

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS**  
**COMMITTEE**

**17 December 2025, 9.30AM**

**MINUTE / ACTION NOTE**

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

**Committee Members Present:**

Ms S Atkin  
Mr M Baird  
Mr R Bremner (remotely) (except item 4.1)  
Ms B Campbell (remotely)  
Ms T Collier (remotely)  
Ms L Dundas  
Mr J Edmondson  
Mr R Gale  
Ms C Gillies  
Mrs A MacLean (except item 3.1)  
**Mr D Millar**  
Ms J McEwan (except item 4.1)  
Ms M Paterson

**Non-Committee Members Present:**

Mr H Morrison  
Mr J Finlayson  
Mr R Jones  
Mr T Robertson  
Mr S Coghill

**Substitutes:**

Mr R Gunn  
Mr P Logue

**Apologies:**

Mr K Rosie  
Ms L Kraft

**Officers participating:**

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)  
Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)  
Mr G Baxter, Principal Planner (GB)

Mr M Fitzpatrick, Principal Planner (MF)  
 Mr J Bridge, Senior Engineer, Transport Planning  
 Ms R Banfro, Acting Principal Solicitor (Planning) and Clerk  
 Ms K Arnott, Committee Officer

ITE M NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> <b>Leisgeulan</b>  <b>Cllr K Rosie</b> <b>Cllr L Kraft</b>	
2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> <b>Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt</b>  Item 6.2 – Mr R Bremner Item 6.2 – Ms J McEwan	n/a
3	<b>Pre Determination Hearing and Determination of Planning Application</b>	
3.1	<p>3.1 (pp 1 - 68) (Plans pp 1 - 16) (2405062/FUL) (PLN/075/25)</p> <p><b>Applicant:</b> Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Land 2430M SW Of Loch Buidhe, Bonar Bridge (Ward 01).</p> <p><b>Nature of Development:</b> Carnaig Substation - Construction and operation of a 400kV substation and associated infrastructure, site access, and landscaping.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> GRANT</p> <p><b>For Motion</b> from Mr R Gale seconded by Mrs M Paterson: -</p> <p>The proposed development does not comply with National Planning Framework 4 Policies 1, 2, 5(c)(ii), 11(e)(xiii) and 13, and Policy 56 and policy 67 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.</p> <p>The proposed development forms a functionally interdependent component of the wider Spittal Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV electricity transmission project. The assessment identifies moderate adverse and significant cumulative landscape and visual effects, which are assessed on the assumption that construction of the substation and the associated overhead line would not overlap; however, that assumption is not secured by way of planning condition. In the event of overlapping construction, cumulative landscape and visual effects would be of greater magnitude and longer duration than those assessed resulting in significantly detrimental effects on the upland and upland fringe landscape character around Carnaig and Loch Buidhe, and the visual amenity of residents of Bonar Bridge, residents of scattered rural properties along Migdale Road and the U3521 (Loch Buidhe Road), and road users and recreational users of the surrounding area. In these circumstances, the proposal does not</p>	GB

demonstrate how cumulative landscape and visual impacts would be appropriately mitigated and therefore the proposal fails to comply with Policy 11(e)(xiii) of NPF4 and Policy 67 of the HwLDP.

The assessment also acknowledges the potential for cumulative construction traffic arising from the combined construction of the substation and the overhead line. These impacts are considered to be substantial given the nature and scale of the development. However, while cumulative traffic effects are identified, the assessment does not provide a sufficiently robust assessment of the combined effects of HGV and abnormal load traffic on constrained local routes, including Bonar Bridge, Migdale Road and the U3521 (Loch Buidhe Road). In particular, the assessment does not identify, define or assess the specific transport mitigation measures required to accommodate this level of cumulative traffic, including the extent of road widening, strengthening and reconstruction works identified by the Council's Transport Planning advice as likely to be necessary along Migdale Road and associated sections of the local road network. The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate how the cumulative impacts on road safety, residential amenity and network capacity for residents in Bonar Bridge and for those living in scattered rural properties along Migdale Road and the U3521, and on Bonar Bridge itself, would be adequately addressed. As such, the proposal fails to comply with Policies 11(e)(xiii) and 13 of NPF4 and Policy 56 of the HwLDP.

In addition, the proposed development would involve the disturbance and removal of a substantial quantity of peat, resulting in an estimated carbon loss of approximately 110,590 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. While the proposal relates to renewable energy infrastructure, it has not been demonstrated that peat disturbance has been avoided or minimised through appropriate siting, layout or design, nor that the resulting carbon loss would be fully mitigated so as to optimise greenhouse gas emissions reductions. As such, the proposed development does not comply with NPF4 Policies 1, 2 and 5(c)(ii).

Amendment 1 moved by Cllr Edmondson with no Seconder:

The proposed development is required to connect and operate the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV overhead Line and therefore forms a functionally interdependent component of a wider electricity transmission project.

There is insufficient environmental information that has been provided to enable an adequate assessment of the likely significant cumulative effects of the development when considered alongside the associated Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV overhead line. In particular, the assessment of landscape and visual effects relies on assumptions that the proposed development would not overlap with construction of the associated Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV overhead line. That construction phasing is not secured, and this could result in overlapping construction and greater cumulative effects than assessed. The assessment of traffic and transportation impacts acknowledges the potential for cumulative construction traffic arising from the combined construction of the Carnaig substation and the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV overhead Line,

but does not include a quantitative cumulative assessment of combined vehicle movements, including HGV and abnormal load traffic through Bonar Bridge, along Migdale Road and the U3521 (Loch Buidhe Road).

In determining the application, under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the decision-maker is required to examine the Environmental Impact Assessment and to ensure that the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, including cumulative effects, are identified, described and assessed, and to reach a reasoned conclusion on those effects before planning permission is granted.

For these reasons the Environmental Impact Assessment fails to meet the requirements of Regulation 4(2) and Schedule 4, paragraph 5(e) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and therefore the Committee is unable to conclude that the cumulative effects of the development have been appropriately mitigated to comply with policy 11(e) xiii of NPF4.

This Amendment was subsequently **Withdrawn** by Cllr Edmondson

**Amendment** from Mr K Rosie seconded by Mr D Millar to **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to (1) the conditions detailed in the report and (2) subject to the following amendments in respect of condition 20:

Replacing current subsections b), e) and f) with:

- b) Road Safety Measures within Bonar Bridge. The schedule shall include consideration of improvements at the A836/A949/U3521 junction, footway improvements, gateway features, traffic regulation orders controlling parking and speed management measures such as speed limit orders and improved signage, speed indicator devices and traffic calming features.
- e) Structural assessment of the capacity of the Migdal Road (U3521) carriageway and drainage system to support the volume and intensity of heavy vehicle axle loading generated by the construction traffic and full reconstruction where the assessment indicates the current infrastructure is not suitable to support the increased loading intensity. This will include any road drainage works required.
- f) Widening of the single lane section of Migdale Road (U3521) to 6m to allow two-way traffic. Where this is not reasonably practicable the single lane section shall be widened to 3.5m and intervisible passing places suitable for two-way HGV traffic shall be provided. Localised widening in excess of 3.5m on bends may also be required. The widening proposals will include any road drainage works required.

Adding the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A joint stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit for the proposed mitigation works on the public road.</li> <li>• A mechanism for post-implementation monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the mitigation measures throughout the construction phase with provision for adjustments if necessary. This shall include stage 3, and 4 Road Safety Audits of the mitigation works.</li> </ul> <p>And subject to the following additional condition:</p> <p>No development shall commence until such time as the Scottish Ministers have issued a decision notice granting consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for planning application ECU00006008 (25/03311/S37) Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV Overhead Line, together with deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> The environmental effects of the proposed development are assessed on the basis that it operates as a functionally interdependent component of the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV overhead line. The condition ensures the development is carried out only on that basis.</p> <p>There were <b>9</b> votes for the Motion and <b>5</b> votes for the Amendment with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:</p> <p>For the Motion: - Ms S Atkin, Mr M Baird, Ms L Dundas, Mr J Edmondson, Mr R Gale, Ms C Gillies, Ms J MacEwan, Ms M Paterson, Mr R Gunn.</p> <p>For the Amendment: - Mr R Bremner, Ms I Campbell, Mr T Collier, Mr D Millar and Mr P Logue</p> <p>The Committee <b>AGREED</b> to <b>REFUSE</b> planning permission for the reasons provided by Cllr Gale.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Planning Applications to be Determined</b>	
4.1	<p><b>Declaration of Interest – Mr R Bremner as a Trustee of the Flow Country World Heritage Site and Ms J MacEwan as a member of the Flow Country Steering Group. Both members left the meeting and did not participate in the meeting.</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No PLN/076/25 by the Area Planning Manager - North which is as follows: -</p> <p><b>Applicant:</b> Shinness Wind Farm Ltd (24/01643/S36) (PLN/076/25)</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Land 2290M SE Of Aultnacoarach, Shinness, Lairg (Ward 01).</p> <p><b>Nature of Development:</b> Shinness Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of 15 (as amended) wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, battery energy storage system (BESS), access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure.</p>	MF

<b>Recommendation: RAISE AN OBJECTION</b>	
<p>The Committee <b>AGREED</b> to <b>RAISE AN OBJECTION</b> for the reasons detailed in the Report.</p>	