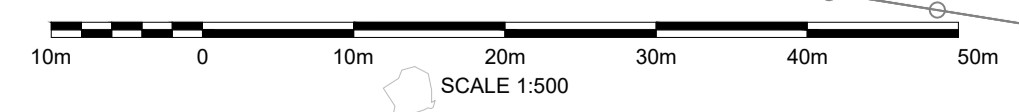
**DEANIE 132KV SUBSTATION**

**DEANIE CONSTRUCTION  
 TEMPORARY DRAINAGE  
 GENERAL ARRANGEMENT**

DRAWING No.  
**8895-DEA-PLN-08-GA 4-4**

DRAWN	DESIGNED	REVISION
HT	AD	PL1

PLAN  
 SCALE 1:500



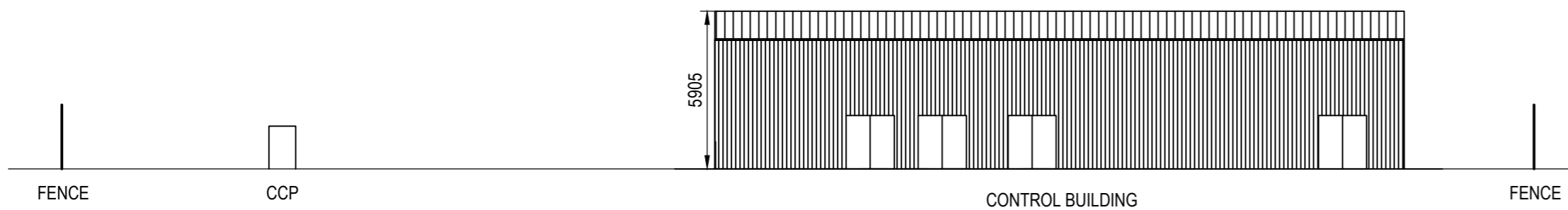
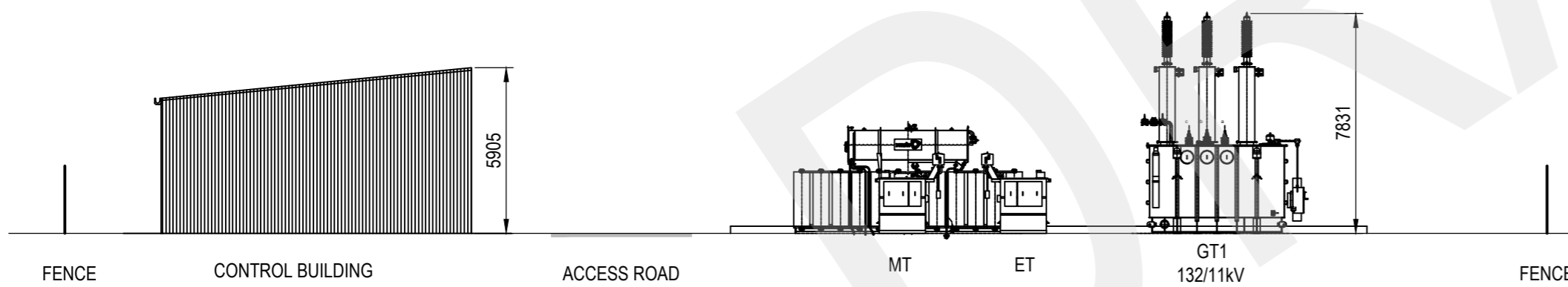
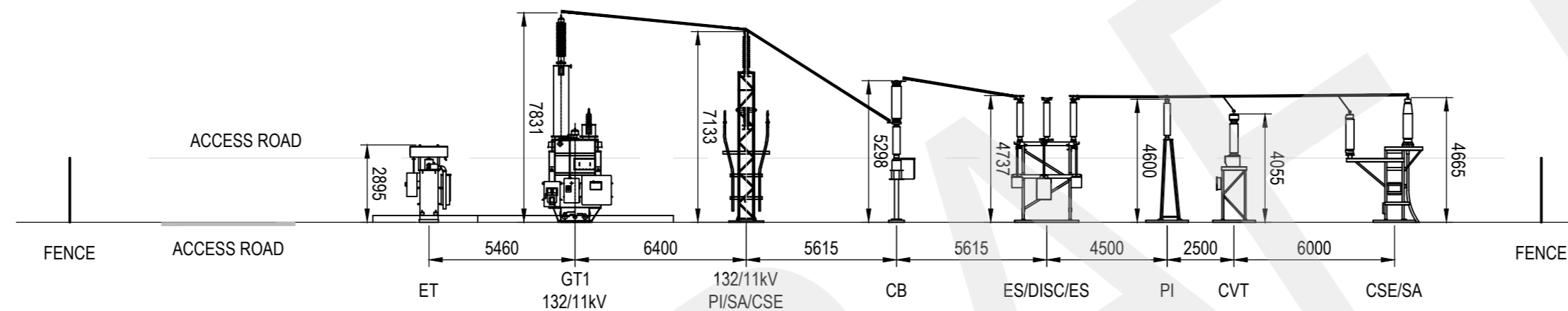
A2

**NOTES:-**

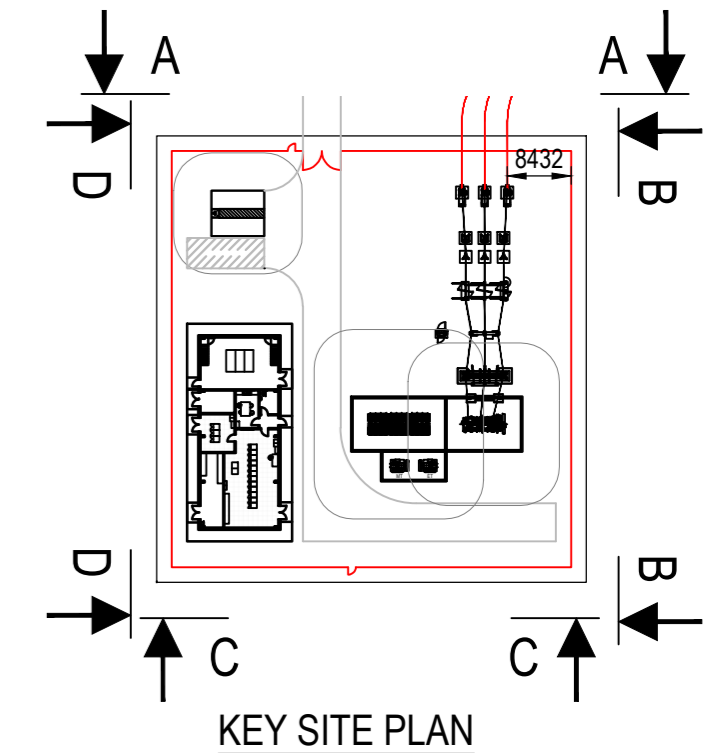
- PLEASE REFER TO PROPOSED SLD LAYOUT DRAWING No. LT248\_DEAN\_1117\_0002
- PROPOSED SITE FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY.
- LAYOUT MAY BE REQUIRED TO BE AMENDED DEPENDENT ON FINAL SITE SELECTION.
- ELECTRICAL LAYOUT SHOWN IS PURELY FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY.
- ALL EQUIPMENT SHOWN TO BE FINALISED AND CONFIRMED BY ENGINEER/DESIGN TEAM AND UNTIL DONE SO ALL ASPECTS OF THE SHOWN DESIGN ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
- ALL EQUIPMENT SHOWN TO BE CONSIDERED NEW.
- ALL DIMENSIONS GIVEN IN MILLIMETRES (mm) U.N.O.

**LEGEND:-**

- GT GRID TRANSFORMER
- ET EARTHING TRANSFORMER
- ES EARTH SWITCH
- DISC DISCONNECTOR (RCP)
- CB CIRCUIT BREAKER
- CVT CAPACITIVE VOLTAGE TRANSFORMER
- SA SURGE ARRESTER
- CSE CABLE SEALING END
- MK MARSHALLING KIOSK
- PI POST INSULATOR



**PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY  
NOT TO BE USED FOR  
CONSTRUCTION**



**SUBSTATION MINIMUM ELECTRICAL CLEARANCES**

REQUIREMENTS TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SSE SUBSTATION DESIGN SPECIFICATION DOC No. SP-NET-SST-501

REF	CLEARANCE (mm)	NOMINAL SYSTEM VOLTAGE	
		132kV	33kV
E	PHASE TO EARTH	1200	500
Ph	PHASE TO PHASE	1400	430
S	DESIGN CLEARANCE FOR SAFETY	3500	2900
SD	SAFETY DISTANCE	1400	800
Ds	WORKING & ACCESS CLEARANCE (VERTICAL)	3500	2900
Dsh	WORKING & ACCESS CLEARANCE (HORIZONTAL)	2900	2300
IH	INSULATION HEIGHT (PEDESTRIAN ACCESS)	2400	2400

WHERE EQUIPMENT CONFIGURATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN SUBJECT TO TYPE OF ROUTINE TESTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH IEC 60694 THE CLEARANCES FOR PHASE TO EARTH AND PHASE TO PHASE ABOVE SHALL APPLY.  
THEY APPLY UNDER CONDITIONS OF MAXIMUM SWING AND SAG.

WHEN DESIGNING ELECTRICAL CONNECTIONS THE FOLLOWING ALLOWANCES HAVE BEEN MADE TO COVER TOLERANCES IN ELECTRICAL AND CIVIL WORK AND THE SETTLEMENT OF FOUNDATIONS:- 132kV - 80mm; 33kV - 80mm

Date Plotted: 25.01.2024  
File Name: LT248\_DEAW\_1104\_0002.dwg

Rev: 0A	Drawn: MS	Checked: 24.01.24	Approved: [Signature]	Description: FOR INTERNAL COMMENTS
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SSE Inverlorn House, 200 Dunkeld Road  
Perth, PH1 3AQ, UK  
www.sse.com

Project: DEANIE 132/11kV GT REPLACEMENT

Project Number: LT248 Location: DEANIE

Title: DEANIE WEST 132/11kV SUBSTATION ELEVATION

Drawing Status: FOR INFORMATION Drawn: MS

Scale: 1:200 @ A2 Checked: [Signature]

Date: 24.01.24 Approved: [Signature]

Drawing Number: LT248\_DEAW\_1104\_0002 Sheet No: 01 Revision No: 0A