Agenda Item	6.2	
Report No	PLS/46/25	

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 22 August 2025

Report Title: 24/03323/S37: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc

Land 680M NE of SSE Power Station, Invergarry

Report By:: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Replacement of 1.1km section of 132kV OHL between Quoich Power

Station and Quoich Tee Switching Station comprising six steel lattice towers, new substation platform, diverted track, associated works and

infrastructure.

Ward: 11 - Caol and Mallaig

Development category: National Development

Reason referred to Committee: Consultation on an application under the Electricity Act

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

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **RAISE NO OBJECTION** to the application as set out in section 10 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The Highland Council has been consulted by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit on an application made under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) for the construction and operation of a replacement 132kV overhead transmission line (OHL). The proposed development is required to serve Quoich Power Station and replace its existing grid connection which is approaching the end of its operational life. This application constitutes a national development as established in the National Planning Framework 4. For such applications the Council are a statutory consultee, with the application to be determined by Scottish Ministers.
- 1.2 The application is for a 1.1km section of 132kV overhead line (OHL) supported by 6 steel lattice towers, a new substation platform at Quoich Power Station measuring approximately 650m², permanent diversions of an existing access track to accommodate the extended platform, a temporary site compound, and removal of existing infrastructure. The application will maintain ongoing hydroelectric renewable energy generation at Quoich Power Station by replacing its grid connection to Quoich Tee Switching Station the wider electricity network.
- 1.3 The replacement steel lattice tower heights for the OHL would typically be in the region of approximately 25m to 34m varying based on ground profile and span lengths between towers. The proposed double circuit would have 3 phase wires all on the same side of the towers, plus a single earth wire on top. The arms on the other side will be left unused. These would replace the existing towers ranging in height between 22.91m and 26.29m with new towers at marginally increased heights ranging between 26.12m and 33.99m. The OHL towers have 3 phase conductors with 2 on one side and 1 on the other, plus 2 earth wires on the top.
- 1.4 At either end of the OHL there will be replacement short underground connections to the hydropower station and to the switching station. Such underground cable (UGC) elements are usually classed as Permitted Development under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. In this instance the applicant has incorporated these elements within the Section 37 application, for which deemed planning permission is sought under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).
- 1.5 Additional associated works include the construction of access tracks and temporary construction compounds, as well as the removal of the redundant section of OHL and ground reinstatement.
- 1.6 A 50m horizontal Limits of Deviation (LoD) for the proposed OHL alignment and temporary access track is sought, meaning the towers could be micro-sited up to 50m from its proposed location in the application. A 20% vertical LoD has also be applied for to increase or decrease the height of the OHL towers. This is to allow for further engineering analysis at the detail design stage.
- 1.7 Access will be taken via the existing access track which serves the Quoich Power Station and connects to the C1144 road. Part of this existing access will be replaced to enable a permanent track diversion due to the extended substation platform. Approximately 1.1km of temporary floating access tracks will be required to be installed. All temporary tracks would be removed upon completion of the Proposed

Development with land being reinstated to its former condition The C1144 road serves as an access to minor settlements in the west Highlands and provides access to tourist amenities in the area such as Loch Poulary.

- 1.8 The estimated construction period for the development is 7 months with working between 07.00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday, and 08.00 to 13.00 on a Saturday.
- 1.9 The applicant notes there will be one main compound required to facilitate construction works including office provision outwith the site further west along the C1144. This will be subject to a separate Town and Country Planning application and will be assessed on its own merits against relevant policy and guidance once submitted.
- 1.10 The applicant has utilised the Council's pre-application advice service (22/01684/PREMAJ) for the proposed development of a replacement 132kV switching station to sever the hydropower plant. Officers advised that the principle of these wider proposals could be broadly supported subject to further consideration of the peat, watercourse, habitat, landscape and visual impacts. The introduction of a replacement switching station in a new location is now not being pursued, with the applicant seeking to renew components and extend the existing Quoich Tee Switching Station which will require an upgraded access. This is subject to a separate planning application (24/01302/FUL) which is pending consideration.
- 1.11 The application has been screened out of requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The application is however supported by an Environmental Appraisal (EA), the scope of which was informed through stakeholder engagement and contains chapters regarding: Description of the Proposed Development; Consideration of Alternatives; Appraisal, Scope and Methodology; Landscape and Visual; Ecology and Ornithology; Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils; Cumulative Appraisal; and Schedule of Mitigation.
- 1.12 No variations have been made during the course of this application.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The proposed development is located adjacent to the southwest of the existing Quoich Tee Switching Station and to the north of Loch Poulary, approximately 20km west of Invergarry. Whilst the proposed OHL and associated infrastructure is located close to, but outwith, natural heritage designations including the West Inverness-shire Lochs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA) the extended red line boundary marginally expands into West Inverness-shire Lochs SSSI at the southwestern boundary. The site also intersects priority peatland and the extended red line boundary marginally expands into an area of Ancient Woodland habitat at the southwestern boundary. The site falls outwith all landscape designations, with visual receptors in the area being remote local residents and visitors using the C1144 Kinloch Hourn road, used by recreational users of the outdoors to access the surrounding hills.
- 2.2 The wider area is sparsely populated with there being limited properties in close proximity. Surrounding farms and dwellings are scattered across the surrounding locale with the closest minor settlement, Kingie, located approximately 700m

northwest of the existing switching station.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	N/A	24/01302/FUL - Formation of access track	Pending consideration
3.2	09.06.2025	22/04580/S37 - Skye Reinforcement Project - Construct and operate approximately 110 kilometres (km) of new double circuit steel structure 132 kV overhead transmission line and associated infrastructure	Consented by Scottish Ministers
3.3	07.11.2023	23/04886/SCRE - New access track to the existing Quoich Switching Station	EIA not required
3.4	26.10.2023	23/04190/SCRE - (Quoich overhead line replacement, the existing OHL between Quoich Power Station is proposed to be replaced to connect the power station to the wider electricity network	EIA not required
3.5	27.07.2023	23/02419/SCRE - Quoich Tee - Replace the existing 132kV switchgear at the switching station as a recent condition assessment highlighted the need for this asset to be replaced	EIA required
3.6	10.01.2023	22/05536/SCOP - To replace the existing 132kV switchgear	EIA Scoping Opinion withdrawn
3.6	10.01.2023 06.10.2022	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Opinion withdrawn
		22/02799/PAN - Construction of a new switching station immediately north-west of the existing site, the installation of circuit breakers and replacement of the existing 132kV switchgear; the replacement of the existing Low Voltage Alternating Current battery and site diesel generator; diversion of existing overhead lines to the new switching station location; landscaping and permanent	Opinion withdrawn Reported to committee

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3.10	08.05.2019	19/01455/S37 - Install a 132kV Woodpole Overhead Line at Quoich to Aberchalder	Raise no objection
3.11	30.08.2018	18/02194/SCRE - Replacement of the existing 132kV steel lattice overhead line	EIA not required
3.12	03.06.2008	08/00195/OHLLO - Alterations to 33kv Overhead Lines	Permission granted

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 The consultation process for this application is split between the Highland Council and the Energy Consents Unit. As the Highland Council are not the determining authority, it is for the Energy Consents Unit to review all consultee responses and consider the incorporation of all recommended planning conditions within any forthcoming consent. Although all consultation responses have been considered, this report of handling's recommended planning conditions relate to matters raised by the case officer, responses received from Community Councils, and matters raised in internal Council department consultation responses. In any forthcoming consent from Scottish Ministers, the conditions recommended by the Council planning case officer within Section 11 of this report are therefore to be supplemented with further conditions required by other statutory consultees.
- 5.2 The following consultation have been undertaken by Highland Council.
- Glengarry Community Council (host) do not object to the application. They welcome the extensive ecological work and proposed mitigation measures. The Community Council noted the local C1144 road is a long single-track route to the coast, from where the only way out is back again, therefore, every infrastructure project requires traffic the length of the road. Whilst works are underway to strengthen the road, there will be cumulative impacts from this development along with other electricity infrastructure upgrades; the Skye reinforcement project and other renewable energy schemes in the wider surrounding area. They appreciate the Arboriculture Assessment but consider the species and habitat surveys do not give a complete picture of the wildlife in the area.
- Access Officer does not object to the application, subject to a condition safeguarding access in the area. They noted that non-motorised public access should not be restricted or discouraged on any permanent access roads constructed as part of the development.
- 5.5 **Development Plans Team** do not object to the application and have no further comment.

- 5.6 **Environment Health** do not object to the application, subject to a condition requiring the submission of a construction noise mitigation scheme which demonstrates best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction noise. Whilst the proposed development is over 500m from the nearest noise sensitive receptor and construction noise is unlikely to be an issue, it is expected that the developer/contractor will employ the best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities. Environmental Health noted the most likely cause for concern may be early morning construction traffic on the public road, however, they have no powers in respect of traffic noise. The applicant has undertaken a private water risk assessment, and no supplies are identified as being at risk.
- 5.7 Flood Risk Management Team do not no object to the application, subject to a condition that removes temporary access tracks and construction platforms as they are located in areas at risk of flooding. Whilst part of the site is located within SEPA's indicative future flood maps, this type of development is classed as "Essential Infrastructure" and can therefore be located in a flood risk area, subject to meeting the requirements of NPF4 Policy 22 Flood risk and water management, part a). ii). The open lattice towers will not result in any loss of floodplain capacity or conveyance.
- 5.8 **Forestry Officer** does not object to the application, subject to a condition requiring the submission of a Tree Planting Plan. Tree protection proposals for T12 and T18 are accepted. Whilst the Forestry Officer noted there are no references within the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) to coppicing and initially requested the supporting information be amended accordingly, they are content that confirmation of tree removal impact and compensatory tree planting can be controlled by condition.
- 5.9 **Historic Environment Team** do not object to the application. There appear to be no built-heritage assets within the proximity of the proposal site, or its surrounding area.
- 5.10 **Landscape Officer** does not object to the application. They have reviewed the application and have no further comment.
- 5.11 Transport Planning Team do not object to the application, subject to conditions that require: confirmation of the type and scale of physical improvements to the existing C1144 public road; the layout and construction details for any temporary or permanent new accesses from the C1144 public road; design details for the proposed closing off of the existing vehicular access to the current switching station; and submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). The means of vehicular access to this development is along the C1144 public road, which is a substandard single-track route not suited to large commercial goods vehicles. Section 3 of the Transport Assessment (TA) states that a detailed assessment of the construction traffic likely to be generated will be carried out prior to works commencing. Such upgrades will be necessary to accommodate the anticipated traffic generated by this development. Other design details remain unclear including how surface water run-off from the private access will be prevented from flowing out onto the carriageway of the public road. A new drainage ditch is proposed alongside the new access that discharges into the existing roadside drainage ditch. This

intended drainage design cannot be supported and requires to be revised by condition. Additionally, design details are lacking for the proposed access to the intended remote construction compound, or what changes will be made to support the closing off of the existing vehicular access to the current switching station. The TA (Section 5) notes that a 'Wear and Tear' Agreement with Highland Council in accordance with Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 will be required. This is to be specified within the CTMP condition.

- 5.12 The following consultations were undertaken by the **Energy Consents Unit.**
- 5.13 **BT Group** do not object to the application as it should not cause any interference to BT's current and planned radio network.
- 5.14 **Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL)** have no comments since the development is located out with their safeguarding zone.
- 5.15 **Historic Environment Scotland** have no comments since the development would not impact historical environment assets within their remit.
- 5.16 **Joint Radio Company** do not object to the application as it should not cause any interference to the radio network.
- 5.17 **Ministry of Defence Safeguarding** do not object to the application, subject to a condition controlling aviation charting and safety management with regards to low flying aircraft. They note the proposed development falls within a Tactical Training Area (TTA 14T) where aircraft may operate as low as 30.5m above ground level to conduct low level flight training. The addition of lattice towers in this location has the potential to introduce a physical obstruction to these low flying aircraft operating in the area. Therefore, the height of the development will necessitate that aeronautical charts and mapping records are amended.
- 5.18 **National Air Traffic Services (NATS)** do not object to the application as it does not conflict with their safeguarding criteria.
- 5.19 **National Gas Transmission** do not object to the application as there are no National Gas assets within the area.
- NatureScot do not object to the application, subject to conditions requiring: bird diverters be fitted to towers; construction and dismantling works (including access) within 750m of the SPA to be avoided during the bird breeding season; the Site Water Management Plan to be agreed; and the proposed development not being microsited closer to the SPA without prior consultation with NatureScot.
- 5.21 **Office for Nuclear Regulation** have no comments since the development does not lie within a nuclear site consultation zone.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) do not object to the application, subject to a condition requiring bird diverters be fitted to the earth wire of the towers. Common Scoter and Black-throated Diver use Loch Poulary as a feeding site. As the proposed OHL is situated between Loch Poulary and Loch Fearna, there is potential risk of collision for commuting Common Scoter between these two lochs. Given the final design of the towers may alter the heights of the towers by 20% this complicated

the applicant's assessment of collision risk.

- 5.23 **Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)** do not object to the application, subject to a condition that removes temporary watercourse crossings post the construction phase as they are located in areas at risk of flooding. SEPA initially issued a holding objection due to a lack of information regarding Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). Following this the applicant provided further details which SEPA confirmed are satisfactory and they have no concerns regarding GWDTE.
- 5.24 **Scottish Forestry** do not object to the application given the minimal impact to trees and woodland.
- 5.25 **Scottish Water** do not object to the application. They note their records indicate that there are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources, which are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive, in the area that may be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.26 **Transport Scotland** do not object to the application, subject to conditions controlling: the submission of a threshold assessment; the proposed route for abnormal loads on the trunk road network; accommodation measures for abnormal loads including additional signage or temporary traffic control measures; and an informative relating to works within the trunk road boundary.
- 5.27 Whilst Transport Scotland note the TA states that a high-level traffic count of anticipated loads expected during the construction of the proposal has been carried out and is attached in TA Appendix A, they have been unable to find these details. They also note that the applicant states that prior to works commencing a detailed assessment of the construction traffic likely to be generated will be carried out and submitted. The study area would cover the A887 trunk road between Bun Loyne and Invermoriston, the A87 trunk road between Invergarry and The Cluanie Inn and the A82 trunk road between Letterfinlay and Invergarry. Whilst Transport Scotland has no objection in principle to the proposed development, they assert that this information should have been produced and made available with the TA. As such, Transport Scotland require a threshold assessment be provided, in accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines. entitled Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement (July 2023), which specify that road links should be taken forward for further detailed assessment where the following is breached:
 - Road links where traffic flows will increase by more than 30% (or the number of heavy goods vehicles will increase by more than 30%).
 - Road links of high sensitivity where traffic flows have increased by 10% or more.
- 5.28 Transport Scotland also require to be satisfied that the size of loads proposed can negotiate the selected route and that transportation will not have any detrimental effects on structures within the trunk road route path. A full Abnormal Load Assessment report should be provided that identifies key pinch points on the trunk road network.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

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, and other material policy considerations which are relevant to the assessment of the application.

7. PLANNING APPRAISAL

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

Planning Considerations

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

Development Plan / Other Planning Policy

- 7.3 The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) and various supplementary guidance associated with these Local Development Plans. WestPlan focuses largely on regional and settlement strategies and specific site allocations, rather than planning policies of relevance for the proposed development.
- 7.4 Appendix 2 of this report provides an assessment of compliance with the Development Plan / other planning policy.
- 7.5 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 via a repowered and expanded electricity grid. 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.

7.6 At the regional level, HwLDP also offers support for transmission infrastructure where this is located, sited and designed to avoid unacceptable significant impacts on the environment. Providing that the resultant siting, size and scale of the proposed infrastructure is acceptable, with its impacts on the receiving environment also being suitably mitigated, the proposal would accord with this key determining policy.

Construction Impact

- 7.7 The construction of the Quoich OHL replacement project is expected to have environmental and logistical impacts, each with specific mitigation measures planned to minimize these effects. The construction program is expected to last around 7 months from December 2025 and will involve phases for enabling works and installation of structures. This is based on the proposal for the works to be undertaken 6 days a week. Construction working hours are anticipated to be between 07.00 to 19.00 Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 Saturday with no construction works on site on Sundays or Bank Holidays. During these phases, a temporary site compound and access infrastructure will be utilised, which could disturb the local environment. To address these impacts, the applicant plans to develop a detailed Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to guide environmentally responsible construction practices throughout each phase and is controlled by condition.
- 7.8 In addition, Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 sets restrictions in terms of hours of operation, plant and equipment used and noise levels, amongst other factors, which is enforceable via Environmental Health. By using best practice construction management, the anticipated impacts on local communities and remote residential properties to the development would be kept to a minimum.

Design, Landscape and Visual Impact (including Wild Land)

- 7.9 The applicant's assessment is detailed in Chapter 5 of the EA. The landscape and visual appraisal is focused on a study area of 2.5km, beyond which the development is considered unlikely to result in any adverse effects. This is agreed. The applicant considers the impacts on the landscape are primarily related to changes in the physical landscape features, such as alterations to topography and vegetation due to construction activities, the presence of steel lattice towers and the visual intrusion of the OHL. Visualisations have been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 (GLVIA3).
- 7.10 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of the proposed OHL was produced using a terrain model which does not take into account buildings and vegetation and thus gives an exaggerated impression of the extent of visibility. The applicant notes the extent of actual visibility experienced on the ground will be considerably less than that suggested by the ZTV pattern given surrounding vegetation. Due to the relatively low-level siting of the proposed OHL towers, at the bottom of the valley, the ZTV extent generally comprises the narrow valley of Loch Poulary, indicating

visibility from the north facing forested landform of Claon Leitir, which forms the southern side of the valley and in turn restricts views from the south and south east. The northern side of the valley is formed by the landform of East Glenquoich Forest, which contains the spread of the ZTV to the north and northeast.

Landscape Effects

- 7.11 The Study Area comprises two Landscape Character Types (LCT) with ZTV coverage across both LCT 235 Broad Forested Strath and LCT 237 Rocky Moorland Lochaber (as shown in Figure 5.2 of the EA). The site is located entirely within LCT 235 which is described as a gently undulating landscape with a broad mosaic of coniferous and deciduous woodland and open pasture. The local landscape character is that of a river valley flanked by steep slopes to the north and south. Landcover is mainly marshy grassland on the valley floor, with areas of open native woodland on the hill slopes. In terms of designations, the western part of the landscape within the Study Area falls within Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel Special Landscape Area (SLA). The applicant notes LCT 235 already accommodates electricity infrastructure, and its susceptibility is considered medium-low to the type of development proposed, resulting in medium sensitivity for the LCT within the Study Area.
- 7.12 The proposed development would be located outwith the adjacent LCT 237. LCT 237 extends to the north and south of Loch Poulary, flanking the valley that forms the western end of the LCT 235 within the study area. LCT 237 is described as an area of rugged, undulating plateau of heather moorland, to which large areas of coniferous forest provide a contrast. Indirect effects would only occur in how the visual perception of this landscape would change due to the effects attributable to the proposed development. Due to the vast scale of the landscape above the Loch Poulary valley its susceptibility is considered medium-low to the type of development proposed, resulting in medium sensitivity to the type of development proposed for the LCT within the Study Area. Post construction and following the establishment of the land reinstatement works the applicant's assessment considers that effects on landscape character would reduce.
- 7.13 The applicant considers the effects on both LCTs are minor, their assessment is agreed.
- 7.14 There are also landscape designations / Wild Land Areas (WLAs) located within the Study Area. These include the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA located 2km to the northwest and Kinloch Houn-Knoydart-Morar WLA 2km northwest and south.
- 7.15 The SLA covers an extensive area of mountains, moorland and lochs between Glen Shiel and Moidart. It also includes the coast of Arisaig from Mallaig to Loch nan Ceall, and the upper part of Loch Ailort. Due to the distance, topography and intervening vegetation, there is no potential for a high level of effect and this SLA is not assessed further. This approach is agreed.
- 7.16 In terms of the WLA, the applicant notes that NPF4 Policy 4 Natural Places states that effects of development outwith WLAs will not be a significant consideration. Therefore, the WLA is not assessed further in the EA. This approach is agreed.

7.17 Highland Council's Landscape officer has reviewed the application and has no concerns.

Visual Amenity Effects

- 7.18 The applicant has submitted 2 representative viewpoints to show the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. Viewpoint 1 is representative of walkers on the local footpath on Claon Leitir, approximately 900m southeast of the site. Viewpoint 2 is representative of road users on the local road to the west of Quoich Tee Switching Station, approximately 360m from the site.
- 7.19 Key visual receptors identified include the following groups:
 - Residents: who are highly sensitive to changes in the landscape due to their direct connection to the setting;
 - Recreational users: Including hillwalkers, cyclists, and visitors to heritage sites or areas of natural beauty. These users are considered highly sensitive due to their activities focus on enjoying the landscape; and
 - Road users on the C1144 public road who are moderately sensitive, as they
 are more transient viewers but still impacted by significant changes to the
 landscape.

There will be visual impacts from elevated or open areas where the new OHL will be clearly visible, as these locations offer unobstructed views of the towers and lines. Conversely, in the area where the landscape provides natural screening through vegetation or where the infrastructure aligns with existing industrial element, the visual impacts is described as low to negligible. Based on the site survey findings, the proposed development would appear in short distance views from the Kinloch Hourn Road and would be discernible from a handful of residential properties in Aultnaslat.

7.20 In terms of surrounding settlements, the key sensitive receptors are a cluster of residential properties at Coille Mhorgil, approximately 600m to the west, at the closest point in the southern portion of the site, along with residential properties to the east of Loch Poulary approximately 1.9km to the east of the proposed development. The orientation of residential receptors is south overlooking the Loch and this is likely to form the focus of views, with oblique views towards the proposed development. Additionally, access to the cluster of properties is limited to the single track Kinloch Hourn road, therefore, residents would regularly experience views of the development as they travel to and from their property. This applies along the section between the woodland to the east of Coille Mhorgil and the Quoich Tee Switching Station, and also to the east of the Quoich Tee Switching Station where the existing infrastructure is close to the road with pylons in occasional views. The proposed OHL will cross the road at the same point as the existing OHL to connect with the Quoich Tee Switching Station, located next to the road. Whilst there will be views of the proposed development along this stretch, the ZTV shows the proposed OHL towers would almost be fully screened from the Coille Mhorgil properties by the existing tree belt which extends between the existing Quoich Power Station and the proposed development.

- 7.21 Kirk Yetholm to Cape Wrath Scottish National Trail (SNT20) crosses the Study Area extending from the south east, where it crosses the River Garry at the eastern end of Loch Poulary and joins with the Kinloch Hourn road at Poulary, overlapping with the road west bound up to the west of the Switching Station, to the point where it turns off the road and climbs East Glenquoich Forest to the north. Other non-designated local paths / hill tracks which traverse, or provide access to the hills, are not considered further due to the nature and scale of the proposed OHL as a replacement to the existing. This approach is agreed.
- 7.22 The route to Loch Poulary is frequently used by hillwalkers and recreational walkers as it is known for its panoramic views. The applicant notes that maintaining the scenic quality of these routes is considered a priority and the applicant has considered the impacts on these recreational routes as insignificant.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

- 7.23 The study area currently accommodates various electricity infrastructure, including the existing 132 kV Quoich Tee Switching Station and 132 kV trident wood pole OHL, which runs between Fort Augustus Substation, Ardmore Substation and Quoich Power Station. Future cumulative development includes the Skye Reinforcement Project, which comprises a new double circuit steel structure 132kV transmission connection between Fort Augustus Substation and Edinbane Substation and a new 132kV double trident H wood pole OHL between Edinbane Substation and Ardmore Substation which would replace the existing 132 kV trident wood pole OHL between Fort Augustus Substation and Ardmore Substation. Additionally, there are upgrade works proposed for the existing Quoich Tee Switching Station with a new access track provided to connect the station with the local road.
- 7.24 Whilst there will be some landscape and visual effects, particularly during the construction phase, due to construction machinery on site along with earthworks, these are assessed as being short-term and temporary, occurring during the length of the works phase, and differing in nature from the long-term operational effects.
- 7.25 It is considered the proposed development would be effectively absorbed into its surrounding context, with visibility contained to a relatively small area, limiting its effects on the wider landscape character and visual amenity.

Natural Heritage

- 7.26 Whilst none within the site, there are natural heritage designations of international importance with the wider surrounding area, namely the West Inverness-shire Lochs SSSI and West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA approximately 120m to the south with Quoich Spillway SSSI set back further at approximately 3.8km to the northwest. Additionally, surrounding forestry is designated as Ancient Woodland of Semi-Natural Origin on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) with the northern extent of the site boundary approximately 20m to the east of an area of Ancient Woodland.
- 7.27 West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA is protected for breeding black-throated divers and common scoters. The site's status means that the requirements of the

Conservation (Natural Habitats, and c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations') apply or, for reserved matters, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Consequently, the Scottish Government is required to consider the effect of the proposal on the SPA before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal). NatureScot note that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on black-throated divers and common scoters within the SPA. Consequently, the Energy Consents Unit, as competent authority, is required to carry out an Appropriate Assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. NatureScot confirmed that providing that the proposed development is carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures noted in the EA, and subject to conditions requiring: bird flight diverters, construction and dismantling works set back at least 750m from the SPA during the bird breeding season; a Site Water Management Plan; and no micro siting closer to the SPA without further consultation, they consider it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. Such conditions are therefore expected to be imposed by the ECU for any consent.

7.28 In areas close to designated sites such as West Inverness-shire Lochs SSSI and SPA, and Ancient Woodlands, the project will take steps to limit its impact on local flora and fauna. As described within the EA and within latter sections of this report, careful management of tree felling and vegetation clearance is proposed to comply with environmental standards. The routing of the OHL has also been adjusted to minimise the impacts on Ancient Woodland and reduce potential effects on Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs).

Cultural Heritage

- 7.29 There are no designated heritage assets within the footprint of the development. The potential for encountering unknown archaeology is considered low and no mitigation measures are provided in this respect. The Historic Environment Team has no objection.
- 7.30 There are five non-designated heritage assets identified within 1km of the proposed development, however, there are no anticipated physical impacts to any heritage assets and no adverse setting impacts have been identified.

Ecology and Ornithology

- 7.31 The applicant's assessment is detailed in Chapter 6 of the EA. The applicant is committed to ensuring that construction practices will be in line with best practice guidance and environmental protection measures will be fully detailed in the final CEMP, Species Protection Plans (SPP) including pre-construction protected species surveys.
- 7.32 As noted, the proposed development is located close to the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA and Loch Poulary which is protected for black-throated diver or common scoter. The presence of these species was not identified in the surveys provided by the applicant; however, common scoter may fly at night, particularly during the migration period. Common scoter and black-throated diver use Loch Poulary as a feeding site, with the proposed OHL being situated between Loch Poulary and Loch Fearna.

- 7.33 Initial comments submitted by RSPB considered that the commuting routes of common scoter between these two lochs was unknown, with the proposal introducing a potential collision risk. RSPB also raised concerns initially regarding the lack of clarity of the height of the OHL, with the applicant subsequently confirming that the final design of the towers may alter in height by 20%.
- 7.34 NatureScot requested a condition that bird diverters be fitted to the OHL to increase the visibility of the line reducing any risk of collision to black-throated divers and common scoters. Use of the Hawkeye model at 5m spacing has been previously recommended for the Skye Reinforcement Project and is controlled by condition for that development. RSPB have no objection subject to this condition also being applied to this proposal.
- 7.35 The EA identified various protected species including otter, water vole and bats present across the site. NatureScot advise further survey work is undertaken with regards to otter as surveys have identified potential resting sites close to the works area. Pre-construction surveys are to be undertaken so as to avoid impacts as far as possible. The proposal's effects on natural heritage interest have been found to be acceptable, subject to the identified mitigation being deployed which can be conditioned within any ECU consent.

Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology

- 7.36 The EA identifies the potential for watercourse alteration as a significant issue in terms of hydrology. During construction, activities such as excavation, material transport and tower foundation work could change the surface water flow and disrupt natural drainage patterns. The applicant has proposed the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) designed to manage water flow effectively, reduce surface runoff, and prevent flooding around the construction site, thus protecting local watercourse and reducing erosion risks (noted in EA Chapter 7).
- 7.37 A cluster of wet heath habitats (M15a, U20/M15b, U4/M15b) is present in the southwest of the Study Area in a low gradient area, where peat deposits are present near to tributaries of the River Garry. Wet heathland communities are predominant throughout the Study Area as M15b, with clusters of M15b/Coniferous Plantation in the northeast and M15d in the west. Wet woodland (W7/W4/U20) in the southwest and northwest of the Study Area, is located in close proximity to the River Garry and Allt a Chobhainn, respectively. The desktop investigation of the potential Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) undertaken by the applicant concludes that these habitats are not likely to be dependent on groundwater, with other water sources dictating local soil water conditions, therefore GWDTE are not considered further. SEPA agree with this approach.
- 7.38 Changes in groundwater levels and flows may have an effect on public water supplies, if they exist. In order to verify existing abstraction operations, local sources, and asset locations, the applicant committed that Scottish Water will be contacted throughout the pre-construction phase. In accordance with Annex 1: Precautions to protect drinking water and Scottish Water assets during development activities, the applicant stated (EA Chapter 7.6) that the Principal Contractor will consent to safeguard any assets that are thought to be at risk during

the construction of the proposed development. The implementation of the mitigation measures would be managed on-site by a suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW), with support from other environmental professionals, as required.

Flood Risk

- 7.39 The site is partly shown to be at risk of flooding based on the SEPA Future Flood Maps. This indicates that there is a risk of flooding from the River Garry / Loch Poulary and the Allt a' Ghobhainn with a number of small watercourses also within and adjacent to the site.
- 7.40 A Flood Risk / Drainage Strategy (FRA) has been provided in support of the proposed development which assesses risk at the location of the existing power station, which is to be extended, and the new access track which runs adjacent to the existing access track at the power station. The power station and immediate surrounding area lies outwith, although adjacent to, SEPA Flood Maps in the wider surrounding area. As such, it is considered the risk of flooding is relatively low and SEPA have no objection to the proposed extension to the power station and formation of the new access road.
- 7.41 The FRA does not assess the risk of flooding at the new overhead line towers and temporary access track and crane platforms to install these towers. SEPA have no objection to the towers themselves being located in areas of flood risk and it is not indicated that there is any land raising proposed so they are unlikely to impact flood risk elsewhere. SEPA have highlighted that Tower 2 is located within an area of flood risk associated with the Allt a' Ghobhainn it is at the developer's own risk in terms of long-term operation and maintenance.
- 7.42 Given the gradient of the site, cut and fill is proposed for the formation of the temporary access track and crane platforms. Landraising is proposed within the flood risk area of the Allt a' Ghobhainn for the part of the track between Towers 2 and 3. Whilst SEPA are generally unable to support landraising within a flood risk area, unless it is required for development outlined under the exceptions in Policy 22a in NPF4, these works are considered to fall under 22a (iii) for essential infrastructure. For developments for essential infrastructure, any landraising should be linked to compensatory storage and demonstrated that there is no reduction in floodplain capacity, or increased risk for others.
- 7.43 No compensatory storage has been outlined and a detailed assessment of flood risk is lacking which SEPA would not usually support, however, given the track is temporary, they are satisfied that there is unlikely to be any impact given the extent of landraising in the flood risk area is for a relatively small section of the access track, there are no nearby receptors and the Allt a' Ghobhainn discharges directly into the River Garry / Loch Poulary immediately downstream where the floodplain storage is significantly greater than on the small tributaries. Notwithstanding this, any landraising must be kept to a minimum. SEPA request a condition is attached to ensure that levels are reinstated to existing levels within the flood risk area and adjacent to any watercourses once the track is removed. This condition is expected to be imposed by the ECU for any consent.

- 7.44 Watercourse crossings will also be required along the route of the temporary access track with crossings proposed at the uppermost part of the watercourse. SEPA are satisfied that given the remote location of the works and steep topography, there is unlikely to be any significant impact on flow pathways which would impact elsewhere and have no objection to the crossings. However, SEPA advise that any watercourse crossings follow good practice guidelines without causing constriction of flow or exacerbation to flood risk elsewhere, and design ensures any exceedance / blockage flows can overtop, or bypass, the structure and return to channel downstream. SEPA request a condition is attached to ensure the removal of all watercourse crossings during removal of the access track once the towers and overhead lines have been constructed. This condition is again expected to be imposed by the ECU for any consent.
- 7.45 The Council's Flood Risk Management Team do not object to the proposed development noting they have no concerns related to flood risk and drainage subject to a condition that removes temporary access tracks and construction platforms required during the works phase as they are located in areas at risk of flooding.

Priority Peatland Habitat

- 7.46 According to the NatureScot Carbon and Peatland Map 117, Class 1 nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitats, that are likely to be of high conservation value, underlie the entire proposed development, with the exception of the most northerly extent, in the area of the existing Quoich Tee Switching Station. Mapping also indicates that superficial deposits underlying the site are predominantly hummocky (moundy) glacial (diamicton, sand and gravel). The applicant also identified brown peaty gleyed podzols, dystrophic semi-confined peat and peaty gleys. Peat probing surveys were therefore undertaken in May and September 2023, and for the Quoich Tee Switching Station project in September 2022. Peat depth results from a total of 224 points taken within 500m of the site, ranged between 0 to 3.1m, and resulted in a mean average depth of 0.63m, with a median depth of 0.47m.
- 7.47 As the site is located on Class 1 peatland, the main concern is the disturbance of this sensitive habitat during construction. As such, the applicant will implement an Outline Peat Management Plan (OPMP) that will be developed into a detailed site specific PMP before construction begins and is controlled by condition. This plan will include strategies to minimise excavation and peat removal, such as using sections of floating track. Post construction restoration is also planned to reinstate affected areas to protect the peatland's ecological integrity.
- 7.48 It is acknowledged that for energy developments, NPF4 Policy 5 Soils section c) does not require absolute avoidance of this habitat, and section 5 d) requires a detailed site specific assessment to be undertaken which should inform careful project design and ensure, in accordance with relevant guidance and the mitigation hierarchy, that adverse impacts are first avoided and then minimised through best practice. The applicant also acknowledges the need to protect peatland and commits to adhering to the guidelines for peatland conservation and restoration efforts.

7.49 NatureScot notes that, although impacts on M15 deep peat are unlikely to raise issues of national interest, they advise that the mitigation hierarchy (set out in their peatland guidance) should still be followed and opportunities for restoration be considered in line with their guidance.

Habitat Restoration

- 7.50 Due to the climate and biodiversity emergency and the provisions of NPF4 Policy 3, the Council seeks to ensure that developments will deliver a positive effect for biodiversity. Policy 3 b) iv) requires significant biodiversity enhancements to be provided. In addition, the Council adopted Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (BEPG) in May 2024. BEPG notes in paragraph 4.39 that "The applicant must be able to demonstrate how biodiversity will be left in a demonstrably better state than before intervention and provide significant biodiversity enhancements". Paragraph 4.40 continues noting "A minimum 10% biodiversity enhancement is required... It is the developer's responsibility to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that this threshold has been achieved. It is the developer's responsibility to ensure that all relevant sections of Policy 3 have been fulfilled".
- 7.51 In the EA, the applicant estimates that there will be a permanent loss of approximately 0.21ha of priority peatland habitat due to the construction of access tracks and tower foundations. Approximately 2.5ha of wet heathland would also be lost / degraded during construction with this habitat restored to moderate condition within 20 years. The majority of habitat loss associated with the proposed development will be temporary with habitats reinstated post works.
- 7.52 Grassland identified within the survey area comprised bracken and other upland grassland UKHab primary habitats. The other upland grassland area is located to the south of the UKHab Survey Area by Quoich Power Station. It comprises purple moor grass, heather, mat grass, heathery moss, heath rush, wavy hair grass, and soft rush. This habitat corresponds to a LBAP Priority habitat Upland Acid Grassland. Approximately 0.16ha of this habitat would be permanently lost under the footprint of the proposed development, which is considered of local importance and is considered of negligible significance. The applicant also assessed wet heath with cross-leaved heath as a Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) terrestrial habitat of regional interest which will be directly impacted by the proposed development.
- 7.53 Whilst the biodiversity impact of the development has been quantified, recommendations for biodiversity enhancement (net gain) are absent within the submission. When queried the applicant considers opportunities for biodiversity net gain (BNG) are limited within the footprint of the development and in the immediate surrounding area. The existing OHL tower footprints are expected to be restored, allowing the reuse excavated excess material, the proposed development is still also expected to provide at least 10% biodiversity enhancement.
- 7.54 The applicant notes opportunities for BNG through woodland creation, primarily through supporting natural woodland regeneration and the use of deer fencing, were explored, however, the existing habitat includes extensive areas of wet heath limit this within the site and immediate surrounding area. Given the impact on wet heath and peatland, the applicant is exploring nearby opportunities to restore or

enhance these habitats.

- 7.55 Although there is lack of BNG as part of this application, this is one of several applications relating to electricity transmission and associated infrastructure in Highland. SSEN are therefore in the process of preparing an overarching strategy for the delivery of offsite biodiversity enhancement across the region. The biodiversity enhancement and compensation measures required for this application can therefore be secured by way of condition. Additionally, the submission of a Habitat Management Plan (HMP), Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW), Pre-construction surveys, protection of nesting birds and submission of GIS shapefiles data are all proposed to be controlled by condition.
- 7.56 It is generally agreed that the proposed development could achieve positive biodiversity effects providing that sufficient off-site habitat creation measures are identified, implemented, and maintained. This therefore ensures that the proposed development will leave the natural environment in a demonstrably better state than before development work began.

Roads, Transport and Wider Access

- 7.57 The applicant's assessment regarding roads and transport related issues is contained within EA Chapter 3. Given the nature and scale of this development, access will be taken via an existing access track which serves the Quoich Power Station and connects to the C1144 public road. The C1144 is a minor road which serves as an access to minor settlements in the west highlands and provides access to tourist amenities in the areas such as Loch Poulary. Part of this existing access to Quoich Power Station will be replaced to enable a permanent track diversion due to the introduction of a substation platform. Access will be required to each OHL tower works site for delivery of materials, plant, fittings, fixtures, working platforms and operatives. Approximately 1.1km of temporary floating access tracks will be required to be installed. All temporary tracks would be removed upon completion of the Proposed Development with land being reinstated to its former condition.
- 7.58 Highland Council's Transport Planning Team noted that the only means of access to this development will be along the C1144, which is a substandard single-track route not suited to large commercial goods vehicles. Whilst the submitted Transport Assessment (TA) has attempted in Appendix A to estimate the likely type and scale of predicted traffic impacts, there appears to be large amounts of duplication between the information provided for the power station works and the switching station works. Also, Section 3 of the TA states that a detailed assessment of the construction traffic likely to be generated will be carried out prior to works commencing.
- 7.59 Transport Planning consider that upgrades will be necessary to physically and safely accommodate the anticipated traffic generated by this development, due to the substandard nature of the C1144. Section 5 of the submitted TA also recognises this as it is proposed to install a number of new passing places, undertake road widening and cattle grid strengthening prior to any works at Quoich switching station. Such improvements should be informed by the anticipated quantum and

type of construction-related vehicles that will require access to this development.

- 7.60 In addition to the above required physical road improvements, suitable traffic management measures will be needed to help limit and lessen any adverse impacts of the proposed development on the existing local public road asset and its users. Such measures will need to be clarified within a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) that will operate alongside and complement the required physical road improvements noted. Any such plan should deal with all forms of constructionrelated traffic access needs, including Abnormal Loads (AILs), commercial goods vehicles (HGVs and LGVs) and workforce transport. It should also demonstrate how all interactions between construction activities and other road users will be effectively managed to ensure that the road remains safe and usable by all. For this development, these will need to include the remote construction compound that has been proposed further west along the C1144. This will result in construction traffic continually interacting with other users of that road, as the section between the construction compound and the proposed development site will effectively become part of the construction site.
- 7.61 Whilst some details have been provided regarding the design and construction of the proposed new vehicular access from the C1144 to the switching station, other information is still not clear. For example, it is not clear how the designs will prevent surface water run-off from this private access from flowing out onto the carriageway of the existing local public road. Additionally, the designs as submitted appear to be proposing a new drainage ditch alongside the new access that discharges into the existing roadside drainage ditch. Transport Planning will not support drainage from a private access discharging into an existing adopted roadside ditch. Furthermore, there is no further information to support whether the existing ditch could accommodate such proposed run-off from the new access. Revised proposals are required to clarify the finalised drainage design solution and are controlled by condition.
- 7.62 Transport Planning has not identified any information about the design details for the proposed access to the intended remote construction compound proposed further west along the C1144 or what changes will be made to support the closing off of the existing vehicular access to the current switching station. The designs for such accesses should adhere with the relevant requirements of their Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments Supplementary Guidance. This will be subject to a separate Town and Country Planning application and will be assessed on its own merits against relevant policy and guidance once submitted.
- 7.63 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is secured via condition to manage the impacts during construction of the proposals on the local road network. Transport Planning state that the CTMP should be reviewed and updated regularly through the construction period. Such reviews should include seeking feedback from and reacting to input from local community groups impacted by the proposed means of accessing this development.
- 7.64 As identified in Section 5 of the submitted TA, Highland Council will require a "Wear and Tear" Agreement in accordance with Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. This is to protect the Council from any extraordinary expenses in having to maintain this route as a direct result of the activities of this development. This is

recommended to be referenced within the CTMP condition wording.

- 7.65 Whilst Transport Scotland has no objection in principle to the proposed development, they, as with Highland Council's Transport Planning Team, note that it is generally standard practice that a detailed assessment of the construction traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development is submitted prior to any consent being granted. The study area covers the A887 trunk road between Bun Loyne and Invermoriston, the A87 trunk road between Invergarry and The Cluanie Inn and the A82 trunk road between Letterfinlay and Invergarry. Given the lack of supporting information Transport Scotland require a threshold assessment be provided to cover road links where:
 - traffic flows will increase by more than 30% (or the number of heavy goods vehicles will increase by more than 30%).
 - road links of high sensitivity where traffic flows have increased by 10% or more.
- 7.66 Transport Scotland also require to be satisfied that the size of loads proposed can negotiate the selected route and that transportation will not have any detrimental effects on structures within the trunk road route path. A full Abnormal Load Assessment report should be provided that identifies key pinch points on the trunk road network.
- 7.67 Transport Scotland do not object to the application subject to conditions controlling the submission of a threshold assessment, the proposed route for abnormal loads on the trunk road network, accommodation measures for abnormal loads including additional signage or temporary traffic control measures and an informative relating to works within the trunk road boundary. All of these matters are expected to be conditioned by the ECU in any consent.
- 7.68 Should the development be granted consent, a condition would require a Community Liaison Group be set up. Given the size, duration and combination of this development alongside the other schemes in the wider area there may be disturbance over a prolonged period, not only noise but other issues such as constrained access in proximity to routes used for recreation. The Community Liaison Group will help to ensure that the Community Council and other stakeholders are kept up to date and consulted before, during and after the construction period.

Economic Impact

7.69 Renewable Energy Transmission, Security of Supply, Economic and Community Socio-Economic Benefits, and local supply chain opportunities are outlined in the submitted Planning Statement Section 3. The proposed development will strengthen the robustness of the country's grid network and also result in further job and investment opportunities through the development of associated supply chains. The Planning Statement states that the replacement works will provide additional capacity on the transmission network for renewable generation which will be consistent with core aims of NPF4 to enhance the green energy transmission capacity to achieve a net zero economy and support network resilience in rural areas.

- 7.70 The applicant makes reference to sustainable procurement codes and supplier guidance to oblige suppliers and contractors to maximise local employment and economic gain and social benefits as a result of the investment in new energy infrastructure in their area with measures to be put in place to maximise opportunities for local people and businesses close to the site and in the wider region.
- 7.71 Highland 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 of 7 months. The project could offer investment / opportunities to the local, Highland, and Scottish economy including businesses ranging across construction, haulage, electrical and service sectors. However, there is also likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction disruption and construction traffic, but these will be temporary in nature.
- 7.72 Given the above, 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.

Other Material Considerations

- 7.73 Light pollution significantly affects the rural countryside, from disturbing the way animals and plants perceive daytime and nighttime to making developments visible across wide areas. The infrastructure would not be illuminated at night for normal operation, with construction lighting to be controlled by condition.
- 7.74 There are no other material considerations.

Non-Material Considerations

7.75 None raised.

Matters to be secured by Legal Agreement

- 7.76 In order to mitigate the impact of the development on infrastructure and services the following matters require to be secured by legal agreement, the requirement for which have been set out within recommended conditions:
 - a) Provision of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 under which the developer will be responsible for the repair of any damage to the local road network attributable to construction related traffic.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Scottish Government and the Council each have policies offering support to projects which increase the capacity of the grid network to serve renewable energy projects. NPF4 offers strong support for such development highlighting upgraded infrastructure supporting onshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors and this is classed as a development of national importance.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 Statutory and other consultees responding to this application have not raised any fundamental concerns, albeit Transport Planning and Transport Scotland require further supporting information to be provided prior to development commencement. There are no outstanding objections subject to conditions. No public representations have been made on the application.
- 8.4 Glengarry Community Council has expressed concern about the cumulative effects on the C1144 public road, which is the only vehicle route to the proposed development and is a poor single-track route that is unsuitable for large commercial goods vehicles. Works to improve this remote road are ongoing and further physical road improvements have been sought by Transport Planning which will be secured by condition.
- 8.5 There are clear impacts that might be expected from this development, particularly during its construction. These can be managed through best practice construction management techniques to ensure surrounding interests, particularly road access and the amenity of local communities is safeguarded. The attached planning conditions will strengthen and clarify the plans and supporting environmental information provided by the applicant. The proposal will also be overseen by an appointed Environmental Clerk of Works with any permission requiring regular compliance monitoring and ongoing engagement by means of the Community Liaison Group.
- 8.6 The proposed development is supported in the context of the Development Plan and in particular NPF4 Policy 11 Energy and HwLDP Policy 69 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure and the underlying support for renewable energy development which is consented in this area. 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.

9. IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Resource: There are significant staffing and financial resource implications if the application is to be subject to a Public Local Inquiry.

- 9.2 Legal: If the Committee determine that an objection should be raised to the application, the application may be subject to a Public Local Inquiry prior to determination by Scottish Ministers.
- 9.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 9.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The application replaces grid infrastructure for the connection of renewable energy to the grid therefore helping to deliver a contribution toward climate change targets.
- 9.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 9.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

10. RECOMMENDATION

Action required prior to issue of consultation response: None.

The Energy Consents Unit will have to consider the incorporation of all recommended planning conditions, including external consultees outwith Highland Council, within any forthcoming consent. The following conditions from Highland Council shall be applied:

10.1 It is recommended to **RAISE NO OBJECTION** to the application subject to:

CONDITIONS AND REASONS

1. Time Limit for the Implementation of Planning Permission

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

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

2. Implementation in Accordance with Approved Plans

Except as otherwise required by the terms of the Section 37 consent and deemed planning permission, the Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the application including the approved Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR), received by the Planning Authority in July 2024.

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

3. **Elevations, Materials and Finishes**

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

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

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

4. Limits of Deviation and Micro-Siting

All poles shall be constructed in the locations shown in Location Plan Figure 7.1.6 of the Environmental Appraisal received by the Planning Authority on 29 July 2024.

- a) No pole shall be positioned more than 100m on the horizontal axis of the proposed overhead line alignment; and
- b) No pole shall be more than a height of 34m in height inclusive of all steel work and insulators with an overall vertical limit of Deviation (LoD) of 20%.

No later than one month after the date of final commissioning of the development, an updated drawing must be submitted showing the final position of the overhead line, including the positioning and height of all poles and associated infrastructure forming part of the development must be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority.

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

5. **Pre-construction survey**

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

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

6. Species Protection Plans (SPPs)

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

- a) Otter
- b) Water vole

- c) Bat
- d) Any other protected species identified on site during the pre-construction surveys

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

7. Environmental Clerk of Works

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

- a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the environmental commitments provided in the Environmental Appraisal as well as the following (the EnvCoW works):
 - i. the Limits of deviation and micro siting under Condition 4;
 - ii. the Pre-Construction Ecological Survey under Condition 5;
 - iii. the Species Protection Plans under Condition 6;
 - iv. Peat Management Plan under Condition 8;
 - v. the Habitat Management Plan under Condition 9;
 - vi. the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan under Condition 10; and
 - vii. the Construction Environmental Management Plan under Condition 12.
- b) Require the EnvCoW to report concurrently to the nominated construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority any incidences of non-compliance with the EnvCoW works at the earliest practical opportunity; and
- c) Require the EnvCoW to concurrently submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site.

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

8. **Peat Management Plan**

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

a) Exact details of the location and design of any tracks on peat greater than 1m, to be agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA.

- b) Demonstration of adhering to recognised best practice including micro siting, limiting the footprint, and use of mog mats / temporary trackway to reduce disturbance:
- c) Confirming the volumes of peat that will be disturbed as a result of the above work, demonstrating that no waste peat will be generated by the development and peat is reused in an appropriate manner with demonstration that peatland restoration achieves at least a 1:10 ratio of loss to offsetting;
- d) Proposed mitigation is undertaken and incorporated into the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Storage areas, laydown areas and pulling stations are planned to avoid areas of sensitive peatland habitat, to further reduce impacts; and

The PMP shall thereafter be implemented as approved.

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

9. Habitat Management Plan

- a) There shall be no commencement of development until an updated Habitat Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with NatureScot. This shall quantify and map the extent and quality of habitat and peat losses, direct and indirect areas of disturbance, and biodiversity impact associated with the finalised development proposals, taking account of the limit of deviation and micro siting allowances to be utilised. This shall also account for any additional intended storage areas, laydown areas, and all other temporary construction areas, identifying existing habitat features and vegetation to be retained.
- b) Within 18 months of the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a finalised Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with NatureScot. The finalised HMP shall set out proposed habitat management of the site including all mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, during the period of construction and operation, and shall detail the long-term management regimes of the compensation and enhancement measures required of the site. All planting, seeding or turfing as may be comprised in the approved details shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the commencement of development, unless otherwise stated in the approved scheme
- c) The HMP shall include provision for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken against the HMP objectives and measures for securing amendments or additions to the HMP in the event that the HMP objectives are not being met. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, for whatever reason are removed or damaged shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of the same size and species.

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

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

10. **Biodiversity Enhancement Plan**

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

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

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

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

11. Tree Planting Plan

No development shall commence until a Tree Planting Plan and maintenance programme to compensate for part loss of group G2 has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority. The Tree Planting Plan shall be implemented in full during the first planting season following commencement of development or as otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity.

12. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

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

- a) an updated Schedule of Mitigation highlighting amendments made to the existing schedule of mitigation set out in the Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR), received by the Planning Authority in July 2024, and the conditions of this consent:
- b) Updated General Environmental Management Plans;
- c) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction-type activities on the environment;
- d) Mitigation to protect the ecological resources on site, including biodiversity protection zones, location and timing of works;
- e) Species and Habitat Protection Plans;

- f) A Pollution Prevention Plan including drainage management strategy and mitigation measures, demonstrating how all surface water run-off and waste water arising during and after development is to be managed and prevented from polluting any watercourses or sources, including any private water supplies. The plan shall also include arrangements for the storage and management of oil and fuel on the site;
- g) Site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the construction period other than peat), including details of contingency planning in the event of accidental release of materials which could cause harm to the environment;
- b) Details of the formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing;
- Details of measures to be taken to prevent loose or deleterious material being deposited on the local road network including wheel cleaning and lorry sheeting facilities, and measures to clean the site entrances and the adjacent local road network;
- Mitigation to protect and minimise disturbance to archaeological interests, including the demarcation implantation of a buffer from known cultural heritage assets and a protocol in the event of the discovery of a previously unrecorded cultural heritage asset;
- k) Details of temporary site illumination; and
- I) Construction Method Statement for any watercourse crossings.

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

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

13. **Construction Noise Mitigation Scheme**

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

- i. A description of the most significant noise sources in terms of equipment; processes or phases of construction;
- ii. The proposed operating hours and the estimated duration of the works for each phase;
- iii. A detailed plan showing the location of noise sources, noise sensitive premises and any survey measurement locations if required; and

iv. A description of noise mitigation methods that will be put in place including any proposals for community liaison. The best practice found in BS5228 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites should be followed. Any divergence requires to be justified.

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

Reason: To reduce the impact of construction noise.

14. Access Improvements

No development shall commence until the layout and construction details for any temporary or permanent new accesses from the C1144 along with any access to be closed off is submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Roads Authority. Thereafter, the works shall be implemented either prior to the main construction works commencing, or within 4 months of the commencement of development, whichever is the sooner.

Reason: To ensure the road is enhanced and thereafter maintained to safely accommodate the increased traffic arising from the construction traffic associated with this development and existing road users.

15. Construction Traffic Management Plan

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

- a) A schedule of mitigation works which shall consider the need for localised strengthening of the carriageway, improvements to junctions, widening on bends, provision and improvements of passing places and measures to reduce conflict between active travel users and HGVs;
- b) A detailed review of the preferred route to the site for all the abnormal indivisible loads (AILs) that will be required including the port of entry, swept path assessment and consideration of the structures along the route and details of mitigation where required.
- c) Scheduling and timing of movements, respecting any large public event taking place in the local area which would be unduly affected or disrupted by construction vehicles using the public road network, avoiding the movement of commercial goods vehicles along the local public road network during the drop-off and pick-up times of the local schools;
- d) Traffic management measures on the routes to site for construction traffic. Measures such as temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road

markings and the use of speed activated signs and banksman/escort details should be considered. During the delivery period of construction materials any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any loads being delivered or removed must be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant, to be approved by the impacted Roads Authority before delivery commences;

- e) Appropriate steps to effectively coordinate traffic movements with other developments that could be impacting on the same construction access route as this proposal, avoid convoying of larger / heavier commercial goods vehicles along local public roads and avoid convoying;
- f) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period;
- g) Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;
- h) Ensure that effective access can be provided to all existing properties and businesses who are also reliant on the roads impacted by this development;
- i) The provision of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 under which the developer will be responsible for the repair of any damage to the local road network attributable to construction related traffic. As part of the agreement, pre-start and post construction road condition surveys must be carried out by the developer to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority;
- j) Provisions for emergency vehicle access;
- k) A timetable for implementation of the measures detailed in the CTMP;
- Identification of quarries/suppliers for materials such as aggregate and concrete;
- m) Estimate of volume of and type of materials that must be imported for each site;
- n) Estimate of load size for each type of material;
- o) Estimate of the number of HGVs for each stage of construction;
- p) Number and type of any abnormal loads;
- q) Clarification of construction routes and port of entry if applicable;
- r) Dates for key activities within construction programmes for the proposed works along with the other schemes noted;
- Type and scale of improvements to the existing C1144 Local Public Road be submitted to and accepted by the Planning Authority and then subsequently fully implemented;
- t) Demonstrate how all interactions between construction activities and other road users will be effectively managed to ensure that the road remains safe and usable by all, this will need to include the remote construction compound proposed further west along the C1144;
- u) Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred and measures for keeping the Community Council informed and dealing with queries and any complaints regarding construction traffic ensuring: effective lines of communication with existing residents, businesses and appropriate local representation.

The Plan shall thereafter be implemented as approved.

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

16. The Abnormal Load Traffic Management Plan (ALTMP)

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

- a) A risk assessment for transportation of abnormal loads during daylight hours and hours of darkness;
- b) Proposed traffic management and mitigation measures on the abnormal load access route. Measures such as temporary speed limits, road closures, suitable temporary signage and diversions, road markings and the use of speed activated signs should be considered;
- c) A contingency plan prepared by the abnormal load haulier. The plan shall be adopted only after consultation and agreement with the Police and the respective roads authorities. It shall include measures to deal with any haulage incidents that may result in public roads becoming temporarily closed or restricted;
- d) A detailed protocol for abnormal load movements, prepared in consultation and agreement with interested parties. The protocol shall identify any requirement for convoy working and/or escorting of vehicles and include arrangements to provide advance notice of abnormal load movements in the local media. Temporary signage, in the form of demountable signs or similar approved, shall be established, when required. All such movements on Council maintained roads shall take place outwith peak times on the network, including school travel times, and shall avoid local community events;
- e) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period; and

Details of appropriate upgrading works at the junction of the site access and the public road for the abnormal load movements. Such works may include suitable drainage measures, improved geometry and construction, measures to protect the public road, and the provision and maintenance of appropriate visibility splays. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

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

17. Traffic Control Measures

Prior to the movement of any components and/or construction materials, 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.

Reason: To ensure that the transportation of any components/materials will not have any detrimental effect on the road and structures along the route.

18. **Temporary Tracks**

No development shall commence until full details of the restoration measures following the removal of the temporary access tracks are submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the restoration of the site is carried out in an appropriate and environmentally acceptable manner.

19. Public Access

Non-motorised public access shall not be restricted or discouraged on any permanent access roads constructed as part of the development. Should any fence or gate be erected across tracks or paths, permanent pass gates shall be installed to accommodate walkers, cyclists and horse riders. These pass gates, not kissing gates, shall have easy access to them, a clear internal width of at least 1.5m and ideally be self-closing

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

20. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

No development shall commence until full details of all surface water drainage provision within the application site (which shall accord with the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and be designed to the standards outlined in Sewers for Scotland Fourth Edition, or any superseding guidance prevailing at the time) shall have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt, the details shall include the final drainage design for all new hardstanding on the site. 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 ensure that surface water drainage is provided timeously and complies with the principles of SUDS; in order to protect the water environment.

21. Lighting

Prior to the first commissioning of the development, details of any external lighting, or any externally visible internal building lighting, shall be submitted to and approved in writing with the Planning Authority. The lighting shall thereafter be constructed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity, to minimise light pollution and to ensure the development does not have an adverse impact on nocturnal animals.

22. Local Employment Scheme

Prior to the Commencement of Development, a Local Employment Scheme for the

construction and operation of the development shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by The Highland Council. The submitted Scheme shall make reference to the Environmental Appraisal (EA) (received 29 July 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.

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

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

23. Community Liaison Group

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

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

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

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

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

24. Planning Monitoring Officer

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

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

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

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

Signature: Bob Robertson

Designation: Acting Area Planning Manager – South

Author: Roddy Dowell

Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans: Plan 1 - Site Layout Plan Figure 1.2

Plan 2 - Location Plan Figure 7.1.6

Plan 3 - Site Layout LT256-QUOI-0802-0002 Rev 0A

Plan 4 - Site Layout LT256-QUOI-0802-0005 Rev 0C

Plan 5 - Site Layout LT256-QUOI-0802-0006 Rev 0A

Plan 6 - Site Layout LT256 QUOI 0802 2005 Rev 0C

Plan 7 - Site Layout LT256-QUOI-0802-0004 Rev 0A

Plan 8 - General Plan LT256_QUOI_0802_1003 Rev D

Plan 9 - General Plan LT256_QUOI_0802_1004 Rev 0C

Plan 10 - Access Layout LT256 QUOI 0802 2003 Rev 0D

Plan 11 - Earthworks Section LT256 QUOI 0802 2006 Rev 0C

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
 - 1 Tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis
 - 2 Climate mitigation and adaptation
 - 3 Biodiversity
 - 4 Natural Places
 - 5 Soils
 - 7 Historic Assets and Places
 - 11 Energy
 - 14 Design, Quality and Place
 - 22 Flood Risk and Water Management
 - 23 Health and Safety
 - 25 Community Wealth Building
 - 29 Rural Development
 - 33 Minerals

Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

- A1.2 28 Sustainable Design
 - 29 Design Quality and Place-making
 - 30 Physical Constraints
 - 31 Developer Contributions
 - 36 Development in the Wider Countryside
 - 51 Trees and Development
 - 55 Peat and Soils
 - 56 Travel
 - 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
 - 58 Protected Species
 - 59 Other Important Species
 - 60 Other Importance Habitats
 - 61 Landscape
 - 63 Water Environment
 - 64 Flood Risk
 - 65 Waste Water Treatment
 - 66 Surface Water Drainage
 - 69 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
 - 72 Pollution
 - 73 Air Quality

77 - Public Access

West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (2019) (WestPlan)

A1.3 No sites specific policies

Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance

- A1.4 Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)
 - Developer Contributions (Mar 2018)
 - Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
 - Green Networks (Jan 2013)
 - Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
 - Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
 - Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (May 2006)
 - Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
 - Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
 - Special Landscape Area Citations (Jun 2011)
 - Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
 - Trees, woodland and development (Jan 2013)

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Other National Policy and Guidance

- Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (July 2024)
 - UK Government Clean Power Action Plan (Dec 2024)
 - Advising on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats in development (NatureScot, Feb 2024)
 - Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure: Government Response, UK Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero (2023)
 - The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
 - Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026 (2022)
 - Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency

(2023)

- Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (2018)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (2019)
- Scheduled Monuments Consents Policy (2019)
- PAN 1/2011 Planning and Noise (2011)
- PAN 60 Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
- Developing with Nature Guidance (NatureScot 2023)
- Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (2010)

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

National Policy

- A2.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) forms part of the Development Plan and was adopted in February 2023. It comprises three parts:
 - Part 1 sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in the future and includes six spatial principles (just transition / conserving and recycling assets / local living / compact urban growth / rebalanced development / rural revitalisation. Part 1 sets out that there are eighteen national developments to support the spatial strategy and regional spatial priorities, which includes single large-scale projects and networks of smaller proposals that are collectively nationally significant.
 - Part 2 sets out policies for the development and use of land that are to be applied in the preparation of local development plans; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining the range of planning consents. This part of the document should be taken as a whole in that all relevant policies should be applied to each application.
 - Part 3 provides a series of annexes that provide the rationale for the strategies and policies of NPF4. The annexes outline how the document should be used and set out how the Scottish Government will implement the strategies and policies contained in the document.
- A2.2 NPF4 outlines 18 national developments that support the plan's spatial strategy. National developments will be a focus for delivery, as well as exemplars of the Place Principle, placemaking and a Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development. Six of the national developments support the delivery of sustainable places. Among these is national development number 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, which "supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply." National development 3 accords national development status to electricity transmission that includes b) New and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more, and/or c) New and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations. This proposal aligns with parts of both b) and c) and therefore, is classed as a national development, and as such received in principle support.
- A2.3 The spatial strategy reflects existing legislation by setting out that decision making requires to reflect the long-term public interest. However, in doing so, it is clear that the decision maker must make the right choices about where development should be located, ensuring clarity is provided over the types of infrastructure that need to be provided and the assets that should be protected to ensure they continue to benefit future generations. To that end, the Spatial Priorities support the planning

and delivery of sustainable places, which will reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; create liveable places, where residents can live better, healthier lives; and create productive places, with a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

- A2.4 NPF4 Policies 1, 2, and 3 now apply to all development proposals Scotland-wide, which means that significant weight must be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals, as required by NPF4 Policy 1. To that end, development proposals are to be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions, as far as is practicably possible, in accordance with NPF4 Policy 2, while contributing to the enhancement of biodiversity, as required by NPF4 Policy 3.
- A2.5 Policy 3 Biodiversity aims to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects and strengthen nature networks. Every development proposal has to maintain or improve biodiversity. As detailed in the Natural Heritage section of this report above, the proposed Habitat Management Plan is not considered to be sufficient to mitigate or provide sufficient habitat enhancement. Therefore, conditions are required to comply with Policy 3.
- A2.6 Policy 4 - Natural Places aims to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. It sets out that development proposals, by virtue of type, location, or scale that have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported. The policy goes on to clarify what that means for different designations. It sets out that proposals with likely significant effects on European sites (SACs or SPAs) require an appropriate assessment, and that development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area or SSSI shall only be supported where: i) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or ii) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance. The site is not located within any ecological or ornithological designation and subject to mitigation measures outlined in the EA and conditions requested by consultees the impacts upon any nearby designations will not be significant. The site is also not located within a National Park or NSA.
- A2.7 Policy 4 section e) also requires project design and mitigation to demonstrate how the following various impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, and noise, landscape, visual and cumulative impacts, public access, aviation and defence interests, telecommunications and broadcasting installations, traffic and roads, historic environment, hydrology, water environment and flood risk, trees, biodiversity, decommissioning and site restoration are all addressed. As detailed in the Natural Heritage section of this report above, the proposed Habitat Management Plan is not considered to be sufficient to mitigate or provide sufficient habitat enhancement.
- A2.8 Policy 5 Soils, aims to protect carbon rich soils including peatlands. Development proposals on such locations, will only be supported where they relate to essential infrastructure or renewable energy development. The applicant will implement an Outline Peat Management Plan (OPMP) that will be developed into a detailed site

specific PMP before construction begins and is controlled by condition.

- A2.9 Policy 7 Historic Assets and Places is intended to protect and enhance historic environment assets, enabling positive change. Policy outcomes include ensuring the historic environment is valued, whilst supporting the transition to net zero, as well as recognising the social, environmental and economic value of the historic environment to our economy and cultural identity. Policy 7 part a) requires proposals with potential significant impacts to be appropriately assessed; with part h) ii) setting out that development proposals will only be supported where significant adverse impacts on the integrity or setting of a scheduled monument are avoided. Part h) iii) of this policy also enables 'exceptional circumstances' to be demonstrated to justify the impact on a scheduled monument and its setting, and where impacts on the monument or its setting have been minimised. The EA concluded that there will be no significant direct impacts upon historic assets within the site boundary nor will there be significant indirect impacts upon the setting of any listed buildings or scheduled monuments.
- A2.10 Policy 11 Energy aims to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure. Section a) notes development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported, including (ii.) enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure. Section c) confirms development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities. Section d) requires development proposals that impact on international or national designations to be assessed in relation to Policy 4. In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.
- A2.11 Policy 25 Community wealth building aims to encourage, promote and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels. While NPF4 considers national developments as a focus for delivery, they should also be exemplars of the community wealth building approach to economic development. This is considered further within the Economic Impact section of this report.

Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

- A2.12 The principal Highland-wide Local Development Plan policy against which the application requires to be determined is the Policy 69 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure. This policy offers support for electricity transmission infrastructure, having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Such support is subject to the proposals not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment.
- A2.13 As the development would facilitate electricity generation from renewable sources, the principle of the development receives support under HwLDP Policy 69 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure, subject to site selection, design and

- overcoming any unacceptable significant environmental effects.
- A2.14 Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside applies and sets out that all development in the countryside will be determined on the basis of a number of criteria. Pertinent matters to this proposal include siting and design, being compatible with the existing pattern of development, landscape character and capacity, as well as drainage and servicing implications.
- A2.15 The generality of the HwLDP's topic policies are superseded by those in NPF4. However, those that offer greater detail than NPF4 or that are tailored to Highland circumstance (and are not wholly incompatible with NPF4) are still relevant and may be applicable. For example, the Council's Policy 31 on Developer Contributions links to greater detail in Supplementary Guidance and therefore both are still relevant.
- A2.16 Work on a new-style local development plan (Highland Local Development Plan) to ultimately repeal and replace the two relevant existing local development plans is progressing with a revised timetable of Evidence Report approval and submission to DPEA for Gate Check in late 2025 and publication of the Proposed Plan in late 2026.
- A2.17 The principal policy on which the application requires to be assessed is HwLDP Policy 69 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure.

Developer Contributions

- A2.18 Under the terms of HwLDP Policy 31 Developer Contributions and the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance (2018), industrial (including energy) developments may be required to make contributions towards transport, green infrastructure, water and waste, and public art. In addition, Policy 11c) of NPF4 now provides an explicit national planning policy requirement for community benefits from energy proposals.
- A2.19 Highland Council's approved and published Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment from June 2024 which sets out the community benefit expectations from developers wishing to invest in energy proposals in Highland.

West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (2019) (WestPlan)

- A2.20 Policy 2 Nature Protection, Restoration and Enhancement states that development 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. To inform this, proposals should:
 - be based on an understanding of the existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of any irreplaceable habitats or species;
 - wherever feasible, integrate and make best use of nature-based solutions,

demonstrating how this has been achieved;

- be supported by an assessment of potential negative effects which should be fully mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements;
- provide significant biodiversity enhancements, in addition to any proposed mitigation. take into account the community benefit of biodiversity and nature networks.
- A2.21 Biodiversity enhancements proposed through development will require to be delivered within an agreed timescale and should include supporting nature networks, linking to and strengthening habitat connectivity within and beyond the development, where appropriate. Any submission should include management arrangements for long-term retention and monitoring of the approved biodiversity enhancements, wherever appropriate.
- A2.22 This application is supported by an ecological assessment and an outline Habitat Management Plan which includes restoration and enhancement measures. The quantum of peatland restoration provisions however fall below expectation.

Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)

A2.23 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.





















