Agenda Item	**6.3**
Report No	**PLS/34/25**

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 18 June 2025

Report Title: 24/02831/FUL: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission
Land 100M NE of Caulternich, Kilmorack, Beauly

Report By: Acting Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Kilmorack 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 and Community Council Objection

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 Kilmorack Power Station and Dam, which is coming to the end of its operational life. The application forms part of the West of Beauly Asset Replacement Project, which replaces the existing substations of Deanie, Culligran, Aigas, and Kilmorack hydroelectric power station as part of the Affric/Beauly hydroelectric scheme. The proposed development comprises:

- Substation platform, measuring 90m by 50m;
- Construction of an Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) building, measuring 40m by 20m, 11.5m in height;
- Construction of a control building, measuring 26m by 11m, 5.9m in height;
- Site drainage;
- 2.4m high security palisade perimeter fencing; and
- Permanent access track connecting to the local road network.

1.2 The above listed elements require planning permission; however there are additional elements of the proposal that are associated with Permitted Development Rights:

- A connection to the existing 132kV overhead line (OHL);
- A diversion of the 132 kV OHL to underground cable (UGC);
- Construction of a Cable Sealing End (CSE) compound, measuring 15m x 15m located to the north west;
- Installation of an UGC connection from the proposed development to the Kilmorack Power Station and Dam; and
- Construction of a temporary site compound(s) and construction laydown area(s).

1.3 Following completion of the proposed development, the existing substation at Kilmorack Power Station and Dam will be redundant, therefore equipment relating to the existing substation will be removed in full. The Kilmorack Power Station and Dam will continue to be operational, and the platform of the existing substation will be retained as “operational land” to host the following:

- 3x 11kV panels to house equipment, connected to existing 11kV cables from the Kilmorack Power Station and Dam;
- 2x Protection and Control and 1 Real Time System Delivery;
- 1 metering panel;
- 1 Low Voltage Alternating Current panel; and
- Drycell batteries in Glass Reinforced Plastic enclosure.

1.4 Access to the proposed development will be via a new permanent access track, to be constructed from the existing publicly adopted U1492 Craigscorrie Road to the

north of the proposed site; it will be 250m in length, and 5m wide. The A831 would also be used as it is the main road to the proposed development with traffic required to travel from the east through Wester Balblair using the U1480 Altyre Road. The permanent access will be created 150m to the east of the temporary construction access. A construction compound is to be located near to the construction access, which will be taken from the existing field access, though this will be upgraded to include a formal junction suitable to accommodate heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). A temporary construction access track will also be formed running south to east from the temporary construction compound to the substation compound. A temporary haul road will also be created to connect the cable joint bay (CJB) at the south to the new CJB in the north of the site, which will be removed from the site after use.

1.5 The applicant utilised the Highland Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments for this proposal jointly with the proposed substation replacement at Aigas, which is part of the West of Beauly – Asset Replacement Project (23/02354/PREMAJ). The pre-application response was broadly positive, with appropriate design mitigation and limiting tree and habitat impacts being critical to the determination of the proposal.

1.6 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.

1.7 A formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion was submitted in September 2023. The Council confirmed in their response in November 2023 that the proposed development does not constitute EIA development; this means the planning application, under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is not required to be accompanied by an EIA Report.

1.8 As such, the application is supported by an Environmental Appraisal report (EA), containing chapters on: Proposed Development, Appraisal Scope and Methodology, Landscape and Visual, Ecology and Nature Conservation, Cultural Heritage, Hydrology, Noise and Vibration, and Summary of Mitigation Measures. The application is also accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Draft Construction Management Plan, associated Technical Appendices and Pre-application Consultation Report (PAC).

1.9 The scheme has not changed materially during the course of the application's consideration however the applicant has provided clarification in relation to traffic,

with an updated Transport Statement and outline Construction Traffic Management Plan in May 2025, as well as biodiversity enhancement calculations.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The 2.6ha application site is located 370m north of the hamlet of Kilmorack, 1.65km west-southwest of Wester Balblair, and 19km west of Inverness. The proposed development is also located 300m northeast of the existing Kilmorack Power Station and Dam. The site itself is characterised as scrub/grassland and class 3.2 agricultural land (i.e. not prime soils), as well as sporadic individual groups of trees, that do not constitute commercial woodland or forestry. In addition, the proposed development site is partially located within an area listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) (Category 2b).

2.2 The site does not form part of any environmentally designated site. There are however internationally, and nationally important designations for nature within 5km, namely the Inner Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, and the Beauly Firth Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The proposed development site has been subject to ecological surveys comprising desk-based studies, habitat mapping and targeted species surveys for bats, red squirrel, badger, otter, pine marten and breeding birds.

2.3 With regard to cultural and built heritage, there are 75 listed buildings, 14 scheduled monuments and 1 garden and designated landscape (GDL) located within 5km of the proposed development site. In the more immediate vicinity lies the Old Kilmorack Church and New Burial Ground 190m and 125m north of the A831 respectively.

2.4 There are no statutory or non-statutory landscape designations within the proposed site or the surrounding 3km study area, with the site located behind the ridgeline of a southeast facing escarpment above the River Beauly. To the west and southwest, the proposed site is enclosed by a block of long-established woodland, comprising pine, oak and birch woodland. To the east, the land opens out onto sloping agricultural fields with mature oak trees and lines of old hedgerows. The applicant has utilised NatureScot's landscape character assessment resources, mainly the digital map, which indicates approximately 6 landscape character types (LCT) are present within the wider study area; these are:

- Open Farmed Slopes – LCT346, the hosting LCT
- Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross and Cromarty – LCT345
- Rugged Massif – Inverness – LCT220
- Farmed River Plains – LCT342
- Farmed Strath – LCT227
- Enclosed Farmland – LCT229

2.5 There are no recreational routes or Core Paths that traverse the proposed site; however, the wider area is popular with walkers, cyclists and hillwalkers. Within the wider area covered by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), there are 6 Core Paths:

- Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge track – IN03.04
- War Memorial to Black Bridge by Balblair Wood track – IN03.03
- East Lodge to West Lodge, Beaufort Castle – IN20.05
- Bruaich Burn to Dounie Burn – IN20.06
- Old Mill track – IN20.08
- Balgate track – IN20.07

2.6 In terms of cumulative impacts and transmission related infrastructure in the vicinity, the proposed site is located 850m west of the Beauly substation, with the northern area of the site being the subject of an extant planning permission (25/00826/FUL) to form a hardstanding area and new access to facilitate the undergrounding of an existing overhead line which connects to the Beauly Substation. Agricultural land further to the west of the site is also the subject of an undetermined planning appeal for a 49.9MW Battery Energy Storage System (23/03113/FUL) with the Council having refused this proposal on grounds of landscape and visual impact. This is due to that proposal being an industrial development on an open field on a rural hillside characterised by open farmland. Other proposals further afield include Fanellan substation (25/00826/FUL), which is pending consideration, with the associated 400kV overhead line connection applications anticipated to be submitted shortly. These wider proposals are however more remote from this application site but will share access via the A831.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	09.08.2023	22/03394/FUL Formation of hardstanding, new access point, temporary site compound and site access and ancillary works	Planning Permission Granted
3.2	09.08.2023	22/03536/PNO Erection of replacement Overhead Line	Prior Notification
3.3	17.11.2023	23/04885/SCRE Replacement Kilmorack substation	EIA Not Required
3.4	17.12.2023	23/05130/PAN Replacement of existing Kilmorack Substation comprising: access track, fenced platform area incorporating control building, transformers, plant and infrastructure, associated ancillary	Reported to Committee

facilities, temporary construction compound and laydown area(s) (where required), alongside drainage and landscaping requirements

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Schedule 3 Development, Unknown Neighbour

Date Advertised: 23.08.2024

Representation deadline: 06.09.2024

Representations: 25 Objections

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

- Landscape and visual impact;
- Energy and carbon footprint;
- Cumulative impact of transmission infrastructure;
- Noise, blasting, dust and health impacts, including to proposed 7 day working;
- Lack of need to relocate this infrastructure which should be replaces in situ;
- Adverse economic and tourism impact;
- Potential pollution and tree loss in an emergency fire event;
- Construction traffic impact;
- Wildlife, habitat, and woodland impact;
- Flooding, drainage and soil impacts, including loss of agricultural land; and
- Cultural heritage impact.

4.3 Non-material matters raised:

- Potential sale of either SSE renewables or SSE networks as individual companies;
- Output of the dams decreased under Return of Capital (ROC) scheme;
- Lack of need for renewable energy;
- Poorly indexed and searchable documentation on the ePlanning casefile;
- Condition compliance concerns;
- Profit of energy companies; and,
- Decrease in property values.

4.4 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.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Kilmorack Community Council** objected to the application due to impacts on unclassified single-track roads, road safety, lack of meaningful pre-application

consultation, disruption to the community, drainage, site access, cumulative effects, site formation levels which could have been lowered, and incomplete protected species plans for badger and bats.

5.2 **Access Officer** does not object and has no specific comments to make.

5.3 **Contaminated Land Officer** does not object to the application as there are no known potential contaminated land issues.

5.4 **Development Plans Team** does not object to the application and considers that overall the development conforms with the approved development plan, subject to appropriate mitigation being secured. Developer contributions may be required.

5.5 **Ecology Officer** does not object to the application and following receipt of further clarification, confirms biodiversity enhancement will be achieved. Conditions are advised to secure a Habitat Management Plan, monitoring, data, a Construction Environmental Management Plan, Environmental Clerk of Works, and pre-construction survey.

5.6 **Environmental Health Officer** does not object to the application subject to conditions being attached to the consent, relating to construction and operational noise, dust, and private water supplies.

5.7 **Flood Risk Management** does not object to the application subject to a condition requiring a finalised surface water drainage design.

5.8 **Forestry Officer** does not object to the application subject to conditions requiring a tree protection plan and a detailed tree planting plan to be accompanied with a maintenance programme. Comparison of the proposed plans with scaled aerial photography shows little adverse impact on existing trees.

5.9 **Historic Environment Team** does not object to the application and recommended a condition relating to the site clearance works being carried out under archaeological supervision.

5.10 **Transport Planning** does not object to the application but made recommendations and requested further information. They require a condition to control routing via Wester Balblair, advanced public road improvements and demonstration of the control of this land to deliver these road improvements, site access details, a wear and tear agreement, a Construction Traffic Management Plan, and a detailed Abnormal Indivisible Load (AIL) Route Assessment.

5.11 **Historic Environment Scotland (HES)** does not object to the application. HES has assessed potential impacts on Scheduled Monuments of Coff House, fort SW of (SM3195) and Kiltarlity Old Parish Church (SM5570), and has no specific comments to make.

5.12 **NatureScot** was consulted but did not provide a response.

5.13 **Scottish Water** does not object to the application and provided advice on surface water drainage and noted that the site is not within a Drinking Water Protected Area.

5.14 **SEPA** confirmed that the application falls below the threshold to provide site specific advice.

5.15 **Transport Scotland** does not object to the application, subject to conditions relating to abnormal loads, and managing construction traffic.

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 POLICY 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) Operational Impacts (including Noise)
e) Siting, Layout and Design Landscape and Visual Impacts
f) Built and Cultural Heritage
g) Water Environment
h) Natural Heritage
i) Biodiversity
j) Roads, Transport and Wider Access

k) Economic Impacts

l) 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 Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR) at section 1.2 advises that the four Affric/Beauly Hydro Electric 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 Impact

8.7 Some unavoidable intermittent impacts are to be expected during construction works from construction traffic and AIL delivery, noise, and dust. Such impacts are expected intermittently through the estimated 18 months of construction. 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 9 of the Environmental Appraisal 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 are to be secured by condition.

8.8 The Council's Environmental Health Service has highlighted potential disturbance to local residents in respect of construction noise and vibration. Accordingly, a noise assessment has been undertaken which confirms that the predicted construction noise level does not exceed the daytime guidance levels in BS5228. The construction vibration assessment indicates that any vibration is unlikely to impact on the nearest sensitive properties. Furthermore, a Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) will be produced by the principal contractor once appointed which is to be conditioned as part of the CEMP. That plan is to include any measures to minimise any cumulative effects, should the construction occur at the same time as the nearby proposed BESS facility

8.9 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 and AIL delivery avoiding school travel times and identified community events.

8.10 Should the development be granted consent 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.

8.11 The EHO advises that generally, people are more tolerant of construction noise during typical working hours between 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. That said, owing to the concerns raised by the Community Council, through the representations received, and the cumulative impact this proposal would have with other recent and ongoing transmission infrastructure projects in the area, an updated informative is recommended by the planning case officer to further limit the proposed construction hours to 8am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays, with no Sunday or Bank Holiday working.

Note that an 8am start time on Saturdays is to be subject to prior agreement with the Community Liaison Group and should their agreement not be forthcoming, a 9am start time on Saturdays shall apply.

Operational Impact (including Noise)

8.12 Whilst the site is in a semi-rural area, the proposed site is located in proximity to individual scattered residential properties, with the closest noise sensitive receptors being 122m south of the proposed substation. There are additional isolated more distant dwellings along Broallan Road to the northeast and northwest of the site, and along the A831 southeast, south and southwest. The EAR includes an assessment on the operational noise from the proposed development. The EHO states that the assessment has been undertaken in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 Method for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound. The outcome of the BS4142 assessment is that the predicted noise Rating level from the proposed development is below the existing background noise level. Furthermore, that the cumulative assessment indicates that predicted noise rating level from both the proposed development and the nearby BESS will also remain below existing background noise levels. In view of this, the noise assessment concludes that the operational noise will have a low impact, and no specific mitigation measures are required. Therefore, as advised by the EHO, a condition is included specifying the permitted operational noise level.

8.13 During the operational period of the development, routine maintenance is expected on an infrequent basis and would take place every 3 months.

8.14 Representations also raised concerns regarding potential Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMFs) emissions during the substation's operation and related health impacts. Magnetic field levels at the boundary of a substation are typically present, but this decreases very quickly as receptors move away. The EMFs close to the sites tend to be dictated by the overhead lines and cables entering the installation, not the equipment within the site, with exposure being greatest directly above and below cables. The UK guidelines are set by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and have been adopted by the Government. These standards must be met by all transmission network operators to ensure health and safety is maintained and are regulated by the Health and Safety Executive and not through the planning system.

Siting, Layout and Design Landscape and Visual Impacts

8.15 The location of the proposal is based on a requirement to be connected both to the Kilmorack power station and the existing 132kV overhead lines, so proximity to both of these is desirable. In situ replacement of the existing dam's substation was discounted owing to modern equipment and health and safety standards dictating

the need for more space as well as the challenge of keeping the hydroelectric power stations connected during the project's construction timeline.

8.16 The applicant therefore undertook a site selection process with five potential site options considered within 1km of the existing dam. More distant sites were discounted owing to resultant cable length energy losses. Of the initial five options considered, three sites south the A831 were not taken forward owing to woodland losses and potential cabling impacts on an adjacent cemetery. Of the two sites north of this road, one included siting the substation slightly further uphill to the north, with this site being discounted as it would have impeded other underground cabling proposals in this area. The other site, which was the initially preferred site, was further south on open agricultural land west of Kilmorack Gallery.

8.17 However, following discussions with the landowner and wider stakeholders from the community, and taking account of pre-application advice from the Council, the initially identified preferred site was not considered acceptable and subsequently discounted. The application site now proposed is however at a midpoint between these two northern options, part way up the hillside above Kilmorack, close to the minor road to Broallan, Torgormack and Drumindorsair, and partially screened from the road by the escarpment ridge and a belt of deciduous woodland.

8.18 The layout and design of the proposal has specifically considered the potential impacts on sensitive receptors and features of the surrounding environment. The design process has sought to minimise the potential permanent effects on landscape, visual, and noise receptors. Noteworthy key design considerations and changes made are as follows:

- existing woodland to west has been retained to screen development; the design has been moved to the edge of the adjacent woodland to enable tree protection. The woodland is currently within an AWI designation, but some of this area is degraded and is representative of plantation. It can therefore be considered of less ecological importance than the ancient woodland;
- The CSE has been reduced in size and situation and is optimised to minimise any woodland loss;
- UGCs have changed orientation from the west to east path, to avoid tree loss and follow the existing dam's eastern access road;
- The substation's access track follows an existing agricultural track / field boundary to reduce impact to agricultural holding and is proposed to be an unfinished surface, departing applicant standards, following local feedback and reconsideration; and,
- Substation equipment is housed within a building to reduce the land take requirements, lessen the visual impact (with a dull mid green finish to help

blend into the adjacent woodland taking account of local feedback), and to reduce any operational noise impacts.

8.19 The Community Council have questioned the proposed site levels with the southern part of the substation's platform requiring a raised embankment. The proposed substation level is at 77m AOD, with the southern area of the site being raised by some 6m above the existing ground level of 71m AOD. A similar sized raised embankment is also required for the proposed SUDS basin located to the south. The formation level will also require a degree of up to 4m of cutting into the western edge of the site where this woodland's ground level rises to around circa 85m AOD, whilst retaining woodland and associated root protection areas. This cut and fill process will help towards achieving a balanced cut and fill. Should levels have been reduced further, this would require retaining walls which are not being proposed. Areas of new mixed woodland planting are however proposed along the base of the embankment, with mixed woodland also proposed around the modified ground levels surrounding the SUDS basin.

8.20 During construction the temporary compound area is also intended to be raised to achieve a level working area. This area would however require to be reinstated to existing ground conditions and site levels, as required under permitted development rights. At the north end of the site, a mixed native hedgerow is also proposed along the roadside to reduce views into the site and provide a degree of linear habitat connectivity. The delivery and finalisation of the outline landscape and ecology mitigation plan (EA Figure 4.4) is proposed to be secured by conditioned.

8.21 The applicant has assessed the landscape and visual effects of the proposal. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) EA Figure 4.1 indicates that the bare earth visibility of the 11.5m high substation building built at a level of 77m AOD would be mostly experienced to the east, west and south, with northern areas of visibility being evident above the immediate settled area in and around Broallan.

8.22 Effects on landscape character are expected to be most acute during construction, but with the establishment of planting impacts are reported to be moderately adverse in the longer term. For the host Open Farmed Slopes LCT the proposal would be prominent at a very local level, although it would not affect the perception of the landform or disturb the outward looking character of the landscape or available expansive views as shown at VP5 - next to the unnamed road to the north of the site. The other SSEN proposals to underground the OHL into Beauly substation across this area would also help to offset to a degree the intrusion caused. Overall, a minor to moderate adverse effect, falling to minor over time as mitigation planting develops is predicted in the applicant's EA. This is not disputed.

8.23 In terms of visual effects, eight representative receptor viewpoints (VPs) have been assessed. These relate to residential and transport receptors in the 3km

study area. When accounting for intervening woodland and vegetation, the development is predicted to be visible from:

- the east: VP1 on the Western edge of Balblair;
- the south: VP3 at the A831 intersection with local road; and
- the north: VP5 next to the unnamed road to the north of the site; and VP7 on Drumindorsair road.

8.24 For residents within Wester Balblair to the east, there would be no view of the proposed development, because of screening by other houses and by trees and shrubs in people's gardens. The view shown in VP1, taken from the road at the edge of the village is representative of the view that will be available from the gable end of the commercial property at the end of the village, and from a small number of houses immediately behind it. From here visibility is predicted to be at worst a minor to moderate adverse effect for the outlook from the western edge of the village, and negligible for the village as a whole. This is not disputed, with potential for the upper areas of the proposed substation and control building being visible but backdropped by woodland.

8.25 For receptors further to the west and southwest, at Kilmorack the site is well screened by mature woodland (as evident in VPs 2 and 4). One individual property (Teafrish) just east of the site would however have a clearer view, albeit partly screened by the edge of the hillside immediately below the site, with impacts being reduced through proposed woodland planting. Effects post construction are not significant with the principal outlook from this property being in the opposite direction.

8.26 For the distant hamlets of Torgormack, Drumindorsair, Broallan and Ruisarie, the proposal would not be visually prominent. As per VP7, it is likely that from where the site is visible, only the upper parts of the development would be seen, backdropped against landform and woodland, as a small element in a panoramic view. Closer into the site, the effect for the property at Platchaig, a short distance from the site entrance may be major to moderately adverse; albeit that this private property has extensive mature garden ground trees and vegetation which will help filter views.

8.27 Transport receptors affected are mainly users of the A831 and the road from Kiltarlity via Black Bridge represented by VP3, which is taken at this junction at a level of around 35m AOD, so 42m below the proposed substation platform level. From the A831 the proposal would be visible to westbound travellers over approximately 1.5km from the bend in the road on the edge of Wester Balblair to Kilmorack Gallery. Over most of this length, it would be partly screened by the rising foreground and backdropped by the mature trees to the west.

8.28 Eastbound, visibility would be visible once level with the site and side on to the direction of travel over a short distance. Overall, for users of this section of the network a moderate adverse effect is predicted, which is not disputed while impacts will be lessened by the decision to orientate the substation buildings generally north to south so that the shorter gable end fronts the road. The intervening landform helps to screen part of the proposal, but it will appear somewhat modular in nature and breaking the skyline. The location tight to the adjacent woodland, however, helps to limit this impact, as does the site configuration to locate the higher GIS building to the north with the building heights stepping up away from the receptor.

8.29 Planning officers have also entered into dialogue with the applicant to seek the re-introduction of a tree shelterbelt along the southern field boundary at the escarpment ridgeline, which would further filter visibility and improve the general amenity of the wider area. The applicant has agreed to the principle of this proposal, the delivery of which shall be explored whilst finalising the landscape management plan for the site.

8.30 Elsewhere, visibility across the local road network is localised and given the character of the hillside landscape being interspersed by woodland bocks, effects would be at worst minor in nature.

8.31 There is also recognition in the applicant's EAR of the potential for sequential cumulative landscape and visual effects to be experienced for users of the A831, particularly westbound, which has been heavily referred to through representations on this application. This position is understood, with this area becoming more influenced by energy development. Recent decisions to maximise screening of the Beauly substation's roadside frontage through the introduction of stone walling and more landscape planting will help to limit its influence; the design of this proposal is also considered to be sympathetic to the landscape and works with the surrounding woodland to ensure its influence is also kept to a minimum, with the proposal being relatively well contained within the wider landscape. The greater effects of the Fanellan substation application are currently being appraised and that application will be reported to this Committee later this year, with the landscape and visual effects of this Kilmorack substation found to be within acceptable limits.

Built and Cultural Heritage

8.32 The applicant's EAR includes a cultural heritage appraisal. There are no designated heritage assets within the site and for those in the wider study area, the proposals have been assessed with setting impacts being at worst minor adverse in nature, which is not considered material, or sufficient to warrant any concern. This assessment includes consideration of all listed buildings at

Kilmorack and Kiltarlity to the south and southwest and scheduled monuments as well as the more distant Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape. Both the Council's Historic Environment Team and Historic Environment Scotland have similarly raised no concerns regarding the proposal subject to a condition being applied requiring works to be undertaken under an archaeology watching brief given the potential for buried features or finds at this location.

Water Environment

8.33 The proposed site is located within the catchment of the River Beauly which is some 340m south of the proposed development site and meanders to the Beauly Firth located 7km northeast. The works proposed to be undertaken under Permitted Development rights are located 15m from the north of the banks of the River Beauly. All of the proposed works would be located 340m southeast of a tributary of the River Beauly, Allt nan Tunnag, which is made up of several field drains that drain southwest to the confluence of the Beauly.

8.34 SEPA's Flood Mapping indicates the works associated with permitted development are to be in an area at 'high' risk of river flooding due to proximity to the River Beauly, as well as being classed as 'high' risk of surface water flooding. Meanwhile, the works associated with the proposed development that require planning permission are not located in areas identified to be at risk of river flooding, or surface water flooding. The Flood Risk Management Team are also content that the flood risk to the development site itself is low.

8.35 The site is to be drained via a sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) with an infiltration basin located to the south. A swale will also be located to the north of the proposal, to collect and treat surface water run-off from the permanent access track. The application includes a Drainage Impact Assessment and the Council's Flood Risk Management Team are satisfied that the drainage will attenuate the 1 in 200-year plus climate change storm event. The site's drainage design is also proposed to be controlled by condition, with further details of the proposed discharge/dispersal system from the SUDS basin overflow to demonstrate that it will mimic the existing pre-development surface water runoff patterns.

8.36 In terms of pollution prevention, Environmental Health and SEPA have not raised any concerns with no private water supplies expected to be affected. The proposed transformer will be located within a constructed bund. The site has the potential to be hydrologically connected to a number of downstream designated sites, with groundwater flowing towards the River Beauly which is managed by the Beauly District Fishery Board for the conservation of salmon and sea trout. As per the EA's Chapter 7 Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils, owing to the site's separation of over 2km from the River Beauly and with the introduction of best practice measures set out within the Construction Environmental Management Plan, no significant effects on the water environment are likely to

arise. Similarly, no Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs) are likely to affected, with those potential habitats located near the river reported in the EA to be surface and rainwater fed.

Natural Heritage

8.37 EA Chapter 5 Ecology and Nature Conservation and the accompanying Appendices include assessments of the proposal's likely impacts on designated sites, protected species and birds, and habitats.

8.38 No statutory sites of international, national or local importance are within 2km of the site and all impacts on designates sited have been scoped out of assessment. This approach is not disputed with the site being well located from a designation perspective.

Protected Species

8.39 Appropriate protected species surveys were undertaken in 2022 and 2023 with aerial trees surveys in 2024, which identified habitats suitable for supporting bats, red squirrel, badger, otter, pine marten and breeding birds. Post survey, species identified which are likely to be affected include bats with the proposal resulting in the loss of a scattering of trees, with further survey effort being required to identify roosting potential pre-felling, and licence requirements from NatureScot. Similarly, this provision is to extend to all UGC works; although no tree felling is required for cabling, trees within 15m require to be re-surveyed for potential.

8.40 The proposal will also remove habitat which has the potential to support badgers, including areas where setts are present and a development licence from NatureScot will be required, with a badger Species Protection Plan (SPP) being proposed. 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.

8.41 In terms of breeding birds, a total of 21 species were recorded during the surveys, mainly comprising small numbers of common and widespread species typical of farmland and woodland/ scrub habitats. No breeding activity was recorded. Desk based records indicate that the project will result in no loss of nesting habitat and negligible risk of disturbance. As such, impacts upon these species are not anticipated to occur.

8.42 Finalised SPPs should be secured by condition, with the appointment of an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) to oversee construction, while habitat

management should also include additional mitigation and enhancements. Overall, impacts on protected species can be appropriately managed.

Habitat and Woodland

8.43 The site is dominated by agricultural modified grassland and cropland with a small area of broadleaved woodland on the western edge of the site. The site is adjacent to a woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). The AWI lists the woodland as being within the footprint of the development, however the field surveys verified that much of the area within the site has degraded to only contain grassland with scattered scrub, which should no longer be considered ancient woodland. The applicant states in the EAR that in the north of the site, scattered trees and a very small area of ancient woodland are to be cleared as a result of the proposed development. The main footprint of the proposed development avoids any clearance of the adjacent ancient woodland as do the permitted development works, other than the CSE compound, which will be micro-sited to ensure no damage to the roots of the retained woodland. Despite the presence on site of ancient woodland, and proximity of the proposed development site to areas of ancient woodland, the applicant has stated in the EAR that this habitat will not be impacted by the proposed development.

8.44 The application includes an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (EA Appneix 5.3). This identifies that there will be tree losses equating to 5 individual trees (1 category A (T20 – 5m high Rowan), 1 category B and 3 category C), plus the removal of 1 group of cat C trees of low quality. This equated to 75% of trees surveyed in the vicinity of the site being retained. The Council's Forestry Officer has no objection with the landscaping proposals for the site proposing substantially greater areas for woodland planting (EAR Figure 4.5).

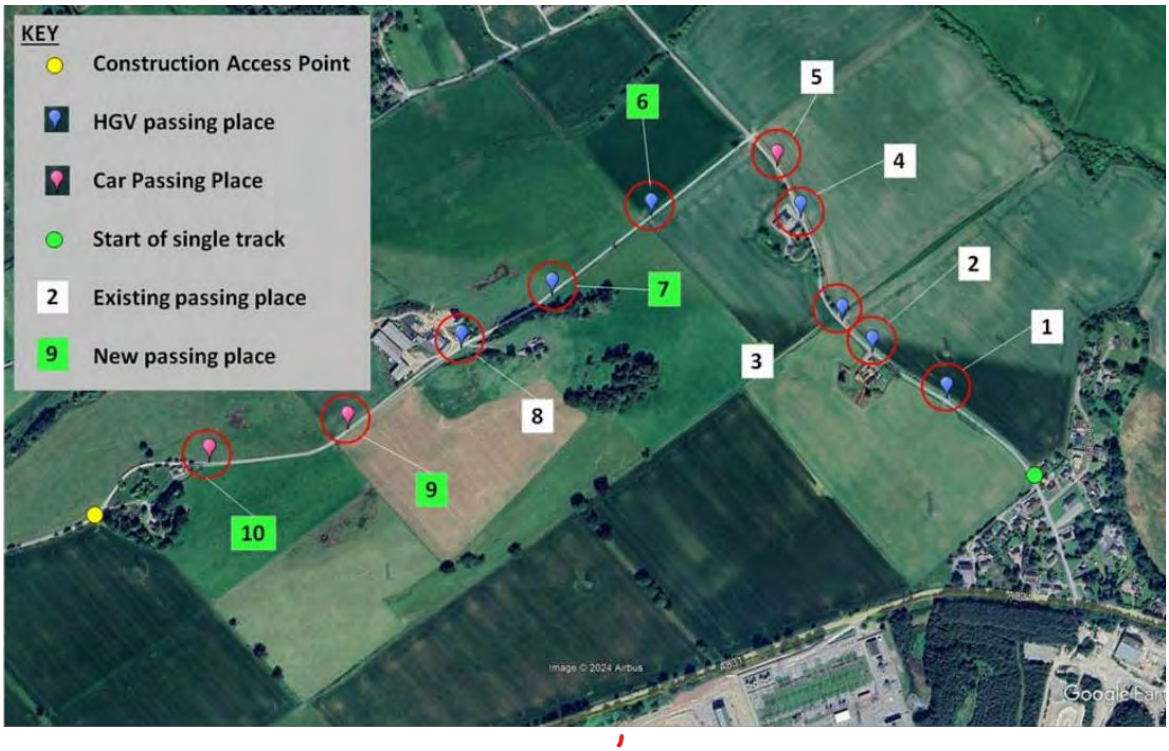
Biodiversity Enhancement

8.45 The applicant has provided a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (EA Appendix 5.2) that followed the SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Net Gain Toolkit User Guide and the SSEN Transmission Assessment Methodology and Associated Guidance which uses habitat as a proxy to determine biodiversity impacts. The assessment confirms that the biodiversity baseline value for the proposed development is 5.12 Biodiversity Units (BU). Based on the assumptions made with respect to habitat reinstatement/enhancement and the landscape design, the post construction BU value is predicted to be 8.03 BU, which represents a 66% increase. Measures to enhance the site include nature networks, linking to and strengthen habitat connectivity: The area of woodland enhancement from poor condition to moderate is ecologically connected to the larger adjacent woodland block. Therefore, the enhancements increase the quality of the existing woodland. The creation of other neutral and other upland acid grassland increases the quality of the habitat within the site and provides a hotspot of high distinctiveness habitat within the wider

landscape which is dominated by intensively managed and low distinctiveness agricultural habitats. The Council's Ecology Team are content with these proposals providing the implementation of the proposed plan is conditioned, will ensure the site is left in a better condition than before the development takes place. There is no requirement for any further offsite measures.

Roads, Transport and Wider Access

8.46 The applicant's Transport Statement anticipates that construction works will take between 12 and 18 months, with the peak of construction traffic in months 3 and 5 with an anticipated peak of 55 inbound trips per day to undertake the earthworks to form the platform level. To facilitate this access is proposed to and from Wester Balblair via U1480 Altyre Road from Wester Balblair and the U1492 Craigscorrie Road to the north of the site. Given the route's substandard rural nature, the applicant is proposing a widening scheme on this road for a 1.1km length to create a continuous running width of at least 3.5m. Between Wester Balblair and the site access, the minor roads are single-track, with vehicles only able to pass at passing places. There are currently six passing places on the minor roads, five of which would be improved. Temporary passing places would be provided at four locations. When complete, there will be 7 passing places where HGVs can pass and a further 3 passing places where cars can pass each other as shown below:



8.47 There is currently a derestricted 60mph speed limit on the minor roads between Wester Balblair and the site, however speed surveys have indicated traffic speeds of typically below 30mph. It is proposed to impose a contractor speed limit of 20 mph on these minor roads. The contractor speed limit will be reinforced by

construction traffic speed limit signs along the length of the route. During the winter months, it may be necessary to grit the minor road network, particularly on the section with a 14% gradient in the vicinity of Altyre. In recognition of the substandard visibility at the junction with the A831 at Kilmorack further to the west, it is proposed that all construction traffic will be routed to and from Wester Balblair, with the site's operational traffic will utilise the same route as that proposed for construction traffic, which is proposed to be secured by condition.

8.48 In addition to regular construction traffic, an abnormal load feasibility report has also been provided with the application. This identifies the preferred abnormal loads delivery route to the site for the transport of a 45MVA 132/11kV 60.5te transformer, the largest component that will be delivered. The identified routing is as follows, avoiding the Lovat Bridge (as advised by Transport Planning):

- Inverness (port of delivery)
- LH turn from Inverness Harbour Abnormal Loads Exit onto Longman Drive
- RH turn at A9 Longman Roundabout from Longman Drive onto A9 (using bus lane)
- LH turn at A9 Tore Roundabout onto A835
- LH turn from A835 onto B9169
- Straight on at B9169/A832 junction remaining on B9169
- LH turn from B9169 onto A862
- RH turn from A862 onto A831
- RH turn from A831 onto the minor road through Wester Balblair, which will be followed to the site.

8.49 During the operational period of the development, routine maintenance is expected on an infrequent basis and would take place every 3 months.

8.50 The rural road network from which the site will be accessed includes single track roads, with steep gradients, tight bends, and limited and small passing places, and can be subject to icy conditions in winter. It is also used for recreational purposes by walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, as well as access for local residents of all ages. Transport Planning has accordingly requested additional information to enable the full and proper assessment of the capacity of the existing roads, in particular in relation to construction traffic.

8.51 This route is single track with limited formal passing places, with the passing places that do exist being generally of insufficient size for large commercial vehicles to use. Improvements are therefore clearly needed to safely accommodate the proposed construction and ongoing operational access needs. A review of the location and form of existing formal passing places along the route, including their intervisibility, together with a review of the existing surfaced carriageway widths and conditions has been carried out. A condition is to be included to finalise the schedule of advanced public road improvement and secure

their implementation. Transport Planning have advised that a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) should also be in secured by condition as well as a wear and tear agreement under S96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

8.52 The CTMP is required to again help control the timing and routes of construction traffic and thus support the safe and effective interactions on the roads between construction traffic and other general road users and minimise the impact on the amenity and safety of local residents. This can be secured by condition.

8.53 The construction access junction into the site from the public road is to utilise an existing field gate access further to the east. A condition is required to ensure that this access is delivered to an appropriate standard to be used for construction, with the junction to be surfaced and gate access to be set back from the public road, with this access to be removed and the ground reinstated. Thereafter, post construction, the permanent site access would revert to utilising the CSE compound access which has consent via separate planning permission 22/03394/FUL.

8.54 It is considered that the measures requested by Transport Planning are sufficient to mitigate concerns expressed regarding the standard of the road network, and the adequacy of the road to accommodate both construction and operational traffic in a safe manner. There will however 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.

Economic Impacts

8.55 NPF4 Policy 11, in particular paragraph c), notes that development proposals should only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities. Additionally, NPF4 Policy 25 provides support for development that is consistent with local economic priorities and where they contribute to local and/or regional community wealth building strategies. A condition is attached requiring the submission of a Local Employment Scheme prior to the start of works to maximise the socio-economic benefits of the proposed development.

8.56 The development of grid infrastructure has been identified as a national priority together with investment in renewable energy. The proposed development, along with the associated schemes noted, 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 development is required to facilitate the continued supply of renewable energy to the national grid which will allow the export of electricity generated to consumers. The relationship of the development to the economic and social benefits of renewable energy developments is therefore relevant, in a positive way.

8.57 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.

8.58 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.

Other Material Considerations

8.59 The application was screened for EIA development with the screening concluding that the proposal is not EIA. Given that construction of each of the substation replacements associated with the West of Beauly Asset Replacement Project can be carried out on an individual basis, it is not considered reasonable to conclude that the individual schemes are ‘salami slicing’ a larger EIA development.

Non-material Considerations

8.60 The following matters were raised in objection to the proposal but are not material to the assessment and have not been considered as part of this assessment:

- Potential sale of either SSE renewables or SSE networks as individual companies;
- Output of the dams decreased under Return of Capital (ROC) scheme;
- Lack of need for renewable energy;
- Poorly indexed and searchable documentation on the ePlanning casefile;
- Condition compliance concerns;
- Profit of energy companies; and,

- Decrease in property values.

Matters to be secured by Legal Agreement / Upfront Payment

8.61 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 contribition 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 that sustain and 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, substations 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 Whilst objections have been raised through representations and from the host community council, other consultees responding to this application have not raised any fundamental objections subject to conditions. Although this infrastructure comes as an unwelcome addition to an area which has already accommodated substantial amount of renewable energy infrastructure, this proposal is necessary for the continued operation of the existing hydroelectric scheme. Care has been taken to appropriately site and design this substation to address the environmental effects of this development. The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission and the development demonstrably delivers onsite biodiversity and woodland enhancement.

9.4 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and

policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Resource: Not applicable

10.2 Legal: 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 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, 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 Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR).

(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 EAR, 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 micrositing; 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 appropriately timed pre-construction surveys including for, but not limited to, badger, breeding birds, otter, red squirrel, roosting bats, water vole, reptiles and amphibians and any other identified species as appropriate. The Plans shall provide mitigation measures to protect these species and 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 and Vibration 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. The assessment shall include but is not limited to:

   i. a description of the most significant noise sources in terms of equipment, processes, and phases of construction;
   ii. the proposed working hours and the estimated duration of the works for each phase, with no site construction or other site works taking place before 0900 on Saturdays without the prior written agreement of the Community Liaison Group;
   iii. a detailed plan showing the location of noise sources and noise sensitive premises;
   iv. a description of mitigation methods and best practical means that will be implemented to reduce/minimise construction

noise/vibration with any divergence from the above code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites justified.

Thereafter, the development shall proceed in accordance with the approved Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan.

(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 Council.

Reason: to ensure that all construction operations are carried out in a manner that minimises their impact on road safety, amenity and the environment, and that the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Appraisal 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 EAR Figure 4.4: 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 explore additional tree planting to the south of the development to filter views from the A831, and 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. **Tree Protection**

No development, site excavation or groundwork shall commence until a Tree Protection Plan in accordance with BS 5837:2012 (Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Council. Thereafter, the Tree Protection Plan shall be implemented as approved in full throughout the construction and post construction reinstatement period unless otherwise approved by the Council.

Reason: to ensure the retention of retained trees during construction and thereafter.

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 routeing 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) details of a contingency plan prepared by the abnormal load haulier. The plan shall be adopted only after consultation and agreement with the Police and the respective roads authorities which shall include measures to deal with any haulage incidents that may result in public roads becoming temporarily closed or restricted;

(k) provisions for emergency vehicle access;

(l) a procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period;

(m) measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;

(n) 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;

(o) 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;

(p) An up to date review of road accidents; and,

(q) identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred.

(2) 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. an engineering assessment of the public road network up to the site entrance with proposals for widening the road to a minimum of 3.5 metres (including a detailed design of how the road will be widened) and the provision of passing places for use by HGV;
c. full details including a detailed layout drawing of the upgrades required to the site access junctions with the U1335 and the A831;
d. A programme for the delivery of the proposals for the public road mitigation including road widening and strengthening, provision of passing places, upgrades of the site access junctions and provision of the footway as set out in Part (1) above;

(2) All works on the public road network shall comply with the Council's 'Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments';

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 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.

The details in the approved report shall thereafter be implemented in full prior the first delivery of an abnormal load.

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

14. **Community Liaison Group**

(1) No development shall commence until a West of Beauly 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.

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.

(2) Thereafter, the liaison group shall be maintained until the West of Beauly 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**

No development shall commence until full details of all surface water drainage provision within the application site (which shall accord with the Drainage Strategy set out in Appendix 7.2 of the Environmental Appraisal Report) have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. Thereafter, only the approved details shall be implemented, and all surface water drainage provision shall be completed prior to the first occupation of any of the development.

Reason: to enure 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.

(3) Within 21 days from receipt of a written request of the Council following a complaint alleging noise disturbance at a noise sensitive location, the site operator shall, at its expense, employ an independent consultant to assess the level of noise in terms of compliance with consented noise limits. The site operator shall submit the report of the independent consultant's assessment for the approval of the Planning Authority within 2 months of receiving the written request.

(4) In the event that the noise level is found to exceed the prescribed noise limits, the assessment report shall include a Flare 206271/ZS02359 scheme of mitigation to be enacted, including timescales for implementation, to ensure compliance with consented noise limits following which, details of the proposed compliance monitoring shall be agreed in writing beforehand with the Council.

Reason: In the interests of residential and community amenity.

17. **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'.

18. **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.

INFORMATIVES

Accordance with Approved Plans and 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

Construction Hours and Noise-Generating Activities

You are advised that construction work associated with the approved development (incl. the loading/unloading of delivery vehicles, plant or other machinery), for which noise is audible at the boundary of the

application site, should not normally take place outwith the hours of 08:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00 and 13:00 on Saturdays or at any time on a Sunday or Bank Holiday in Scotland, as prescribed in Schedule 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 (as amended).

Note that an 08:00 start time on Saturdays is subject to prior agreement with the Community Liaison Group and should their agreement not be forthcoming, a 09:00 start time on Saturdays shall apply.

Work falling outwith these hours which gives rise to amenity concerns, or noise at any time which exceeds acceptable levels, may result in the service of a notice under Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 (as amended). Breaching a Section 60 notice constitutes an offence and is likely to result in court action.

If you wish formal consent to work at specific times or on specific days, you may apply to the Council's Environmental Health Officer under Section 61 of the 1974 Act. Any such application should be submitted after you have obtained your Building Warrant, if required, and will be considered on its merits. Any decision taken will reflect the nature of the development, the site's location and the proximity of noise sensitive premises. Please contact env.health@highland.gov.uk for more information.

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 Context Plan
	Plan 3 - Site Layout Plan
	Plan 4 - Site Layout with Aerial Mapping
	Plan 5 - GIS Substation Elevations
	Plan 6 - Control Building Elevations

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)

Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure: Government Response, UK Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero (2023)

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 sub-stations 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.

Date Saved: 14/12/23

Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central data\Projects\70102xxx\70102202 - Beauly Cluster - Kilmorack\05 GIS\MXD\EA Figures\Figure 1.2 – The Site.aprx

Drumindorsair Wood

Broallan

Sheneval

Craigscorrie

Torgormack Lodge

Track

Platchaig

Kilmorack Hall

Kilmorack House

New House

Teafrish

Balblair Wood

Mill Cottage

Power Station Dam

FB

Overflows

Pit (dis)

Quarry (Sand)

Black Bridge

Track

Drain

Iss

Sks

A831

84m

86m

48m

40m

37m

36m

34m

12m

91m

8m

N

Legend

- Red Line Boundary
- Kilmorack Power Station and Dam

0 100 200 m

Client: Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

Project: Kilmorack 132 kV Replacement Substation

Title: The Site – Location

Date: 14/12/2023 Scale: 1:5,000 @ A3

Drawn: VA Checked: IM Approved: BH

Drawing Number: BEAULY-CLUSTER-KILMORACK-WSP-020

Date Saved: 31/05/24

Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central data\Projects\70102xxx\70102202 - Beauly Cluster - Kilmorack\05 GIS\MXD\EA Figures\Figure 1.1 – The Proposed Development.aprx

CABLE SEALING END COMPOUND

TEMPORARY ACCESS TRACK

PROPOSED DRAINAGE

PERMANENT ACCESS TRACK

PROPOSED DRAINAGE

AIR INSULATED SWITCHGEAR (AIS) BUILDING

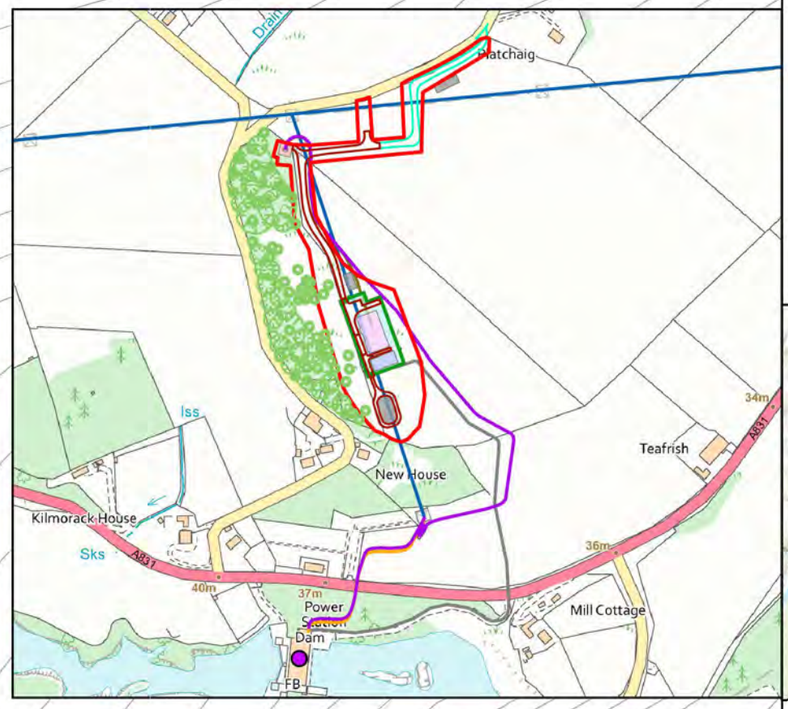
SUBSTATION PLATFORM

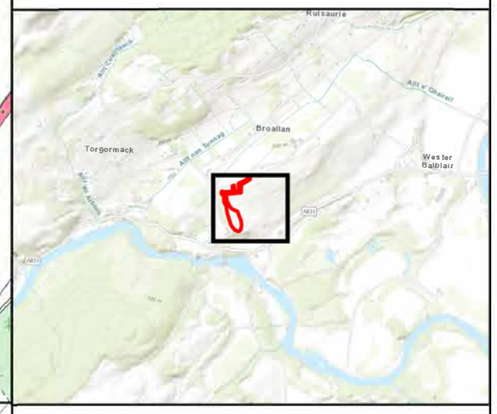
PALISADE FENCE

NEW CONTROL BUILDING

PROPOSED DRAINAGE

N





Legend

- Red Line Boundary
- Kilmorack Power Station and Dam

Proposed Development

- Substation Platform
- New Control Building
- Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) building
- Proposed Drainage
- Palisade Fence
- Permanent Access Track

Permitted Development Works

- Proposed 132kV Cable Route
- An underground cable (UGC) connection from the Proposed Development to the Kilmorack Power Station and Dam
- Temporary Access Track
- Existing 132 kV overhead lines (OHL)
- Temporary 132kV Cable Route
- Cable Sealing End Compound

Landscape

- Existing Vegetation

0 50 100 m

Client: Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

Project: Kilmorack 132 kV Replacement Substation

Title: The Proposed Development

Date: 31/05/2024 Scale: 2,000 @ A3

Drawn: NB Checked: AS Approved: BH

Drawing Number: BEAUTY-CLUSTER-KILMORACK-WSP-020

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING

NOTES

1. ALL LEVELS ARE IN METRES UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.
2. TREE LOCATIONS SHOWN ARE BASED ON TRACING LOCATIONS FROM AERIAL PHOTOS (NOT AN ARBORICULTURAL SURVEY).
3. THE PLANNING APPLICATION BOUNDARY/ SITE BOUNDARY IS UNDER REVIEW AT THE TIME OF DRAWING PRODUCTION.

LEGEND :

- EXISTING WOODED AREA (TREES TO BE PROTECTED THROUGHOUT CONSTRUCTION PHASE)
- SITE BOUNDARY
- PERMEABLE GRANULAR ACCESS TRACK
- ASPHALT ROAD
- ANCIENT WOODLAND BOUNDARY SHOWN IS TAKEN FROM FORESTRY COMMISSION OPEN DATA DATED 21/07/22

REFER TO DRAWING 8895-KIL-PLN-11-10-1-3 FOR CABLE DETAILS.

REFER TO DRAWING 8895-KIL-PLN-08-GA-2-4 FOR DRAINAGE DETAILS

- TOE DRAIN

REV.	BY	CHK'D	APP'D	DATE	DESCRIPTION
P17	WW	AD	TA	15/05/25	FOR REVIEW
P16	WW	AD	TA	06/05/25	FOR REVIEW
P15	WW	AD	TA	29/04/25	FOR REVIEW
P14	WW	AD	TA	28/04/25	FOR REVIEW
P13	WW	AD	TA	26/06/24	FOR REVIEW
P12	KW	AD	TA	07/06/24	FOR REVIEW
P11	KW	AD	TA	06/06/24	FOR REVIEW
P10	HT	AD	TA	17/04/24	FOR REVIEW
P09	HT	AD	TA	06/12/23	FOR REVIEW
P08	HT	TA	TA	24/11/23	FOR REVIEW
P07	HT	TA	TA	03/11/23	FOR REVIEW
P06	HT	AD	TA	06/10/23	FOR REVIEW
P05	HT	AD	TA	29/09/23	FOR REVIEW
P04	HT	AD	TA	13/09/23	FOR REVIEW
P03	HT	AD	TA	05/09/23	FOR REVIEW
P02	HT	AD	TA	04/08/23	FOR REVIEW
P01	HT	AD	TA	30/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN

CODE	DRAWING STATUS
S3	FOR REVIEW

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

BEAULY SUBSTATION CLUSTER

KILMORACK SUBSTATION GENERAL ARRANGEMENT

DRAWING. No.
8895-KIL-PLN-08-GA 1-5

DRAWN : HT	DESIGNED : AD	REVISION
SCALE : AS SHOWN	ORIGINAL SIZE : A1	P17

PROPOSED ACCESS GATE. TRANSFORMER TO BE DELIVERED FROM EASTERN APPROACH

TEMPORARY COMPOUND (AREA SHOWN INDICATIVELY) DESIGNED BY OTHERS

EXISTING OVERHEAD LINE. CABLES ARE TO BE RE-ROUTED UNDERGROUND TO THE CABLE-SEALING END PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION OF THE KILMORACK SUBSTATION

CABLE SEALING END COMPOUND DESIGNED BY OTHERS

JUNCTION ALIGNMENT SHOWN INDICATIVELY. LEVEL OF CABLE SEALING END COMPOUND TO BE CONFIRMED

PERMANENT ACCESS

PROPOSED DRAINAGE DITCH

POST AND WIRE FENCE

WOOD-POLE PLATFORM.

INDICATIVE DIVERSION OF EXISTING OVERHEAD LINE (TO BE DESIGNED BY OTHERS)

EXISTING NORTH-SOUTH RUN OF OVERHEAD LINE TO BE DIVERTED ABOVE GROUND TO AVOID PROPOSED SUBSTATION

ANCIENT WOODLAND

MATCHLINE A - A

PLAN
SCALE 1:500

10m 0 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m
SCALE 1:500

ACCESS STRIP EASEMENT TO BE PROVIDED ALONG TOE DRAIN FOR FUTURE MAINTENANACE

POST AND WIRE FENCE

PROPOSED ATTENUATION BASIN, SEE DRAWING : 8895-KIL-PLN-08-GA 2-5

OUTFALL TO BE CONCLUDED FOLLOWING DETAIL DESIGN. REFER TO DRAINAGE STRATEGY REPORT REFERENCE xx.

B - B
GA-3

PROPOSED SUBSTATION GRANULAR PLATFORM

TRANSFORMER

CONTROL BUILDING

43.61m

15.64m

11.13m

2m

CAR PARK

OVERHEAD CABLE WOOD POLE FOUNDATION TO BE REMOVED

"CHERRY PICKER" VEHICLE SHOWN FOR ILLUSTRATION

90.05m

NARROW TRACK (UNSUITABLE FOR LARGE HAULAGES)

A - A
GA-3

PROPOSED SUBSTATION ENTRANCE / EGRESS

MATCHLINE A - A

PLAN
SCALE 1:500

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING

NOTES

LEGEND :

PERMEABLE GRANULAR ACCESS TRACK

ASPHALT ROAD

REV.	BY	CHK'D	APP'D	DATE	DESCRIPTION
P12	WW	AD	TA	15/05/25	FOR REVIEW
P11	WW	AD	TA	06/05/25	FOR REVIEW
P10	WW	AD	TA	29/04/25	FOR REVIEW
P09	WW	AD	TA	28/04/25	FOR REVIEW
P08	WW	AD	TA	26/06/24	FOR REVIEW
P07	HT	AD	TA	18/04/24	FOR REVIEW
P06	HT	AD	TA	06/12/23	FOR REVIEW
P05	HT	AD	TA	24/11/23	FOR REVIEW
P04	HT	AD	TA	03/11/23	FOR REVIEW
P03	HT	AD	TA	04/08/23	FOR REVIEW
P02	HT	AD	TA	30/06/23	PRELIMINARY DESIGN
P01	HT	AD	TA	25/05/23	FIRST ISSUE

CODE	DRAWING STATUS
S3	FOR REVIEW

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

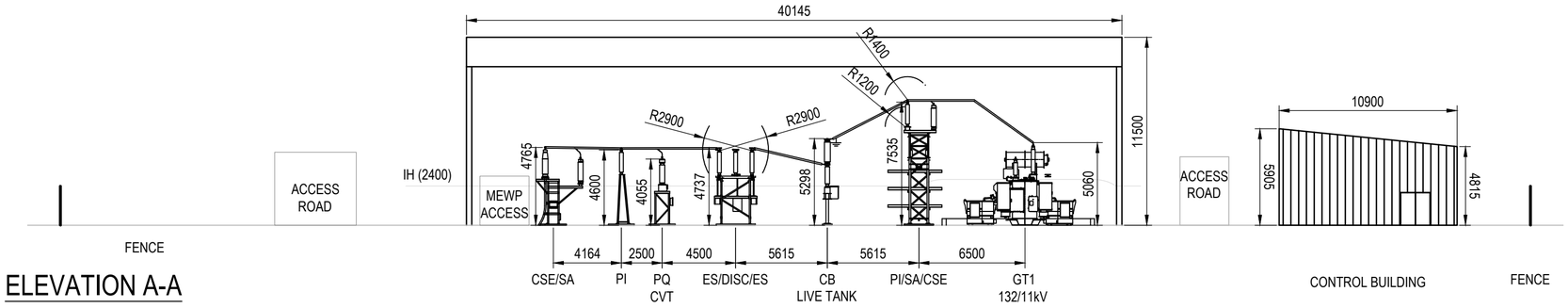
BEAULY CLUSTER

KILMORACK PROPOSED PLATFORM VISUALISATION

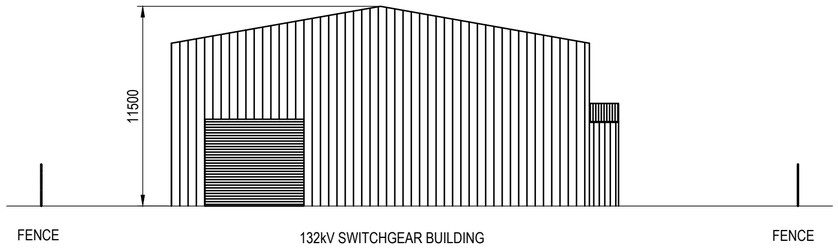
DRAWING. No.

8895-KIL-PLN-08-GA 5-5

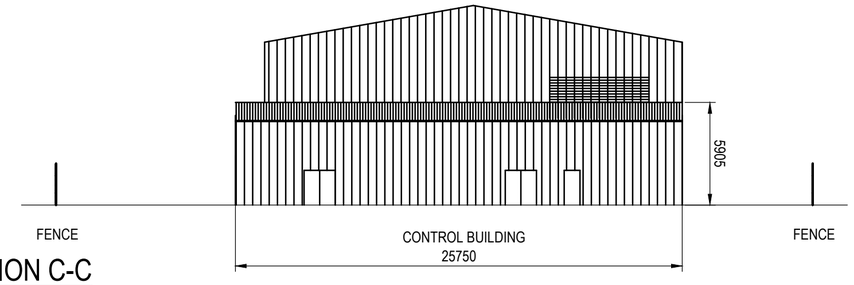
DRAWN : HT	DESIGNED : AD	REVISION
SCALE : 1:1000	ORIGINAL SIZE : A1	P12



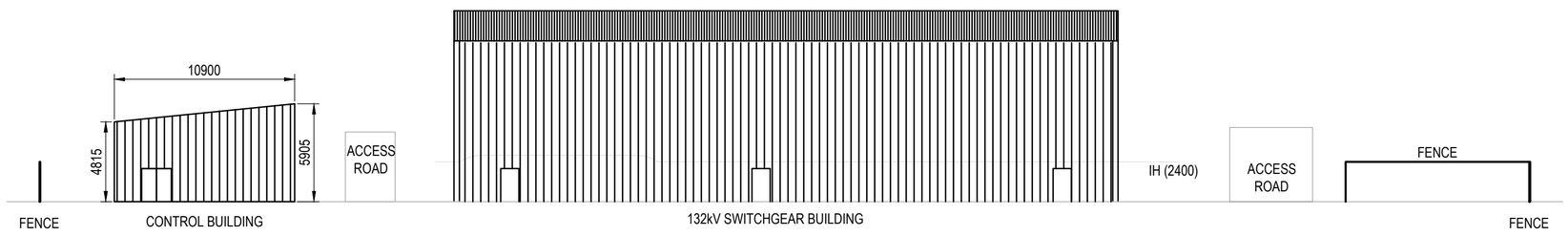
ELEVATION A-A



ELEVATION B-B



ELEVATION C-C



ELEVATION D-D

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			
		400kV	275kV	132kV	33kV
E	PHASE TO EARTH	2800	2100	1200	500
Ph	PHASE TO PHASE	3600	2400	1400	430
S	DESIGN CLEARANCE FOR SAFETY	5500	4800	3500	2900
SD	SAFETY DISTANCE	3100	2400	1400	800
Ds	WORKING & ACCESS CLEARANCE (VERTICAL)	5200	4500	3500	2900
Dsh	WORKING & ACCESS CLEARANCE (HORIZONTAL)	4600	3900	2900	2300
IH	INSULATION HEIGHT (PEDESTRIAN ACCESS)	2400	2400	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

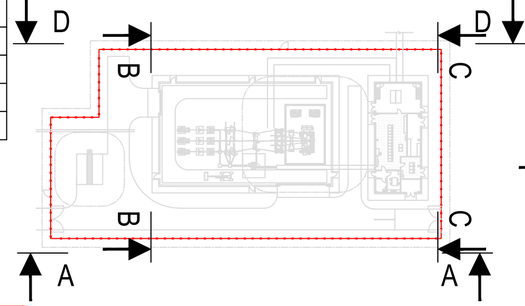
PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY
NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION

NOTES:-

1. PLEASE REFER TO PROPOSED SLD LAYOUT DRAWING No. LT449_KIOR_1117_0002 PROPOSED SLD
2. PROPOSED SITE FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY.
3. LAYOUT MAY BE REQUIRED TO BE AMENDED DEPENDENT ON FINAL SITE SELECTION.
4. ELECTRICAL LAYOUT SHOWN IS PURELY FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY.
5. 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.
6. ALL EQUIPMENT SHOWN TO BE CONSIDERED NEW.
11. 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
CT	CURRENT TRANSFORMER
CVT	CAPACITIVE VOLTAGE TRANSFORMER
SA	SURGE ARRESTER
CSE	CABLE SEALING END
MK	MARSHALLING KIOSK
PI	POST INSULATOR



SCALE AT 1:250

0m 6.25m 12.5m 18.75m 25m

Rev:	Drawn:	Approved:	Description:
1A	SA		FOR PLANNING
	Checked:	Date: 20.06.24	
Rev:	Drawn:	Approved:	Description:
00	MS	JC	APPROVED FOR ISSUE
	Checked: ZQ	Date: 31.01.24	

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

SSE Inveralmond House, 200 Dunkeld Road
Perth, PH1 3AQ, UK www.sse.com

Project: KILMORACK REPLACEMENT SUBSTATION

Project Number: LT449 **Location:** KILMORACK

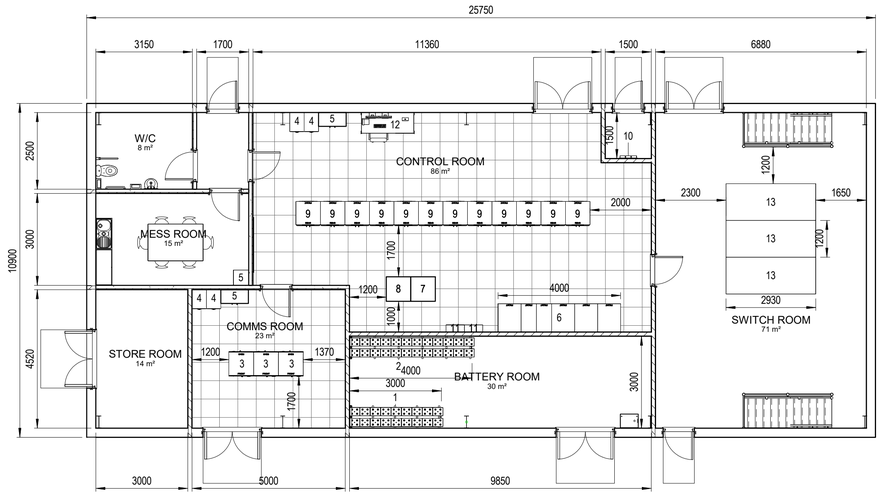
Title: KILMORACK 132/11kV REPLACEMENT SUBSTATION ELEVATIONS/ SECTIONS

Drawing Status: For Information	**Drawn:** MS
Scale: 1:250 @ A2	**Checked:** ZQ
Date: 31.01.24 OF FIRST ISSUE	**Approved:** JC

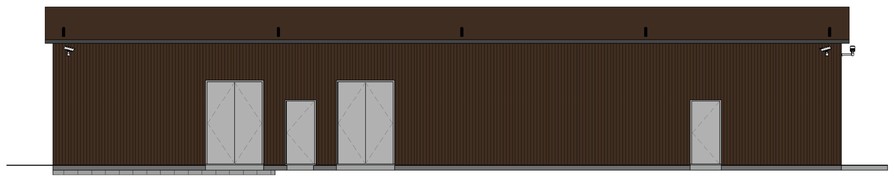
Drawing Number: LT449_KION_1104_0002 **Sheet No:** 01 **Revision No:** 1A

Date Plotted: 20.06.2024
File Name: LT449_KION_1104_0002.dwg

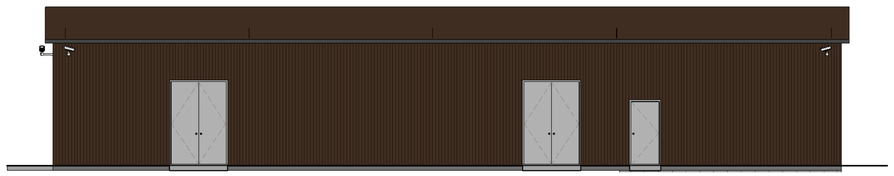
A1



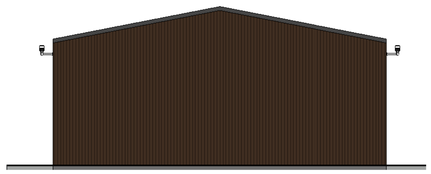
5 GROUND FLOOR LAYOUT
1 : 100



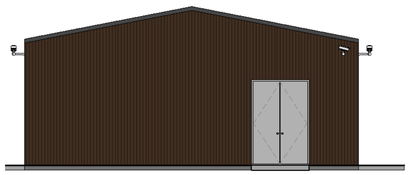
1 NORTH ELEVATION
1 : 100



3 SOUTH ELEVATION
1 : 100



2 EAST ELEVATION
1 : 100



4 WEST ELEVATION
1 : 100

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

FOR PLANNING

REV:	DATE:	DRWN:	CHKD:	APPD:	DESCRIPTION:
0G	25/06/24	SA			ELEVATION DRAWING CREATED FOR PLANNING
0F		LD			MODELLED IN ACCORDANCE TO AUTOCAD REV 0F
0E					
0D					
0C					
0B					
0A					

STATUS: PRELIMINARY DESIGN ONLY

CONTRACTOR:

INSERT CONTRACTOR LOGO HERE

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

PROJECT: STANDARDISED DESIGNS

PROJECT NUMBER: | LOCATION:

TITLE: 132kV CONTROL BUILDING ELEVATIONS

DRAWN BY: SA | ENG CHECK:

DESIGNER: SSENT | COORDINATION:

SCALE: 1 : 100 | APPROVED:

DATE OF FIRST ISSUE: 12/02/24 | SECURITY: INTERNAL

ORIGINATOR DRAWING NUMBER: 500_0805_0001_02 | SHEET No: 02 of 02

CLIENT DRAWING NUMBER: N/A | REV No: 0G

Autodesk Docs://STANDARDISED DESIGNS/500-0805-0001.rvt