Agenda Item	**3.1**
Report No	**PLS/77/25**

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 18 December 2025

Report Title: 25/00826/FUL: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc
Land 300m NW of Fanellan Farmhouse, Kiltarlity

Report By: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose / Executive Summary

Description: Fanellan Substation - construction and operation of a 400kV substation and converter station and associated infrastructure, site access, landscaping and demolition works

Ward: 12 – Aird and Loch Ness

Development category: National Development

Pre-Determination Hearing: Yes

Reason referred to Committee: National Development

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

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **GRANT** the application as set out in Section 11 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

1.1 The applicant, the electricity network operator in Highland, SSEN, are proposing the construction and operation of a 400kV substation, converter station, site access, landscaping and demolition works along with associated infrastructure (the Fanellan Hub). The proposed development forms one of several major network upgrades planned across Highland and is part of a wider national programme of works that are required to meet UK and Scottish Government energy targets. The energy regulator, Ofgem, approved the need for the Fanellan Hub as part of its Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) framework decision separate to the planning process. There is a strong expectation from both UK and Scottish Governments and Ofgem, that these ASTI projects will be delivered by 2030 with these being required to deliver the Governments 2030 renewable targets as set within the British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022). Whilst the target for the substation to become operational is 2030, this was based on a 2025 start date.

1.2 The substation and converter station are required to substantially strengthen the local transmission network and support new onshore and offshore connections, such as those created through the Western Isles Connection project. This requires a new connection to transmit electricity generated by renewables on the Western Isles to areas of demand on the mainland using subsea and onshore underground cables to provide a link between the Western Isles and Beauly. The applicant considers the site offers the most suitable location on the 400kV transmission network where it can connect to the existing Beauly Denny 400kV overhead line (OHL). Additionally, the proposed development will facilitate the export of future renewable generation from the north of Scotland to areas of demand throughout the UK. The proposed development will provide connections for the Western Isles Connection, Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL and the Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL. The existing Beauly Denny 400kV / 265kV OHL will also be tied into the proposed development.

1.3 This planning application is for the substation and converter station and is made under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, whereby the Council is the determining authority. All related grid connections do not form part of this application, with all associated above ground connections requiring separate consents. The main elements this application are:

400kV Substation

- Construction of a substation platform measuring 525m by 305m to accommodate the infrastructure by means of cut and fill earthworks and importation of materials as required;
- Installation of Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) and busbar to connect incoming circuits including the High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) converter station (with all associated external infrastructure equipment being up to 15m in height);
- Installation of Step-Down Transformers (SDT) to provide the site with Low Voltage Alternating Current (LVAC) supply;
- Control building measuring 50m by 26m with a height of 7m;

- 4.2m high security fence.

HVDC Converter Station

A co-located converter station platform measuring 305m by 285m adjacent to the substation;

- Main 525kV 2GW bi-pole HVDC converter station buildings comprising a valve hall, direct current hall, reactor hall, transformer hall with adjacent service and control rooms measuring approximately 260m by 80m with a height of 27.5m;
- Ancillary and support buildings adjacent to the main converter station building;
- A connection to the alternating current (AC) site via overhead busbar;
- Shared common access, drainage infrastructure and landscaping across both the substation and HVDC converter sites.

Other Infrastructure

- Operations depot and store measuring 124m by 60m with a height of 24m (capable of storing transformers and other large plant equipment);
- A new access track including a bellmouth from the C1106 Fanellan Road retained once operational;
- Car parking;
- Underground connectors for Low Voltage (LV) and communication cabling;
- Earthworks, drainage, landscaping and biodiversity enhancement.

Construction Works

- Cut and fill earthworks to achieve a level area;
- Temporary access tracks, construction compounds, storage and laydown areas for topsoil and other materials, construction drainage arrangements;
- Demolition of existing agricultural yard and associated structures, and demolition of 2 residential properties; and
- Site clearance including 7.09ha of tree felling (for this proposed development and the associated Beauly to Denny reconfigures OHL).

1.4 The location of temporary site compounds and access tracks are indicative at this stage and are to be finalised by planning condition.

1.5 The construction period is anticipated to take approximately 3 years, with a further 2 years to commission and reach full energisation. Whilst the target for the substation to become operational is 2030 this was based on a 2025 start date. When operational, the substation would usually be unmanned with staff in attendance on an ad hoc basis for maintenance, fault repairs and routine inspections.

1.6 There are a number of associated proposed electricity transmission developments currently pending consideration that relate directly to the site. These include:

- The diversion of a section of the Beauly-Denny OHL (25/02993/S37) which will intersect the site and be rerouted to the north/northeast around the proposed substation. The proposed re-routed section of Beauly-Denny OHL would also tie into the proposed development;

- The proposed Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL (25/03986/S37) which will follow a south-westerly route to the site over the River Beauly crossing the C1106 Fanellan Road to tie in with the proposed development from the south of the site; and
- The proposed Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL (25/03311/S37) which will follow an easterly route to the site across the River Beauly and through Ruttle Wood to tie in with the proposed development from the northwest of the site.

1.7 Additional underground cable connections (UGC) beyond the site are to be progressed under permitted development rights. This includes the UGC for the Western Isles HVDC connection along with Low Voltage (LV) and communication cabling to connect site buildings and operational infrastructure. The HVDC converter station itself will connect to the AC substation via an overhead busbar, not underground cabling, but the long-distance link will be underground.

1.8 The substation would be accessed from the C1106 Fanellan Road which crosses through the site boundary. A new access track is proposed to the east of the site extending from the substation platform to the Fanellan Road by the forming of a new junction. This would connect with the Fanellan Road via a priority junction located approximately 100m to the west of the Fanellan Road junction with the U1604 Kiltarlity Road. This access road will remain in place permanently for operational use. The access road within the site connects the various elements of the proposed development.

1.9 Beyond the application site itself, further access infrastructure is required. This comprises the replacement of the Black Bridge over the River Beauly to allow heavy vehicle access, including the largest Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) to site. Whilst a 2 phase approach to access the site during construction works was initially proposed, with traffic passing through the settlement of Kiltarlity until Black Bridge had been upgraded, during the course of the application's determination the applicant has confirmed that it would accept a condition directing all Fanellan Hub construction traffic to be routed via the A831, over Black Bridge on the C1106 Fanellan Road only, unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Authority. As Black Bridge is outwith the red line site boundary, the replacement works will require a separate planning application.

1.10 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) will be integrated into the development as part of the landscape and habitat management strategy. The proposed SUDS measures include basins and ponds designed to manage surface water runoff and reduce flood risk. Reedbeds would be created within the deepest areas of the ponds to provide habitat and improve water quality. Seasonally wet species-rich neutral grassland will be planted around the margins of basins with native woodland planting proposed adjacent.

1.11 The Design and Access Statement sets out design principles for the proposed development. An Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) solution is proposed due to a combination of factors including cost, extensive site, ease of maintenance and a lack of sulphur hexafluoride (SF_6) gas (a potent greenhouse gas).

1.12 An Outline Landscape and Habitat Management Plan (noted in EIAR Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape Character and Visual Amenity) seeks to minimise the visual impact of the development to ensure the long-term objectives of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) mitigation are met. It commits to regular monitoring at years 5, 10, and 15 of operation, integration of habitat creation measures (native woodland planting, wildflower meadows, wetland areas) and compliance with embedded mitigation measures (landform design, colour strategy, fencing, drainage, and planting with local provenance species).

1.13 Construction works will require the removal of forestry for this scheme and the proposed Beauly to Denny reconfigured OHL, with felling consisting of the removal of both individual trees and groups of trees within agricultural land. Additionally, a small portion of Ruttle Wood would be removed as well as approximately half of the young woodland block at Bredaig. The Landscape Mitigation Plan (Volume 3, Figure 8.11) outlines that existing hedgerows and trees would be retained within the site alongside the new tree planting with the intention to retain as much of the perimeter trees and vegetation as possible.

1.14 The applicant used The Highland Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments (23/04003/PREMAJ). The pre-application response stated that whilst Highland Council is supportive of renewable energy developments in principle, including necessary grid connections, and noting the need for the development is well established with this national development looking to deliver a vital part of NPF4's National Spatial Strategy, significant concerns were noted. These included the significant size and scale of the substation infrastructure, along with land take required, on an elevated site alongside the cumulative impact of associated overhead lines which could lead to detrimental landscape and visual impacts on surrounding communities and various receptors. The larger buildings on site were encouraged to be reduced in height wherever possible, with care required to design buildings which are designed to fit within the landscape, particularly if their profile will be sky-lining in any key views or from surrounding transportation routes. The applicant was asked to fully consider split site options for the AC and HVDC elements of the project, with the higher HVDC building to be sited at a lower, better screened location. Further, underground options were encouraged to be explored for stretches of connecting transmission lines which cross through, or are in the vicinity of, more densely populated areas to the north and east of the site to mitigate cumulative impacts.

1.15 The pre-application response also noted various further requirements and supporting information including comprehensive landscaping and habitat plans, along with robust mitigation for construction impacts, particularly on local roads and the Black Bridge crossing. The Transport Planning Team noted that construction traffic routing through Kiltarlity would not be supported. Socio-economic benefits were to be clearly demonstrated to support community wealth building and a just transition. Whilst supportive in principle, the Council's position remained conditional on addressing outstanding concerns regarding site selection, routing, design, and environmental mitigation noting that unless these matters were resolved the Council could not confirm its support for the project.

1.16 The applicant has undertaken statutory pre-application consultation. A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted to Highland Council on 21 February 2024. The PAN provides an outline of the application details and proposed consultation methods, which included a series pre-consultation events. The first public events were held on 26 March 2024 between 12.30pm to 3.30pm and 6pm and 8pm at Kiltarlity Hall. A further event followed on 28 March 2024 between 2pm and 7pm at Phipps Hall in Beauly. The second public events were held on 19 June 2024 between 2pm and 7pm at Phipps Halll and 20 June 2024 between 2pm and 7pm. Consultation material was also available online. The applicant raised awareness of these events by notifying the host Community Council and 2 adjacent Community Councils, local ward members, MP, regional MSPs, Beauly Community Liaison Group and placing statutory newspaper adverts. Additionally, they undertook a leaflet drop to properties within 10km of the site.

1.17 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). This was informed through EIA Scoping (24/02655/SCOP) which was submitted to Highland Council on 14 June 2024. The Council's Scoping Response was issued on 6 August 2024 with further information provided separately from Highland Council's Forestry Officer on 15 August 2024. The submitted EIAR contains the following chapters: Introduction and Background; Project Need; Description of the Proposed Development; Site Selection and Alternatives; EIA Process and Methodology; Scope and Consultation; Energy Policy and Context; Landscape Character and Visual Amenity; Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation Ecology and Nature Conservation; Ornithology; Heritage; Traffic and Transport; Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils; Noise and Vibration; Forestry; Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation; Cumulative Effects; Summary of Effects; and Schedule of Mitigation. The application is also accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC), Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement.

1.18 During the determination of the application, the following variations have been made, as set out within the application's updated Transport Assessment Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI):

- An amended construction access route to the site, passing though Beaufort Estate as opposed to the majority of vehicles travelling through Kiltarlity (EIAR Volume 4, Appendix 12.2 Transport Assessment).

1.19 Following concerns raised by Historic Environment Scotland, Historic Environment Team, Transport Planning, Forestry Officer and Access Officer given the significant levels of traffic proposed through the Estate, the applicant then confirmed in writing that traffic would be routed to avoid passing through Kiltarlity with the C1006 Fanellan Road across the Black Bridge used from the north to access the site. As noted, Black Bridge needs to be replaced to accommodate large scale, heavier vehicles that will be required for the construction phase of the development. To date, no further details have been provided outlining how these works will be accommodated within the work programme of the proposed development.

1.20 Additionally, the applicant provided further clarification regarding a number of issues and addressing concerns raised in relation to: flood risk, access, noise,

trees and woodland, habitat, biodiversity net gain and the historic environment. An amended Flood Risk Assessment, Lovat Estate Woodland Management Plans, Habitats Regulations Appraisal, Outdoor Access Plan and supplementary visualisations were submitted, all of which was regarded as information to provide clarification, rather than constituting SEI.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The proposed development is located at Fanellan, approximately 4.1km to the southwest of Beauly. The application site covers 223ha with an elevation ranging from approximately 34m above ordinance datum (AOD) at its lowest point to the northeast, rising to approximately 147.5m AOD in the southwest portion of the site. The are of the proposed development's permanent platform covers 24.7ha.

2.2 The proposed development would be located in a lowland landscape lying to the east of extensive uplands. The landscape has a combination of hilly topography, a mixture of woodland and farmland and a significant local population living in small settlements, scattered clusters of dwellings and farms in the surrounding area. The proposed development would occupy farmland near the crest of a ridge landform partially enclosed by forestry to the northeast. The site boundary occupies an extensive area of farmland to the southeast and northeast of the main development platform, accommodating proposed extensive screening earthworks, planting and seeding.

2.3 Several overhead electricity lines pass through the area, including the Beauly Denny line which intersects the site, and converge on Beauly substation set back from the River Beauly. The proposed development would be located further southwest, near the top of a ridge on the other side of the river.

2.4 A number of farmsteads, cottages and houses are scattered in the immediate surrounding area to the south, west and east along the C1106 Fanellan Road as well as within the application site boundary. Beauly is the largest village within the wider surrounding area with other various smaller settlements including Kilmorack and Wester Balblair to the northeast, Aigas to the west, and Kiltarlity to the southeast.

2.5 The applicant notes that approximately 21 residential receptors are located within 500m of the site boundary and approximately 567 residential receptors are located within 1km of the site boundary, generally spread along the local road network.

2.6 The site lies within the River Beauly catchment and includes several small watercourses flowing through or adjacent to the development footprint. It is located outwith any Drinking Water Protected Area for groundwater with 2 private water supplies identified within 1km (Culburnie and Aigas Power Station) and a non-operational well within the site boundary. The site contains shallow groundwater levels with only a minimal peat presence and no significant contaminated land issues identified.

2.7 There are no built heritage designations within the site. The landscape includes many visible archaeological assets including tumuli, standing stones, Beaufort Castle, and the church and cemetery near Black Bridge along with others in the

wider surrounding area. There are various Scheduled Monuments in the locale along with the nationally significant Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape (GDL00052) and internationally significant Beaufort Castle Category A-Listed building (LB8068).

2.8 The proposed development is not located within any landscape designations and there are none in the wider surrounding area. The site falls within 2 Landscape Character Types (LCT) with the majority of the proposed development located within the Enclosed Farmland LCT 229 but a portion of the northeastern edge is also located within the Farmed Strath – Inverness LCT 227. Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area (NSA) is located approximately 10.2km to the southwest of the site. The Central Highlands Wild Land Area (WLA) 24 surrounds Glen Strathfarrar to the north and south of the glen and is located approximately 6km to the west of the site.

2.9 There is a mix of agricultural land, productive conifer woodland, upland birchwood, native pinewood and wet woodland within the application site boundary. The proposed substation is generally centred on open agricultural land with a strong field margin line of trees running northwest from Upper Fanellan Cottages and a more fragmented line of field margin trees running northeast and southwest from these cottages. The majority of the woodland areas within the site are recorded in the Ancient Woodland Inventory as Long-Established Plantation Origin (LEPO1860). There are other areas of conifer and native woodland within the application site boundary with many of the native woodland areas listed in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland as upland birchwood, wet woodland and native pinewood. The wider surrounding area is covered by blocks of woodland with the Farley Wood, Ruttle Wood and woods west of Torr a Bhealaich located in the northern portion of the study, area whilst Fanellan, Femnock, Teanacoil, Eskadale and Boblainy Woods are located in the southern portion of the study area and enclose the site.

2.10 The development would be located on an area of mainly commercial plantation and improved agricultural land. Soil Class 0 (mineral soils) is found across the site with peatland soils not typically found within this class. The site is mostly underlain by humus-iron podzols, which are well-drained, acidic soils commonly associated with forestry and rough grazing. The site has been subject to comprehensive habitat and ecological surveys, supported by desk-based research. Surveys included assessments for otter, water vole, badger, pine marten, bats, and other protected species. No evidence of otter or water vole activity was recorded within the site, and the watercourses present were assessed as unlikely to support significant fish populations, aquatic invertebrates, or notable terrestrial invertebrate assemblages. Bat surveys identified multiple trees with potential roost features and confirmed roosts within nearby structures, including day and maternity roosts for common and soprano pipistrelle bats; overall, bat activity was moderate. Red squirrels were not observed on site, but given there are 13 records within 1km, their presence remains possible, although habitat suitability is low. One non-breeding pine marten den was recorded within the site, and a total of 32 badger setts were identified in the wider study area, including eight within or near the development footprint. No evidence of great crested newt was found, and reptile presence (common lizard and slow worm) is considered likely based on

habitat suitability.

2.11 Several statutory sites designated for ornithological interest lie within 10km of the proposed development, including the Inner Moray Firth SPA (4.4km northeast), designated for breeding osprey and other waterfowl, and the North Inverness Lochs SPA (9.4km south), designated for Slavonian grebe. There is no direct hydrological connection between these SPAs and the site, and the habitats within the development footprint (primarily grazing pasture) are considered of low suitability for SPA-associated species, raptors, and black grouse. Ornithological surveys recorded a limited number of breeding territories for common farmland birds such as skylark, yellowhammer, and lapwing, alongside occasional observations of Schedule 1 raptors in the wider area. Overall, the site is expected to support only small populations of widespread species, with no significant ornithological constraints identified, provided embedded mitigation measures are implemented.

2.12 The hydrological assessment identified areas with potential for Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs), however, detailed surveys confirmed these habitats are sustained primarily by surface water rather than groundwater. The areas assessed were degraded and subject to significant artificial drainage associated with commercial forestry and scrub encroachment. Consequently, it was concluded that any potential GWDTEs present are unlikely to be moderately or highly dependent on groundwater to maintain their ecological condition.

2.13 The A831, which forms part of a recognised tourist route and rural road corridor, along with the A833 and A862 serve as the main arterial routes, to the southwest and south respectively, which means the proposed development has the potential to be seen by high numbers of road users. These A roads connect to the smaller roads linking the wider community. Additionally, the Far North Railway Line takes passengers between Inverness and Beauly and beyond, is located on the western fringe of the village. There are various other recreational interests in the surrounding area including walking routes, cycling routes, with the River Beauly also used for canoeing and fishing.

2.14 A number of Core Paths are located in the wider surrounding area to the south of the site including Core Paths IN20.11 and IN20.05 merging with Core Path IN20.06 south of Beaufort Castle. The latter splits up to IN20.08 and IN20.10 on one side and IN20.07 and IN20.09 on the other side. Core Paths IN03.03 and IN03.04 are located in the area between Beaufort Castle and Wester Balblair. Additionally, Core Paths IN20.03 and IN20.04 are located in Black Wood to the southeast and to the southwest, Core Path IN20.01 found near Eskadale.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 **PLANNING HISTORY**

Date	Description	Outcome
N/A	25/04411/PAN: Proposed replacement of existing Black Bridge over the River Beauly together with temporary laydown / compound areas and other ancillary works	Pending consideration
N/A	25/04411/PAN: Proposed replacement of existing Black Bridge over the River Beauly	Pending consideration

N/A	25/03986/S37: Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL - Install, operate and keep installed 186km of new 400kV overhead transmission line (OHL) supported on steel lattice tower structures, between proposed new substations at Fanellan (NH 48321 42717) in the area of Beauly, Greens (NJ 81960 47587) in the area of New Deer and Netherton (NK 05761 45576) in the area of Peterhead; associated crossing works, temporary diversions and permanent realignment to 14.7km of existing 132kV and 275kV OHLs, and ancillary development and associated works.	Pending consideration
N/A	25/03986/S37: Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL - Install, operate and keep installed 186km of new 400kV overhead transmission line (OHL) supported on steel lattice tower structures, between proposed new substations at Fanellan (NH 48321 42717) in the area of Beauly, Greens (NJ 81960 47587) in the area of New Deer and Netherton (NK 05761 45576) in the area of Peterhead; associated crossing works, temporary diversions and permanent realignment to 14.7km of existing 132kV and 275kV OHLs, and ancillary development and associated works.	Pending consideration
30 October 2025	25/03311/S37: Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL - Install, operate and keep installed 173km of new 400kV overhead electricity line, supported on steel lattice tower structures, between proposed new substations at Banniskirk (ND 15905 56823) in the area of Spittal, and Fanellan (NH 48534 43208) in the area of Beauly, with a connection via a proposed new substation at Carnaig (NH 65053 97458) near to the existing substation at Loch Buidhe, in the area of Bonar Bridge; associated permanent diversion works to 18km of existing 132kV and 275kV overhead electricity lines, including the temporary diversion works, and ancillary development and associated works. This case will be determined by the Energy Consents Unit.	Objection letter issued to ECU
30 October 2025	25/03311/S37: Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL - Install, operate and keep installed 173km of new 400kV overhead electricity line, supported on steel lattice tower structures, between proposed new substations at Banniskirk (ND 15905 56823) in the area of Spittal, and Fanellan (NH 48534 43208) in the area of Beauly, with a connection via a proposed new substation at Carnaig (NH 65053 97458) near to the existing substation at Loch Buidhe, in the area of Bonar Bridge; associated permanent diversion works to 18km of existing 132kV and 275kV overhead electricity lines, including the temporary diversion works, and ancillary development and associated works. This case will be determined by the Energy Consents Unit.	Objection letter issued to ECU
23 September 2025	25/02993/S37: Beauly - Denny Overhead Line Diversion - The temporary and permanent diversion of approximately 1.7km section of the existing 275/400kV Beauly Denny overhead line (OHL).	Objection letter issued to ECU
23 September 2025	25/02993/S37: Beauly - Denny Overhead Line Diversion - The temporary and permanent diversion of approximately 1.7km section of the existing 275/400kV Beauly Denny overhead line (OHL).	Objection letter issued to ECU
8 September 2025	25/02997/PNO: Application under Reg 62 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & C.) Regulations 1994 - Fanellan to Dundonnell Underground Cable	Prior Approval granted
N/A	25/02997/PNO: Application under Reg 62 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & C.) Regulations 1994 - Fanellan to Dundonnell Underground Cable	Pending consideration
14 October 2025	25/00426/FUL: Change of use from dwelling house (Class 9) into office accommodation (Class 4)	Application refused
N/A	25/00426/FUL: Change of use from dwelling house (Class 9) into office accommodation (Class 4)	Pending consideration
14 October	25/00573/FUL: Change of use from 2no.	Application refused

N/A	25/00573/FUL: Change of use from 2no. houses (Class 9) into office accommodation (Class 4)	Pending consideration
1 May 2025	24/01533/PAN: Proposed new 400kV substation, HVDC converter, access, construction compound, landscaping and ancillary infrastructure	Reported to South Planning Applications Committee
18 December 2024	24/04588/SCOP: Construct and operate a 400 kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line (OHL) supported by steel lattice towers over a distance of approximately 167 km, between proposed substations at Spittal (Banniskirk), Loch Buidhe (Carnaig) and Beauly (Fanellan), rationalisation and crossing of existing transmission infrastructure.	EIA Scoping response issued
22 August 2024	24/03064/SCOP: Section 37 application for the construction of a new double circuit steel structure 400 kV OHL between Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead, approximately 194km in length, including the diversion of an existing 400kV OHL into a proposed new Coachford 400kV substation near Blackhillock, removal of the existing 132kV OHL from Beauly to Knocknagael substations, and rationalisation and crossings of the existing transmission network	EIA Scoping response issued
6 August 2024	24/02655/SCOP: Fanellen substation - Proposed new 400kV substation and HVDC converter station comprising new buildings, platform, plant and machinery, access, laydown/work compound area(s), landscaping, site drainage, and other ancillary works (National Development)	EIA Scoping response issued
20 March 2024	24/00834/SCRE: Proposed Beauly - Denny Overhead Line Diversion	EIA not required
14 November 2023	23/04003/PREMAJ: New Beauly area 400kV substation and HVDC converter station and associated overhead lines	Major preapplication respbnse pack issued
3 September 2020	20/02801/FUL: Erection of agricultural building	Planning permission granted
10 September	15/02805/FUL: Proposed change of use of	Planning

10 September 2015	15/02805/FUL: Proposed change of use of existing warehouse & factory (Class 5: General Industrial) to Class 4: Business, 5: General Industrial & 6: Storage or Distribution use	Planning permission granted
19 December 2013	13/04164/FUL: Retention of temporary access road and hardstanding area	Planning permission granted
30 January 2009	08/00980/FULIN: Erection of industrial shed	Planning permission granted
2 March 2000	00/00044/FULIN: Erection of 2 No. Water Storage Vessels adjacent to existing Tanks.	Planning permission granted

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Schedule 3 / Unknown Neighbour / EIA Development

Date Advertised:

Inverness Courier – 4 April 2025 and 17 October 2025 for SEI.

Edinburgh Gazette – 4 April 2025 and 17 October 2025 for SEI.

Representation deadline: 16 November 2025

Representations received: 1911 (correct as of 4 December 2025)

Objections: 1910

General / Support: 1

Given the substantial number of representations received no Appendix is attached to this report noting the addresses of all those submitting comments. Details of all representations can be found at https://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/.

5. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Material considerations raised in objections are summarised as follows:

- Not in accordance with the Development Plan
- Landscape and visual impact
- Roads, road safety and construction traffic
- Inappropriate location, scale and design
- Lack of community engagement and consultation, incorrect advertising, not long enough to comment on the application
- Natural heritage and designated sites
- Built heritage, designated sites and buried archaeology
- Ecological impacts and lack of biodiversity net gain
- Protected species
- Insufficient ecological survey works and supporting information
- Tree removal and lack of compensatory planting
- Peat and soils
- Unacceptable visualisations

- Amenity, length of construction period and working hours
- Noise during construction and operation
- Lighting during construction and operation
- Flood risk and drainage
- Worker accommodation, compound and laydown areas
- Impact of the worker accommodation on local infrastructure and services
- Water pollution
- Dust pollution
- Tourism and the local economy
- Cumulative impacts and piecemeal development connected to a wider scale project
- Impacts upon heritage assets and buried archaeology
- Poor job opportunities with a lack of work for the local community
- Lead to de-population of the area
- Potential radioactive contamination in peat from the Chernobyl disaster
- Impact on recreational access
- Lack of national strategy regarding electricity transmission infrastructure
- Lack of consideration of alternative proposals or design solutions, particularly with regards to the reasoning for AIS over GIS
- Use of SF_6 gas

5.2 Material considerations raised in support are summarised as follows:

- General support comment

5.3 Non-material planning considerations

- Overprovision of renewable energy in Highland
- Grid connection and associated OHL development should be part of the application
- Impact on views from surrounding residential properties
- Lack of detail regarding community benefit
- Security risk
- Decrease in property prices
- Speculative and no need for the development
- Constraint payments associated with renewable energy schemes
- Fire risk and capacity of the local fire service
- Health effects from substations
- Fairer Scotland Duty, UNRC commitments and children's rights

5.4 Whilst details of representations would normally be included as an appendix to this report this has not been done given the significant volume of comments received. All letters of representation received by the Council are available for inspection via the Council's Eplanning portal which can be accessed through the internet www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam.

6 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 **Kiltarlity Community Council (Host) object** to the application. They considered the proposed development does not accord with the Development Plan and other

relevant policy, raised concerns regarding the scale, design and layout of the substation and associated infrastructure, cumulative effects of this scheme alongside other development in the region and road and traffic impacts, particularly through Kiltarlity. Additionally, the Community Council raised concerns that the proposed Fanellan substation is part of a much wider infrastructure project which includes the Spittal to Beauly to Peterhead overhead line connection, upgraded and replacement substation in the wider surrounding area along with associated worker accommodation, which has not been fully considered. They noted reservations regarding the alternative route proposed through Beaufort Estate submitted as SEI provided.

6.2 **Invergordon Community Council object** to the application. They raised concerns regarding the roads and traffic impacts in the wider surrounding area. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.3 **Kilmorack Community Council object** to the application. They raised concerns regarding scale and location of the proposed development, cumulative effects of this scheme alongside other development in the region, potential contamination, impact on the health of the local community, the roads and traffic impacts, particularly through Kiltarlity and a detrimental impact on tourism. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.4 **Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Council object** to the application. They considered the proposed development does not accord with the Development Plan and other relevant policy, raised concerns regarding the detrimental landscape and visual impact, cumulative effects of this scheme alongside other development in the region, lack of justification for the proposed development, site selection and consideration of alternative locations, detrimental impact on habitat and species, lack of biodiversity enhancement and net gain, road and traffic impacts, particularly through Kiltarlity and a detrimental impact on the local economy, recreational receptors and tourism in the area. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.5 **Knockbain Community Council object** to the application. They raised concerns regarding the roads and traffic impacts in the wider surrounding area. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.6 **Muir of Ord Community Council object** to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.7 **Other Community Councils –** the following community councils did not respond to the consultation:

- Alness
- Kilmuir and Logie
- Nigg and Shandwick
- Muirtown
- Park
- Merkinch
- Ardross
- Fearn

- Maryburgh
- Killearnan
- Marybank, Scatwell and Strathconon
- Strathglass
- Glenurquhart
- Ferintosh
- Beauly
- Inverness West

6.8 **Access Officer objects** to the application. They initially noted that insufficient information was provided with regards to recreational receptors within the site and wider surrounding area. As such, they considered the likely impacts of the proposed development on public access during the construction and operational phases was understated. Whilst Access Management Plans are often controlled through a condition and agreed prior to the start of development, given the omissions in the information submitted in support of the application, and to avoid delays later in the process, they requested that a plan be submitted at this stage.

6.9 In terms of the additional mitigation measures proposed as part of SEI provided noting the potential alternative Beaufort Estate route avoiding Kiltarlity, along with further commentary regarding public access, the Access Officer considered that unanswered queries critical to understanding the impact, management and mitigation of the proposed development on public access rights remain. Whilst Black Bridge and the proposed Beaufort Estate access route are outwith the red line site boundary, they may also have a significant detrimental impact on public access. The Access Management Plan does not make clear from the outset which areas are intended to be excluded from access rights, and which are not. Plans for the construction and operational phases of the proposal should show which areas the public would be excluded from and why helping to illustrate the text within the Access Management Plan. It is considered this has not been done and the baseline has understated public access across the site and in the wider surrounding area.

6.10 Whilst the Access Officer has maintained their objection given the insufficient details submitted in support of the application up until this point, they advise that a condition stating that no development shall commence until a detailed Outdoor Access Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority shall be attached should planning permission be granted.

6.11 **Community Wealth Building Team** do not object to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.12 **Environmental Health - Contaminated Land** does not object to the application. They agree there is limited potential for contamination at the site as noted in Ground Investigation Report (Appendix 13.4). Given the demolition of 3 buildings, including 2 cottages and an agricultural building, is planned as part of the proposed development, a pre-demolition asbestos survey would be required and controlled by an Informative. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.13 **Development Plans Team** do not object to the application. It notes that overall,

the development conforms with the approved development plan, subject to appropriate mitigation being secured. The proposed development will allow the more efficient use of existing and future energy generated from renewable sources by transmitting it to areas of higher demand where existing non-renewable energy sources can be substituted out. This will offer the likelihood of utilising energy with fewer or no additional emissions and therefore will be a major positive in climate change and renewable energy terms (covered by NPF4 policies 1, 2, 11, and 18). Subject to adequate, committed mitigation, then the proposal will also provide local socio-economic benefits (covered by NPF4 policies 11 and 25). Mitigation is also required to avoid, reduce or offset adverse impacts on a variety of receptors and other features in the wider surrounding area (covered by NPF4 policies 3, 4, 6, 7, 20 and 23). Mitigation measures should include avoidance, or at least reduction, of adverse landscape, visual and setting impacts as seen from the agreed viewpoints.

6.14 Whilst the Development Plans Team welcomed the alternative route to the site through Beaufort Estate avoiding Kiltarlity, as part of the SEI provided, along with other clarifications regarding improvements to the public road network, flood risk, biodiversity net gain and public access. It noted that many previously highlighted issues still remain to be addressed, such as landscape and visual mitigation, compensatory planting along with socio-economic benefits.

6.15 **Ecology Officer objects** to the application. Whilst they welcome opportunities for enhancement within the site boundary, details provided note the development will lead to a significant deficit of biodiversity. The Biodiversity Net Gain report suggests that the deficit will be made up of mostly off-site habitat creation and enhancement, however, there is a lack of detail, with no site currently proposed.

6.16 Although the applicant submitted further information in support of biodiversity enhancement, which suggests the development is set to achieve 22% biodiversity net gain the additional supporting information is lacking sufficient detail required to review and assess the calculations. The Ecology Officer requested the BNG toolkit be provided to clarify matters but the applicant is yet to provide this information. The Ecology Officer notes that without these details they cannot confidently assess whether or not the proposed development would satisfy Policy 3 of NPF4.

6.17 Whilst the Ecology Officer has maintained their objection given the insufficient details submitted in support of the application up until this point, they advise that conditions stating that no development shall commence until a Habitat Management Plan which delivers biodiversity enhancement, GIS data, Construction Environmental Management Plan, Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW), and undertaking a pre-construction survey, including for any nesting birds, have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority shall be attached should planning permission be granted. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.18 **Environmental Health** do not object to the application. It initially noted that insufficient information was provided with regards to the operational noise assessment. However, following further clarifications Environmental Health confirmed it had no objection subject to conditions stating that no development

shall commence until a detailed Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan, Blasting Management Plan, Construction Environmental Management Plan, further investigation regarding private water supplies, revised Noise Impact Assessment, compliance monitoring, noise limit scheme of mitigation, manufacturers / suppliers' specifications and the formation of a Community Liaison Group have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority should planning permission be granted. The 7 days a week, 07:00 until 19:00 construction hours proposed by the applicant is unacceptable with working hours curtailed to mirror heavy goods vehicle traffic hours to provide respite to the local community on weekends. The restricted working hours will also be controlled by condition. Environmental Health had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.19 **Flood Risk Management Team** do not object to the application. It initially noted that insufficient information was provided with regards to flood risk and mitigation measures proposed, however, following further clarifications, submission of an updated Flood Risk Assessment, hydraulic modelling and associated drawings they confirmed they have no objection subject to a condition requiring the final surface water drainage design be submitted to and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. It had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.20 **Forestry Officer objects** to the application. They initially raised concerns that the compensatory planting proposals were lacking as the applicant has not proposed to replace the approximately 3.33ha of productive conifer forestry with "like for like" planting. They note the timber industry is important to the Highlands and where productive conifer woodland is lost to development, the Forestry Officer would expect an equivalent area of productive conifer woodland to be created through compensatory planting in line with the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal policy. Additionally, they noted that further clarification was required regarding the potential impacts of construction traffic on Tree Preservation Order protected trees, specification of proposed tree protection barriers, and confirmation that on-site woodland creation is purely compensatory planting and has not been counted towards biodiversity net gain.

6.21 Whilst the Forestry Officer has maintained their objection given the insufficient details submitted in support of the application up until this point, they advise that conditions stating that no development shall commence until an Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Removal and Protection Plans, Specimen Tree Planting Plan and Maintenance Programme, Compensatory Planting Plan and Veteran Tree Management Plan have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority shall be attached should planning permission be granted. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.22 **Historic Environment Team - Archaeology** do not object to the application. It is satisfied that the EIA contains an adequate assessment of the potential impacts. Whilst they note there is at least moderate potential for additional buried, unrecorded features and deposits to survive, impacts on the setting of designated assets are not expected to be significant. Mitigation measures shall include marking out and avoidance with buffers around 3 identified assets, so they can be preserved in-situ within the development. Additionally, good practice measures shall be set out with cultural heritage issues included within the Construction

Environment Management Plan. Conditions to secure these details along with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation would be required if the proposed development was approved.

6.23 Following the submission of the SEI provided it noted the monitoring of ground investigation works along the proposed route through Beaufort Estate has been completed without significant archaeological results. Additional areas where evaluation cannot be undertaken at this stage have been confirmed as suitable for watching brief.

6.24 **Landscape Officer** does not object to the application. The Highland Council sought independent professional landscape advice from Ironside Farrar for this application. Whilst not objecting they raised a number of notable concerns regarding the proposed development which would cause significant direct and indirect landscape effects during construction, once works have been completed and longer term at 15 years of operation and beyond. These would primarily be in the Enclosed Farmland (LCT 229), where most of the development footprint and visibility lies, with more limited effects from Farmed Strath – Inverness (LCT 227). These significant effects would extend beyond the 2km noted by the applicant and it is considered that they would extend to approximately 3km on higher ground. These effects are experienced from various locations including dwellings, settlements, Core Paths and roads mostly located to the south and southeast of the site. From these views the proposed development would be seen to occupy the ridge of farmland and forest with the proposed converter station buildings prominent either on or near the skyline which is already occupied by the Beauly Denny OHL.

6.25 The proposed earthworks would screen much, but not all, of the proposed development and appear as an adverse feature in the landscape from a number of locations, when viewed from the south and southeast. It is considered the effects will not diminish until the extensive woodland mitigation planting has matured which will help to better integrate the proposed development into the landscape. Even at 15 years of operation, the proposed earthworks will still not completely screen the proposed development from all locations with residual significant effects remaining for some receptors, albeit less adverse than at the construction phase and once works have been completed.

6.26 They noted the proposed development would also contribute to cumulative landscape and visual effects with the most significant combined effects with the 2 proposed 400kV Spittal to Beauly and Beauly to Peterhead OHLs that would connect with the proposed substation seen alongside the existing Beauly to Denny OHL. Significant cumulative effects would also extend to approximately 3km, particularly to the south and southeast. As such, it is considered the proposed development would contribute to overall cumulative change to the landscape character and cumulative effects would be experienced sequentially along some linear receptors including surrounding roads and Core Paths.

6.27 **Transport Planning Team object** to the application. It initially raised concern regarding the unsuitability of the existing construction traffic routes proposed along the C1108 and the U1604 via Kiltarlity given the nature and scale of such substantial traffic that the proposed development will generate prior to the

intended replacement of the Black Bridge, which is estimated to take approximately 2 years to complete. The concerns regarding road safety and network management raised by the Transport Planning Team go back some time to pre-application discussions and are noted within the Scoping response (24/02655/SCOP). Additionally, vehicle movement figures noted in the supporting information provided required further clarification; proposed convoying through Kiltarlity would not be supported; inspections and assessments would be required for structures along the route to site from Invergordon and Nigg are undertaken with regards to Abnormal Indivisible Loads before further consideration is given to making use of North Kessock for such activities.

6.28 The SEI provided, noting the potential alternative Beaufort Estate route avoiding Kiltarlity, also raised concerns. These relate to the inconsistencies and omissions of the supporting information noted above, highlighting unknown likely trip levels and patterns for this development with no effective cumulative traffic impact assessment from other developments in the area. As such, Transport Planning also objected to this alternative route.

6.29 Whilst the applicant has not provided any further updated Transport Assessment, CTMP or any other specific details regarding the current proposed access via Black Bridge, Transport Planning have confirmed this is the preferred route to site and generally welcome the changes in principle, albeit these have been submitted belatedly and without the requisite supporting information expected which is extremely disappointing. Whilst Transport Planning have maintained their objection given the insufficient details submitted in support of the application up until this point, they advise that conditions to secure the Black Bridge replacement prior to the commencement of works, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Traffic Management Coordinator role for the duration of this development, Abnormal Load Route Assessment, delivery of active travel improvements within the local area and a ”Wear and Tear” agreement would be required.

6.30 **Beauly District Salmon Fishery Board object** to the application raising concern that the associated Black Bridge works have the potential to negatively affect fish in the River Beauly. It considered the information provided was insufficient with regards to the impacts of water pollution, noise and vibration from both construction activity and heavy goods traffic on fish, particularly salmon and sea trout, along with salmon spawning grounds. It had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.31 **Civil Aviation Authority** do not object to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.32 **Defence Infrastructure Organisation** do not object to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.33 **Highlands and Islands Airports** do not object to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.34 **Historic Environment Scotland** did not object to the application initially. It considered the proposal, when utilising the Kiltarlity route to the site, did not raise historic environment issues of national significance. At the Scoping stage, it noted

that whilst it discussed visualisations to aid assessment of the potential historic environment impacts of the proposed development, no further visualisations were provided within the EIAR to support the developer's assessment of the impacts on the historic environment.

6.35 However, following the submission of the SEI that proposed access through Beaufort Estate Historic Environment Scotland changed its position to one of objection on the basis that the access route had potential to have a detrimental impact on the Category A Listed Beaufort Castle, Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape Designation and other listed buildings within the estate such as East Lodge and Gate Piers. Whilst the objection is noted, it is considered that these concerns can be controlled by condition requiring the construction access routing via the upgraded Black Bridge therefore avoiding Beaufort Estate and Kiltarlity.

6.36 **Inverness Access Panel** do not object to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.37 **National Air Traffic Services** do not object to the application. They had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.38 **NatureScot** do not object to the application. The proposal has connectivity to the Inner Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA) protected for its wintering and breeding bird interests including osprey and greylag geese. With regards to osprey, they note the proposed development has the potential to have a detrimental impact on the designation unless conditions limiting blasting between March and July, pre-construction surveys for osprey nests and buffer zones are applied along with other mitigation measures noted in the Bird Species Protection Plan if the proposed development was approved. With regards to greylag geese, they note the proposed development does not have a potential detrimental impact on the designation. With regards to the SEI provided, noting the potential alternative Beaufort Estate route avoiding Kiltarlity, NatureScot confirmed there will be no adverse effects on site integrity of Inner Moray Firth SPA given the mitigation measures in place for the breeding osprey qualifying feature noted in their initial consultation response.

6.39 **Network Rail** do not object to the application. It notes that its Abnormal Loads Team should be contacted given the route to site would pass over Railway Overbridge 302/030 on the A862 public road at Beauly if the proposed development was approved. It had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.40 **Scottish Environment Protection Agency** do not object to the application. It initially noted that insufficient information was provided with regards to flood risk and mitigation measures proposed. It considered the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) relied on assumptions about embankment height and lacked surveyed cross-sections with potential flood risk increases from landraising and culvert blockage, particularly affecting receptors near Forest Lodge.

6.41 Following the submission of a revised FRA, SEPA confirmed it was satisfied with the details subject to conditions controlling setback of earthworks from

watercourses, along with the details of watercourse crossings and subject to buffer and culvert details which will be controlled by conditions. It had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

6.42 **Scottish Water** do not object to the application. It noted that there are no drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources in the area. Its records indicate that there is live infrastructure in proximity to the site that may impact existing Scottish Water assets. The applicant must identify any conflicts with Scottish Water assets and contact their Asset Protection Team for an appraisal of the proposals. Following the submission of the SEI proposing access through Beaufort Estate Scottish Water noted that alternative route is within the Glenvonvinth Water Treatment Works catchment and therefore suggested that the applicant completed a Pre-Development Enquiry (PDE) Form to be submitted to Scottish Water.

6.43 **Transport Scotland** do not object to the application subject to conditions to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), the routing proposed for the transportation of abnormal loads, and details of associated mitigation including signage or temporary traffic control measures. It had no further comments regarding the SEI provided.

7. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Appendix 1 of this report provides details of the documents which comprise the adopted Development Plan, including details of pertinent planning policies as well as adopted supplementary guidance, and other material policy considerations which are relevant to the assessment of the application.

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

8.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means that the application must be assessed against all Development Plan policies relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

Planning Considerations

8.2 The key considerations in this case are:

a. Development Plan and Other Planning Policy
b. Planning History
c. Site Selection and Alternatives
d. Layout, Design and Materials
e. Landscape and Visual Impact
f. Construction Impact
g. Roads, Transport and Access
h. Operational Noise
i. Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)
j. Forestry, Woodland and Trees
k. Biodiversity

l. Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Soils
m. Built and Cultural Heritage
n. Economic Impact
o. Other Material Considerations

Development Plan

8.3 The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) (2024) and various supplementary guidance associated with these Local Development Plans. IMFLDP2 focuses largely on regional and settlement strategies and specific site allocations, rather than planning policies of relevance for the proposed development.

8.4 Appendix 2 of this report provides an assessment of compliance with the Development Plan/other planning policy.

8.5 The proposed development is classed as national development by the National Planning Framework 4. Annex B – National Developments Statement of Need 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 new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more along with new and/or upgraded infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations.

8.5 In summary, the principle of development is established in national policy, with the proposed development being of national importance for the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy. NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland’s ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address climate change. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.

8.6 At a regional level, the principal Highland-wide Local Development Plan policy is 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure. This policy offers support for electricity transmission infrastructure, having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Such support is subject to the proposals not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment. As the development would help to reinforce the onshore transmission infrastructure and facilitate an increasing proportion of 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.

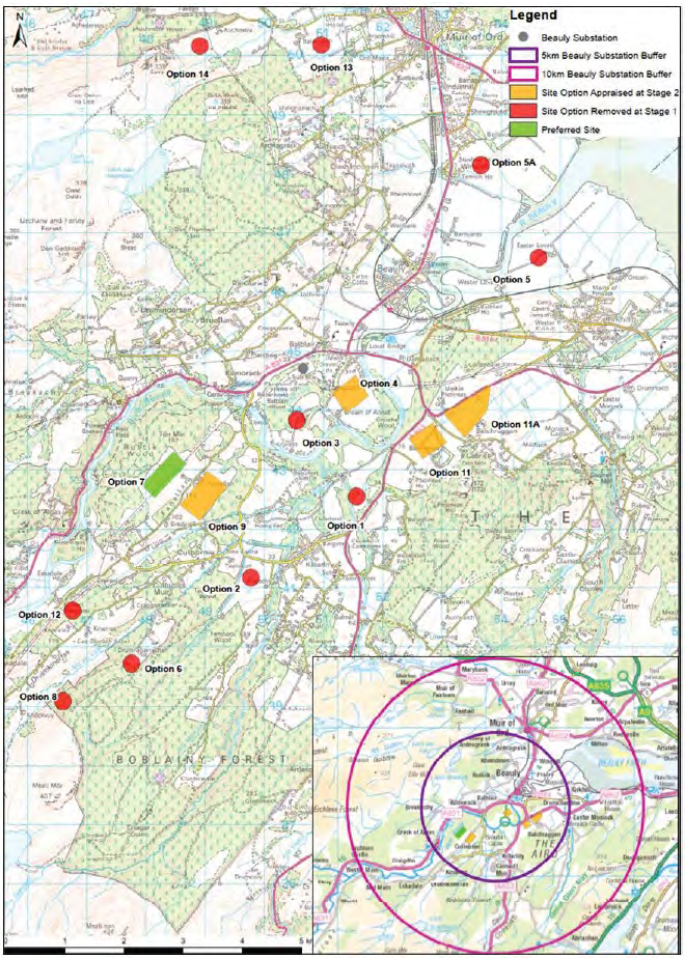
Planning History

8.7 The applicant considered the cumulative operational impact of the proposed development alongside the proposed connections to the Western Isles, Spittal, Peterhead and reconfigured portion of the Beauly Denny OHL schemes which are currently pending consideration. These are assessed in more detail later on in the report. Additionally, now that it has been confirmed that traffic will be routed across Black Bridge, and not through Kiltarlity, a Proposal of Application Notice has recently been submitted for the replacement bridge works (25/04411/PAN). Ground investigation works associated with the proposed development are also ongoing and have been for some time. With any further planning applications, it is for those later submissions to take account of the consents and applications before them. This includes the need to revisit the cumulative baseline. All such proposals require assessment on their own merits and are the subject of individual applications. They will, where applicable, be considered by the area planning committee in due course. NPF4 makes it clear that grid capacity should not constrain renewable development.

8.8 Planning applications submitted by Lovat Estate to change the use of Fanellan Farmhouse and Lower Fanellan Cottages (25/00426/FUL and 25/00573/FUL) from residential to offices were recently refused. All of these properties are regarded as Noise Sensitive Receptors should they remain as residential use and covered by the noise conditions.

Site Selection and Alternatives

8.9 Following the first site selection stage, 5 sites, out of an initial 16, were considered by the applicant for the second stage of assessment. These 5 sites underwent an environmental and technical constraint appraisal to determine the site to be the most technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally acceptable option.



8.10 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 4: Site Selection and Alternatives notes that this new substation had to meet the following requirements:

- Proximity to the existing 400kV OHL network, with the search area set to 10km from the Beauly substation, to minimise the amount of new OHL and/or cabling required to connect to the network.
- A substantial site large enough to accommodate the proposed individual or combined 400kV substation / HVDC converter station footprints along with associated landscaping, contractor compounds, access and new connection routes. The alternative would be to provide 2 sites within 1km of each other.
- A lack of environmental designations and minimise impacts on local communities and environmental receptors wherever possible.
- Enable practical connection routes for the proposed new 400kV OHLs from Spittal, Peterhead and HVDC cable from the Western Isles.
- Provide sufficient space for known future connections.

8.11 Early in the preapplication stage officers raised concerns with SSEN's strategy to locate the substation and converter station at a single site given the landscape and visual impacts associated with this approach, particularly given the elevated site. Whilst separating the substation and converter station across 2 separate sites was discussed, with the worked-out quarry floor further west of Balblair appearing to offer a low-lying landform to accommodate the larger buildings associated with the HVDC converter station limiting the landscape and visual effects in the

surrounding area, the applicant did not consider this would be technically deliverable. It was noted that the larger buildings within the site should be reduced in height wherever possible with care needed with regards to the design so that the infrastructure would appear as appropriate within this landscape, particularly if breaking the skyline from surrounding routes and views.

8.12 Whilst all options were relatively comparable from an environmental perspective, the proposed development site (Site Option 7) rated the most favourably for the applicant with regards to cultural and natural heritage as well as in terms of its current land use and planning. However, given the topography there is greater visibility than other site options considered, leading to greater landscape and visual impacts from the surrounding area; it was considered that this could be mitigated to some extent by landscaping and planting to screen elements of the proposed development given the substantial land available to utilise. The connection to and from the sites were deemed an important part of the overall consideration with Site Option 7 minimising new overhead line infrastructure required for the Beauly Denny OHL diversion. The site topography and area allow for a single HVDC converter station platform with opportunity to lower the site platform and screen the site further using material excavated from the site and provide suitable routing for future connections. All of these details were reviewed and overall, Site Option 7 was considered the best, on balance, by the applicant.

Layout, Design and Materials

8.13 The substation design has evolved through a series of iterations with the layout, design and materials proposed aiming to minimise significant environmental impacts through embedded mitigation along with consideration of the site topography, slope, drainage, existing land uses and vegetation.

8.14 Whilst the site boundary is extensive at 223ha, the main area of development is generally focused on a rectangular platform measuring approximately 305m by 810m on a north easterly alignment. The northeastern portion will contain the 525kV 2GW Bi-pole HVDC converter station and associated infrastructure, and the southwestern portion will contain the 400kV substation and associated infrastructure. The platform will be enclosed by the raised landform along the southeastern edge with less extensive cut and fill earth works along the opposite northwestern edge. 3No. SUDS basins surround the platform, located to the northeast, southeast and southwest. The access to the site is from the C1106 Fanellan Road generally heading in a south-westerly direction, is enclosed by cut and fill earth works with 2 smaller scale SUDS basins.

8.15 The proposed OHLs will intersect the main compound at various points with the proposed rerouted Beauly to Denny OHL to the north/northeast around the substation platform and would connect to the substation from the northwestern side of the site. The proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL will follow a south westerly route to the site and would connect to the substation at the southern side of the site. The proposed Spittal to Beauly OHL will follow an easterly route to the site and would connect to the substation from the northwestern side of the site between the Beauly to Denny OHL tie in.

8.16 The 400kV Substation will provide the electrical infrastructure where the 3 OHL noted, along with the Western Isles HVDC UGC link, which will allow electricity to be imported and exported between the Western Isles and the mainland. The substation will transmit electricity onto the wider 400kV transmission network onshore and on to the lower voltage distribution network to supply homes and businesses. Additionally, the substation is the point where the 2 circuits being carried by the proposed 3 OHLs will converge to manage electrical flows and allow the renewable generation to be transmitted to centres of demand.

8.17 The substation platform will measure 305m by 525m and will be enclosed by a 4.2m high security fence. This portion of the site will include Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) and busbar with a maximum height of 15m which will connect incoming OHL circuits along with the HVDC converter station. Step-Down Transformers will provide the site with Low Voltage Alternating Current (LVAC) supply. The control building will measure 50m by 26m with a maximum height of 7m.

8.18 The HVDC Converter Station is required to connect the HVDC Link from the Western Isles and convert this electricity from Direct Current (DC) to an Alternating Current (AC) at the required voltage to allow connection to the 400kV substation and the wider 400kV transmission schemes.

8.19 The converter station platform will measure 305m by 285m and house various buildings including valve hall, DC hall, reactor hall, transformer hall, along with the adjacent service and control rooms. This portion of the development contains the largest infrastructure across the site with the biggest building measuring 160m by 80m with a height of 27.5m. Along with this substantial infrastructure there will also be smaller ancillary and support buildings adjacent to the main converter station building. There will be a connection to the AC site via an overhead busbar for the UGC (that will then run approximately 80km from Dundonnell to Fanellan).

8.20 An operations depot and store would measure 60m by 124m with a height of 24m and will consist of buildings for offices, training facilities, car parking and storage facilities.

8.21 Both sites will share common access, security arrangements, site drainage infrastructure and landscaping with various other ancillary infrastructure found across the wider site.

8.22 EIAR Volume 4: Appendix 8.5 – Environmental Colour Assessment notes that a variety of colour palettes were considered with Option 3 preferred with a mix of brown (Van Dyke RAL8028), green (Olive RAL1035) and beige grey (RAL7030) shades for the exterior finish of the buildings and infrastructure. This mix of colours helps to break up the massing of the imposing converter station buildings that are of a substantial scale and height of up to 27.5m. The mix of colours will better assimilate the structures within the landscape where the colour finishes do not appear out of keeping within the mixed pastoral farmland and woodland landscape, with the hues chosen reflecting the surrounding landscape.

8.23 HwLDP Policy 29 - Design Quality and Place Making requires new development to be designed with a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of

the area. Furthermore, development proposals must demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards the local distinctiveness of the landscape through the architecture, design and layout of the proposals.

8.24 Although the design is technically driven, the applicant considers the proposed development to the environment and context in which it sits. This includes minimising environmental and vi and the local community, and use of appropriate architectural form, colour and materials.

8.25 At the preapplication stage the applicant was encouraged to reduce the extent of land take required wherever possible. Developing a sloping site such as this location requires significant ground engineering works to form a developable platform, along with further extensive areas also being required for adequate SUDS provision, access and landscaping. Consideration was encouraged of the use of Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) as a design solution, which would generally require a smaller site, as opposed to Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) as well as lowering the site through cut and fill.

8.26 A number of representations received raised concerns that AIS is the preferred option for the site, however, the applicant considers this to be the standard solution for 400kV transmission substations in rural Scotland due to its reliability, lower capital and maintenance costs and simpler operational requirements. Whilst GIS offers a more compact footprint and reduced visual impact, the applicant considers it is significantly more expensive, requires specialist maintenance, and involves the use of SF_6 gas, which has high global warming potential. Given that the site at Fanellan provides sufficient space for AIS and landscaping measures that are to mitigate landscape and visual effects to some extent, the applicant considered that AIS was considered the most practical, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible choice for this location.

8.27 In short, these significant national scale strategic infrastructure projects have to be provided at particular geographic nodal areas for technical reasons. In this instance, the applicant has outlined various factors, including their technical and operational reasons for this particular location being chosen, despite the significant concerns raised within the local community. The land take requirements of the proposed development will be substantially larger than the existing collective substations at Beauly with this substation and converter station of a starkly different character, with the size and scale of the connecting lines being larger than any others located within this part of Highland. However, Policy 29 has to be balanced against NPF4 Policy 11 – Energy and the strong presumption in favour of national infrastructure projects such as this and other electricity transmission infrastructure projects that are currently proposed across Highland.

Mitigation Measures

8.28 A range of mitigation measures are proposed which the applicant considers will reduce the potential adverse landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. These include both “embedded” and “additional” mitigation measures detailed in Figure 8.11 Illustrative Landscape Masterplan. The “embedded” measures include elements such as platform levels, building design, and colour finishes. The “additional” measures include shaped screening earthworks, planting and seeding. There are inevitable compromises to be made

to maximise landscape integration and screening without them becoming unduly onerous or having an adverse environmental effect in their own right.

8.29 Table 8.6: Landscape Mitigation Measures (EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity) details 16 embedded and committed measures including specific items and / or a minimum level of performance in respect of landform gradients, screening, monitoring and management of landscape measures. However, it does not reference the forestry retained on the north side of the site which is only partially covered by the application boundary. This is key to screening the site from the north and should it be removed as part of forestry management or due to windthrow, wider significant visual effects would likely result, albeit that any commercial plantation felling would be subject to compensatory planting under the Scottish Government's control of woodland removal policy.

8.30 It is considered the measures proposed would be an important factor in reducing the potential significance and / or adversity of landscape and visual effects but would not eliminate them. However, it is considered that the site location on the higher ground ridgeline necessitates the need for such comprehensive mitigation measures not only because of the scale and appearance of the proposed development in the rural context. The elevated location leads to the proposed development being widely visible to the south, southeast and east in particular in the wider surrounding area.

8.31 The applicant notes that the site selection process and criteria (detailed in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 4: Site Selection and Alternatives) was driven by the need to achieve "the best balance when assessing a number of environmental, technical and cost considerations, including the risk of adverse landscape and visual effects" which has led to a choice that is not driven primarily by landscape and visual considerations. Nonetheless, it is considered that the proposed development could be improved further through the following measures which would likely reduce the detrimental landscape and visual impacts further:

- A reduction in platform level lessening visibility of the proposed infrastructure by a combination of lower elevation and increased generation of material for heightening along with a more natural shaping of earthworks.
- Inclusion of screen planting, and potentially some mounding, to the north side of the site, to insure against the potential long-term loss of existing forestry.
- External colour finishes of the proposed infrastructure presented in an appropriate visual representation.
- Additional on and offsite roadside structural planting within surrounding estate grounds.

Landscape and Visual Impact

8.32 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) forms part of the EIAR and provides:

- A landscape assessment of potential effects of the development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes; and
- A visual assessment of potential effects of the development on visual

amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential areas and routes.

8.33 The LVIA also gives consideration to cumulative effects occurring as a result of the addition of the proposed development alongside existing development including the Beauly to Denny 400kV OHL diversion, Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL, Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL, Western Isles Link HVDC underground cable, and Black Bridge replacement works in the immediate vicinity to the site along with the proposed Kilmorack substation replacement, BESS, along with other OHL within the study area.

8.34 Potential effects have been considered during the construction phase of the proposed development, along with year 0 and year 15 during operation, to illustrate the change associated with proposed mitigation, landscaping, planting and regeneration measures.

8.35 The methodology for the LVIA is sufficiently clear, being generally in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3). The methodology outlining how the applicant has come to their findings is included (EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity along with a review of each viewpoint in EIAR Volume 4 Appendix 8.4 Visual Effects). This methodology has been used to appraise the assessment provided and to come to a view on what combination of influences on the sensitivity of receptor and magnitude of change are leading to a significant effect.

8.36 Whilst the methodology generally accords with published guidance and provides a reasonable basis for determining the significance of landscape and visual effects, there are a number of issues that raise concerns with regards to cumulative effects, visual representations, and standard of photography.

8.37 In the assessment of each viewpoint, the applicant has come to a judgement as to whether the effect is significant, or not. In assessing visual impacts in particular, it is important to consider that the viewpoint is representative of particular receptors, i.e. people who would be at that point and experiencing that view of the landscape not just in that single view but in taking in their entire surroundings.

8.38 The sensitivity of receptors is influenced by the value of the view and susceptibility to change leading to a sensitivity rating. Familiarity with the site and the extent, nature, and expectation of existing views by visual receptors is a key factor in establishing the visual sensitivity in terms of the development proposed.

8.39 The applicant has assessed the sensitivity of receptors between Medium for road / rail users and High for residents in surrounding properties and recreational receptors. This is agreed.

8.40 The magnitude of change on views is an expression of the change that would result from the proposed development influenced by the size or scale of change, geographical extent, leading to a magnitude of change rating. From a number of viewpoints, it is considered that the applicant has understated the effects on receptors, particularly residents in the wider surrounding area, given the significant change brought about by proposed development within the landscape.

8.41 The guidelines require evaluation of magnitude of change to views experienced by sensitive receptors, comprising individuals living, working, travelling and carrying out other activities within the landscape, and the subsequent evaluation of the significance of effects. The potential to mitigate adverse effects has also been considered for both landscape and visual assessment.

8.42 In the assessment of each receptor and representative viewpoint the applicant has come to a judgement as to whether the effect is significant or not. This is undertaken on a viewpoint by viewpoint and case by case basis. In assessing visual impacts in particular, it is important to consider that the viewpoint is representative of particular receptors i.e. people who would be at that point and experiencing that view of the landscape not just in that single view but taking in their entire surroundings. Those living within the surrounding area have a higher sensitivity to views than those travelling through on various routes.

8.43 The applicant has assessed a variety of landscape and visual receptors within the study area, including building, route and recreation-based receptors. The effects on visual amenity relate to changes to available views rather than perceived changes to whole areas of a distinctive landscape character. 14 viewpoints (VP) were selected in order to assess landscape and visual impact (Figure 8.6: Viewpoint Locations Plan). The viewpoints have been assessed at the construction phase along with the operational phase year 0 and year 15. This is considered appropriate as it will take some time for the proposed landscaping, planting and other mitigation measures to become established.

8.44 The associated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) drawings (EIAR Volume 3 Figure 8.1 and Figure 8.2) also provide the predicted extent of bare earth visibility of the proposal with a study area of 10km and 5km respectively. These indicate that visibility would generally extend north, northeast, east, southeast and south from both lower and higher elevations with smaller pockets of visibility to the southwest and northwest. There will also be sustained visibility on surrounding routes extending to approximately 6km to the northeast along the A862 towards the outskirts of Muir of Ord and approximately 5km to the east and southeast along the A833 around Ardendrain. Visibility will extend to approximately 11km to the northeast along the B9169 beyond Muir of Ord. There will be pockets of visibility along the A831 in and around Crask of Aigas Kilmorack.

8.45 Whilst bare earth visibility is shown on the supporting information noted above, mature woodland and vegetation will screen the proposed developments to varying degrees. Additional supporting information provided gives a fuller picture of the visibility of the proposed development (Figure 8.3: Screening ZTV, Figure 8.4a: Upper Portion ZTV – Fanellan 400kV Substation, Converter Station and Proposed Beauly to Denny 400kV Overhead Line Permanent Diversion, Figure 8.4b: Upper Portion ZTV – Fanellan 400kV Substation, Converter Station and Proposed Beauly to Denny 400kV Overhead Line Temporary Diversion and Figure 8.5: Cumulative ZTV for SSEN Sites).

8.46 Figure 8.4a and 8.4b show visibility of both the upper and lower portion of the proposed development extending to the southwest, south, southeast and northeast with visibility limited to the upper portion only from higher ground to the

north and northwest within the 10km study area. Figure 8.3: Screening ZTV shows that visibility is reduced further when screening is taken into account with views constrained to pockets of visibility within the 5km study area in the directions noted above. The cumulative picture shown in Figure 8.5 shows visibility of the existing and proposed development alongside the other SSEN projects immediately adjacent to the site (both the existing Beauly to Denny OHL and proposed reconfiguration, proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Spittal to Beauly OHL) showing visibility of all 5 transmission schemes together, extending to higher elevations southwest, south, southeast, north and northwest up to approximately 9km. Visibility of all the schemes extending to lower elevations are generally located in the immediate vicinity of the site along with the east and northeast up to 9km.

8.47 A substantial number of representations have been submitted objecting to the proposed development, with the vast majority raising concerns with regards to the detrimental landscape and visual impact of the scheme. It is considered that the applicant has understated the extent of significant landscape and visual effects which spread beyond 2km, and the applicant has also understated the time period before these effects have diminished below a significant level with many views showing that the detrimental landscape and visual impacts will continue at the 15 years operational period and beyond.

Visualisations

8.48 Whilst it must be recognised that the submitted visualisations do not provide the entire wider context when not viewed on site, they do demonstrate the predicted effects and are a useful aid in conceptualising the development and predicting its associated impacts.

8.49 Some concerns were raised by officers following an initial review of the application with the applicant regarding the conditions on site when the photography was taken, faintness of images, coloration of images, haze, and cloud cover creating a dark image within a number of the visualisations provided. Whilst these are noted in the appraisal of visualisations provided in Appendix 3 – Viewpoint Assessment Appraisal – Visual Impact, the applicant has responded on these particular points, reiterating that all photography has been undertaken in compliance with the requirements of The Highland Council guidance, which is generally agreed. Whilst photomontages provide a useful aid in showing the appearance of the proposed development, they are just one tool used by the Planning Authority in the assessment of landscape and visual impact.

8.50 In addition to the concerns noted above the rendering of buildings and structures presented in the visualisations is shown in light grey rather than a colour finish chosen to reduce their prominence. As such, it is not clear whether the landscape and visual impact assessment takes account of the preferred colour finishes to buildings. Oddly, whilst images show the proposed development with the preferred coloured finished to the proposed infrastructure (Option 3) along with discounted Option 1 and 2 (Appendix 8.5) from various viewpoints, these have not been provided to the Highland Council standard 50mm / 75mm photography that would be expected. The Option 3 VPs show a softer landscape and visual impact more generally from surrounding locations that blends in better with the surrounding

landscape given the more natural finishes. This may account for some of the disparity in the officer assessment as this was assessed on the basis of the light grey finishes shown in the visualisations.

Landscape Impact

8.51 The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the proposed development to Landscape Character Types (LCTs). Whilst there are 8 LCTs in the study area detailed assessment is limited to 2 LCTs which would be directly affected by the site and have the potential for significant landscape effects. This is due to the scale of the LCTs, intervening vegetation and the undulating nature of the local topography. This is agreed. These are Enclosed Farmland (LCT 229) and Farmed Strath – Inverness (LCT 227).

8.52 The Enclosed Farmland (LCT 229) consists of an area of north facing, sheltered, sloping farmland located to the west of Inverness. LCT 229 forms a transition between Rocky Moorland Plateau – Inverness (LCT 222) to the south and the intensively farmed lowland plain of Farmed Strath-Inverness to the north (LCT 227). Key characteristics of LCT 229 include:

- Broad undulating glens interspersed with low, rounded ridges sloping to lower plains.
- Mixed agricultural land-use balanced with a high proportion of trees, woodlands, small scale forests and hedgerows.
- Tree cover provides varying degrees of enclosure for fields and buildings as well as a diverse mix of landscape patterns, colours and textures.
- Large areas of intensive agriculture with medium-sized geometric fields divided by rows of mature deciduous trees and woodland, with some stone dykes.
- Contrasting small scale, intimate croft lands, small rectangular fields, simple arrangement of buildings, narrow lanes, gullies and small scrubby woodlands.
- Diverse range of settlement with many small farms and crofts, several villages and estates.
- Large estate houses set in woodlands and parklands with avenues of trees, prominent in the intensive agricultural land.
- Network of major and minor roads following geometric field boundaries.
- Wide distribution and range of historic sites dating from prehistoric cairns and settlements to more recent sporting estates.
- Landform and tree cover limit long distance views, creating intrigue and screen many settlements from roads.
- Restricted views and increased sense of enclosure in crofting areas, due to the density and close proximity of vertical landscape elements.

8.53 Most of the site and main development platform lies within LCT 229 and is assessed as High sensitivity. Construction effects are assessed as locally Major Adverse (significant), Year 1 effects are assessed as locally Moderate Adverse (significant) and Year 15 effects are assessed as locally Minor to Moderate Adverse (significant).

8.54 Farmed Strath – Inverness (LCT 227) is comprised of open farmland valley floors and a meandering river contained within steep, mainly forested and wooded slopes. Key characteristics of LCT 227 include:

- Linear to sinuous channels cut through uplands, with a central meandering river located in a flat or gently undulating strath floor, edged by the steep, rocky, side slopes.
- Pronounced and dynamic river meanders of Strathglass, emphasised by riparian trees, oxbow lakes and curved wetland features.
- Small scale broadleaf woodlands and small blocks of conifer forest within Strathnairn / Stratherrick strath floor which do not override openness of the strath.
- A few small settlements located on the strath floor or sides and infrequent small farms, crofts, estate buildings or groups of houses.
- Roads which generally relate well to landform, with a limited number of river crossing points.
- Many archaeological sites in Strathnairn dating from a range of periods.
- Contrast between the open, inhabited and agricultural landscape of the straths, the side slopes cloaked in alternating broadleaf woodlands, conifer forests and heather moorland, and the setting of adjacent rugged, remote uplands.
- Diversity of colour and texture added by river meanders, wetlands, damp pastures and thin bands of woodland.

8.55 The northwestern edge of the site and development platform lies within LCT 227 and is assessed as High sensitivity. Construction effects are assessed as locally Moderate Adverse (significant), Year 1 effects are assessed as locally Minor Adverse (not significant), and Year 15 effects are assessed as locally Negligible (not significant).

8.56 Whilst the applicant's assessment is generally agreed further clarification is required on a number of points. For example, the introduction for LCTs (para 8.3.11 of EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8: Landscape Character and Visual Amenity) refers to the assessment being for the whole of the LCTs, whereas the detailed assessment is for "local" effects, an extent which is not clearly defined.

8.57 The proposed development would have extensive visibility in LCT 229. While direct effects at the construction and Year 0 of operation are evident it is not clear how far beyond the site boundary the visibility of the proposed development is considered to have a significant landscape effect. It is estimated during construction and early establishment, when the built structures and landforms are prominent features, that significant adverse landscape effects may extend up to between 1km and 2km from the site.

8.58 Also, it is considered that, in addition to the buildings and structures, the screening landform, as shown in visualisations, may have an adverse effect on LCT 229, at least until woodland is well established. After that stage it would be more likely to blend into the landscape, rendering its effects neutral, rather than adverse, particularly in areas where it successfully screens the built structures (such as VP1 and VP2).

8.59 Both the Glen Strathfarrar NSA and Central Highland WLA 24 are located approximately 10.2km to the southwest and 6km to the west. Due to the distance and screening provided by the undulating topography and tree planting views towards the proposed development will be limited. As a result, both the NSA and WLA have been scoped out of the assessment. This is agreed.

Visual Impact

8.60 Large scale energy transmission schemes would be expected to result in some significant visual impact effects; however, such effects do not automatically translate to unacceptable effects. This is a matter of planning judgement when considering the merits of any given scheme. The applicant's assessment of effects on visual amenity has considered potential effects on visual receptors (people obtaining views) based in buildings and residential properties and areas, using transport and recreational routes and taking advantage of the views at defined outdoor viewing locations. Following a review of the applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) there are areas of difference between the assessment of officers and that of the applicant.

8.61 Appendix 3 provides a summary of the applicant's assessment and officer appraisal of this assessment, which highlights the differences and any concerns with regard to visual impact. The key differences are in the assessment of magnitude and significance of effect. The appraisal has consistently assessed a higher level of magnitude, particularly for lower-level effects and effects at year 15. It is generally agreed that there would be significant effects from VP1 – Fanellan Road. Whilst it is generally agreed there would not be significant effects from VP4, VP8, VP9, VP10, VP11, VP12, VP12, VP13 and VP14 for the proposed substation in isolation, it is considered that the applicant has understated the visual impact from a number of the viewpoints provided.

Impact on Residential Receptors

8.62 The lower lying landform in the study area is widely settled, with residential receptors scattered across the area as a mixture of individual farmsteads, isolated houses, scattered clusters of between 2 to 5 properties along with larger settlements including Kiltarlity, Kilmorack, and Beauly as the biggest of these within the study area.

8.63 The proposed development would be visible to a variable degree to residential receptors across the open agricultural land mainly to the south, east and northeast of the site. Of these, the applicant notes that approximately 21 residential receptors are located within 500m of the site boundary and approximately 567 residential receptors are spread relatively consistently along the local road network within 1km of the site boundary. Around half of properties within 500m and a quarter of those within 1km of the site will still have visibility of the proposed development as shown on the ZTV taking account of screening (Figure 8.3: Screening ZTV).

8.64 It is unclear how the applicant calculated the number of receptors as following a review of Highland Council's Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) which showed there were 53 addresses within 500m of application site boundary and

135 addresses within 1km. Additionally, there are 639 within 2km and 912 addresses within 3km.

8.65 Residential receptors, enjoying the view of the surrounding landscape from their own home, are considered to be highly susceptible to visual change and are therefore considered to be high sensitivity receptors, even where the actual view enjoyed may not be particularly valued. This is agreed.

8.66 The active change, movement of construction vehicles, temporary lighting and bare earth of new landforms and temporary stockpiles would be more noticeable than the permanent works due to the level of disturbance. The extent of change in the view would alter from individual properties depending on the aspect of the property in relation to the site, presence of garden planting and intervening local landform and vegetation. Whilst it is generally agreed with the applicant's assessment of significant effects during the construction phase and at early operation of the proposed development (at VP1, VP2, VP5, VP6 and VP7), the key areas of dispute relates to how long significant effects will remain once the substation is operational and the extent of cumulative effects of the proposed associated transmission infrastructure. Additionally, it is considered that the applicant has understated the assessment of VP14 – Belladrum festival grounds as there are considered to be significant effects at the construction phase and early operation of the proposed development.

8.67 It is considered that the applicant has understated significant effects to residential receptors which will extend into year 15 at VP2 - Sunnybrae and Bredaig, VP5 - Tomnacross and Kiltarlity, VP6 – Culburnie and VP7 – Creraig which are set back up to 2km from the proposed development. Given that the construction period is expected to last at least 3 years (with an additional 2 years to commission and reach full energisation) this goes some way beyond what would be considered a temporary period with significant effects extending to at least 18 years after works first began to the proposed development. These viewpoints are assessed in more detail below.

VP2 – Sunnybrae and Bredaig

8.68 Residents of Fanellan, Bredaig, and Sunnybrae generally front onto Fanellan Road with diagonal views towards the site. The primary focus of views is to the southeast across the valley with long-distance views beyond to hills in the distance. Whilst the impact of construction activity will decrease with distance construction traffic utilising the C1106 Fanellan Road will be visible to all receptors on the route. VP2 is located on Fanellan Road to the northeast of Sunnybrae whilst Bredaig is approximately 400m northeast of the viewpoint (adjacent to the southwestern corner of the site). Residents of Hughton are approximately 200m southwest of Sunnybrae. Bredaig is located at closer proximity to the site but screening from existing woodland adjacent to the C1106 Fanellan Road would filter views of construction works to some extent.

8.69 During the construction phase activity will be located in the middle distance within the context of the existing towers and OHL. Views of the works will be available over and above intervening vegetation and through gaps in the summer months but will be less filtered in the winter months when trees have shed their leaves.

Notable construction activity will include traffic along C1106 Fanellan Road, construction of earthworks, substation platform and substation, beyond the middle-distance field boundary. Despite shielded views, there will be noticeable changes to key characteristics in the middle ground. It is considered the level of magnitude is High resulting in a temporary Major Adverse (significant) visual amenity effect. This is generally agreed.

8.70 Once the works are complete there would be filtered views during the winter months to the northeast and east towards the site. Landforms would be clearly visible in the middle-distance restricting views of the substation infrastructure beyond to a certain extent. The level of magnitude would reduce to medium resulting in a Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.71 The applicant considers that by the time the substation has been operational for 15 years woodland planting on the landforms will be maturing and grown sufficiently to soften the landforms and screen much of the built form and infrastructure beyond. They consider the level of magnitude would reduce further to low resulting in a Minor Adverse (Not Significant) effect. Whilst screening the proposed development, the landforms providing the screening appears as angular and slightly incongruous from this outlook creating an intrusive feature. Therefore, it is considered that effects would remain Medium in magnitude as it is still a noticeable change resulting in a Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect for surrounding residents.

VP5 – Tomnacross Primary School

8.72 Kiltarlity is located on the south bank of the Bruiach Burn. Views of residents within the village itself are generally screened by intervening vegetation and other buildings, but pockets of more open views are available for more scattered properties fringed on the edge of the village, particularly to the south and east at a slightly higher elevation, including from Tomnacross, located approximately 350m to the southeast of Kiltarlity. The small hamlet contains scattered houses, Tomnacross Primary School, Kiltarlity Church and cemetery. The area of open ground between Tomnacross and Kiltarlity allows for good visibility across the valley and Fanellan Wood towards the elevated position of the proposed development, enclosed by Ruttle Wood and peaks in the distance beyond.

8.73 During the construction phase, activity would be clearly noticeable for properties in Tomnacross and the surrounding area as works would be seen on the slopes beyond Kiltarlity against the hill and ridgeline backdrop, with taller plant and machinery such as cranes, would likely break the skyline. This would result in a medium magnitude of change resulting in a temporary Moderate Adverse (significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.74 Once the works are complete the substation and converter station infrastructure, as well as landforms, would be clearly discernible in the view from Tomnacross, obscuring a portion of the outlook towards Ruttle Wood and the summit of Tòrr Mòr. The level of magnitude would remain medium with a Moderate Adverse (significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.75 The applicant considers that by the time the substation has been operational for

15 years the proposed vegetation planting will soften the landforms and provide a screening function for much of the substation infrastructure when viewed from properties in Tomnacross. Whilst the converter station buildings will remain distinctive features in the view, the applicant makes reference to the potential sympathetic façade colour treatment that will make the infrastructure appear more recessive. They consider that as no element of the proposed development will skyline in views the backdrop of the distant hills remains largely unaffected. They consider that this results in a low magnitude of change and a Minor Adverse (not significant) effect.

8.76 It is considered that whilst woodland planting would help to screen and integrate the wider development the upper part of the converter station would remain prominent near the skyline and draw the eye. Although reference is made to the colour façade of the converter station buildings blending in with the surrounding landscape at VP5, the proposed development infrastructure is shown in a neutral light grey, as it is for all the other visualisations provided, rather than in the proposed mitigation colours. This increases the prominence of the proposed development, and it is unclear as to whether the LVIA is assessing the visualisations as presented or takes account of the proposed colours. Therefore, it is considered that effects would remain Medium in magnitude as it is still a noticeable change resulting in a Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect for surrounding residents.

Kiltarlity VP6 – Culburnie

8.77 Culburnie is a scattered hamlet south of the site on lower lying ground containing residential properties with various outlooks. The site will appear on the skyline along with Ruttle Wood as key features in views north. The immediate surrounding area is covered by a mixture of small broadleaf and plantation trees along with garden and roadside vegetation in the wider surrounding area. The Culburnie / Teanacoil Burn passes through the area at the bottom of the valley and covered by trees.

8.78 VP6 is located on the western edge of Culburnie and northern edge of Culburnie Muir illustrating views north towards the proposed development. The site is visible in the middle distance on the rising slopes beyond the properties at Bredaig, Lonbuie and Fanellan. The outlook is partially screened by intervening topography, vegetation and occasional buildings but the existing Beauly Deny 400kV OHL is clearly visible on the horizon.

8.79 During the construction phase activity would be clearly visible in the middle distance, occupying a moderate portion of the view. Taller infrastructure would appear above the skyline, obscuring a segment of the view towards Ruttle Wood and the hills beyond. This would be a change of medium magnitude, resulting in a temporary Major Adverse (Significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.80 Once the works are complete the proposed development would remain clearly visible but partially screened behind the new landforms with the activity and movement of vehicles and machinery during the construction phase coming to an end. The level of magnitude would remain medium but with a Moderate Adverse

(Significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.81 The applicant considers that by the time the substation has been operational for 15 years the maturing mitigation woodland would have grown sufficiently to screen views of the proposed development in the middle ground softening the landforms and screening much of the substation beyond. They consider the level of magnitude would reduce to low resulting in a Minor Adverse (Not Significant) effect.

8.82 It is considered there is a higher magnitude of change at VP6 at all development stages and significant effects for residents at year 15. Whilst it is generally agreed that woodland planting would help to screen and integrate the wider development to a certain extent the upper part of the converter station along with other infrastructure would remain prominent in this view longer term. Therefore, it is considered that effects would remain Medium in magnitude as it is still a noticeable change resulting in a Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect for surrounding residents.

VP7 – Creraig

8.83 Creraig hamlet is located west of Culburnie on the same side of the valley but on marginally higher, rising ground. The elevated views across the wider landscape are largely of scenic agricultural farmland with existing large scale OHL infrastructure noticeable in the middle distance and breaking the skyline. Views from elevated areas of Creraig look across towards the site on the opposite hillside, enclosed by distant hills. VP7 is located on the southern, most elevated edge of Creraig. Whilst set back at a distance of approximately 1.5km, the viewpoint provides an elevated outlook with uninterrupted visibility across the valley towards the proposed development on the hillside opposite.

8.84 During the construction phase activity would be visible as a distinct action on the opposing hillside occupying a noticeable portion of the view. This would be a change of medium magnitude, resulting in a temporary Major Adverse (significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.85 Once the works are complete the substation and converter station buildings would be readily evident within the landscape with an element of screening provided by the additional landforms. The immature planting will not provide any screening or integration at this point. The level of magnitude would reduce to medium resulting in a Moderate Adverse (significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.86 The applicant considers that by the time the substation has been operational for 15 years the infrastructure would become weathered, and vegetation planting would mature to provide increased screening and integration of the site into the wider surrounding landscape. They consider the sympathetic façade colour would continue to help make the buildings more recessive. They consider the magnitude of change would reduce to low, resulting in a Minor Adverse (not significant) effect.

8.87 As with VP6 it is considered there is a higher magnitude of change at VP7 at all development stages and significant effects for residents at year 15. Whilst it is generally agreed that woodland planting would help to screen and integrate the

wider development to a certain extent, the upper part of the converter station along with other infrastructure would remain prominent in this view longer term.

8.88 Additionally, reference is made once again to the colour façade (as it was for VP5) of the converter station buildings blending in with the surrounding landscape at VP7. As noted previously, the visualisations provided shows the proposed development infrastructure in a neutral light grey, rather than in the proposed mitigation colours. This increases the prominence of the proposals, and it is unclear as to whether the LVIA is assessing the visualisations as presented or takes account of the proposed colours. Therefore, it is considered that effects would remain Medium in magnitude as it is still a noticeable change resulting in a Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect for surrounding residents.

Impact on Recreational Routes

8.89 The main recreational receptors are users of surrounding Core Paths and visitors to Belladrum Festival shown by VP5 from Balgate Track (Core Path IND20.07) and VP14 within the festival grounds. Whilst there are unlikely to be significant simultaneous or successive effects on receptors using Core Paths within the study area alongside other related developments, the proposed development would contribute to overall cumulative change to landscape character, and cumulative effects could be experienced sequentially along the network.

Home Farm to Hughton by Lonbuie and East Lodge to West Lodge Core Paths

8.90 Home Farm to Hughton by Lonbuie (Core Path IN20.11) and East Lodge to West Lodge within the grounds of the A listed Beaufort Castle (Core Path IN20.05) runs east to west through the designated Designed Landscape and Gardens in a valley from Lonbuie towards Beaufort Castle in between VP1 and VP6. Whilst views towards the site are generally screened along the majority of the route by a mixture of topography and vegetation there is theoretical visibility closer to Beaufort Castle with the proposed development visible in the background of the outlook against the rising slopes of Torr Mor (as illustrated by Figure 8.3: Screening ZTV).

8.91 Whilst the recreational routes noted above have been evaluated, noting Minor Adverse (not significant) effects during the construction and early operational phases then reducing to Negligible (not significant) effects along the paths as a whole, the applicant's assessment fails to mention any significant effects assessed along parts of Core Paths. Whilst Beaufort Castle is scoped out of the assessment (Table 8.4: Items Scoped Out of the LVIA) the ZTV indicates available views of the site.

Bruaich to Burn to Dounie Burn, Balgate Track, Old Mill track, Farm Walk to School, Kiltarlity 2000 path

8.92 These Core Paths (Bruaich to Burn to Dounie Burn (Core Path IN20.06), Balgate Track (Core Path IN20.07), Old Mill track (Core Path IN20.08), Farm Walk to School (Core Path IN20.09), Kiltarlity 2000 path (Core Path IN20.10)) run north to south within the study area linking Kiltarlity to the south east of the site to the grounds of Beaufort Castle (Core Path IN20.05 noted above) to the east. There is

visibility of the site closer to the south of Kiltarlity towards Tomnacross School, where the proposed development will be seen in the background of the views on the rising slopes of Torr Mor in proximity to the existing Beauly Denny OHL. VP5 is illustrative of views from these Core Paths noted with Balgate Track (Core Path IN20.07) covered in further detail in the residential receptor analysis above, which noted that the applicant's assessment has understated the effects which are considered to be significant at year 15 of the operation of the proposed substation.

VP14 – Belladrum Festival Grounds

8.93 Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival grounds are located to the southeast of the study area near Tomnacross. Whilst it is agreed that receptors are going to be focussed on the festival activities to a certain extent, festival goers will still have an appreciation of the wider landscape with the rural setting of Belladrum part of the reason why the event is popular. Receptors in this location are represented by VP14.

8.94 During the construction phase the applicant considers that activity would be visible in a very small portion of the background view, with tall plant and emerging built infrastructure obscuring a portion of views towards Ruttle Wood with works and the majority of infrastructure appearing below the skyline amongst existing landscape features. They consider that changes to key characteristics will be barely discernible and will result in a negligible magnitude of change resulting in a temporary negligible (not significant) effect.

8.95 Once the works are complete the applicant considers the loss of vegetation within Ruttle Wood and the introduction of new landscape features will remain barely perceptible at this distance. They consider this will result in very limited or no discernible changes to the key characteristics of the view and the magnitude of change will remain negligible with negligible (not significant) effect.

8.96 It is considered there is a higher magnitude of change at VP14 at the construction phase and early operation of the substation given the sensitivity of receptors. The proposed development is seen in the centre of the view in an area of agricultural land framed by the hills behind, with little other human intervention beyond the existing Beauly Denny OHL. The construction activity and movement alongside large-scale infrastructure will be seen in the outlook with the screening landform and planting taking some time to become embedded within the view. Therefore, it is considered that effects at the construction and early operational phase would be Medium in magnitude as it will a noticeable change in the view resulting in a Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect for those attending the festival.

8.97 The applicant considers that by the time the substation has been operational for 15 years, maturing woodland planting would screen the proposed development with only the upper portion of the substation and converter substation seen from this view. They consider the magnitude of change will remain negligible and thus a Negligible (not significant) effect. Whilst it is considered that the magnitude of change has been understated by the applicant, it is still Low, therefore, it is generally agreed that the effect will not be significant.

Impact on Road and Rail Users

8.98 The Proposed Development would be visible on parts of the A831 and A862 for users traveling away from Beauly, and from parts of the network of minor roads across the study area. Transport receptors are generally considered to be of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed, and thus of medium sensitivity.

A831 and A862 Public Road

8.99 The A831 forms part of a recognised tourist route and rural road corridor set back from the northern site boundary, on to Cannich and beyond to the southwest before linking to Drumnadrochit and the A82 along the northwestern shoreline of Loch Ness. The A862 serves as an arterial route to the northeast of the site linking Inverness to Beauly then Conon Bridge and beyond to the north.

8.100 Visibility of receptors travelling along these popular routes is commonly limited to short sections only with a predominantly rural outlook alongside woodland and mature roadside vegetation which partially filters views from road users. The existing Beauly Denny 400kV OHL is noticeable through gaps in layered vegetation and trees seen in the background above the skyline. VP8 and VP10 are illustrative of views from those travelling along the A831 and A862.

8.101 During the construction phase activity would be visible in the background view including the removal of vegetation within Ruttle Wood and the movement of tall plant machinery in the immediate surrounding locale around the existing OHL. Construction activities will become more noticeable as travellers move southwest away from Beauly. The magnitude of change will be between low to medium with a temporary Minor Adverse (not significant) to Moderate Adverse (significant) effect along the routes. It is generally agreed that there will be some significant effects along the route although the applicant has not specified where exactly these will be.

8.102 Once the works are complete the loss of vegetation within Ruttle Wood will open up views towards the proposed development and remain visible on the skyline adjacent to the existing OHL. The landscape mitigation will still have to blend in with the surrounding landscape at this point and will not appear integrated. The proposed development will be more apparent as travellers move southwest away from Beauly. The applicant considers the magnitude of change will be Negligible to Low with a Negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant) effect. It is considered that the applicant has understated the visual impact as some significant effects will remain along the routes given the landscaping mitigation measures will take some time to take full effect.

8.103 By the time the substation has been operational for 15 years only the upper portion of the substation and converter station will remain visible above trees and other vegetation on the skyline. Mitigation planting is located primarily to the front of the substation building, therefore, there is minimal additional screening from these routes. As above, the proposed development will be more noticeable the further southwest travellers move from Beauly. The applicant considers the magnitude of change will remain Negligible to Low with a Negligible to Minor Adverse (not

significant) effect. It is considered that the applicant has understated the visual impact slightly as some significant effects will remain along the routes at certain points, however, these have decreased since the early operational phase.

A833 Public Road

8.104 The A833 is another route to the southeast of the site linking Kiltarlity and other scattered settlements to the A831 and A862 and further afield. Visibility of receptors travelling along this route would be limited by distance and intervening vegetation, built form and topography. As with the arterial routes noted above, the rural outlook alongside woodland and mature roadside vegetation will screen views from road users looking west towards the site.

8.105 During the construction phase activity would be discernible in the background view but limited to the removal of vegetation within Ruttle Wood and the movement of tall plant machinery. Views of construction would be glimpsed, transient and at distance. The magnitude of change would be low with a temporary Minor Adverse (not significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.106 Once the works are complete the loss of vegetation within Ruttle Wood will retain views towards the proposed development seen on the skyline at distance alongside the existing OHL with the construction activity and large-scale plant machinery will have ended. Landscape mitigation planting will not have matured at this stage. The magnitude of change would reduce to negligible to low with a negligible to Minor Adverse (not significant) effect. This is generally agreed.

8.107 By the time the substation has been operational for 15 years the proposed development may still be discernible in glimpsed views, however, these will be softened by mitigation planting that will have now matured. The magnitude of change will be negligible and thus a negligible (not significant) effect. Whilst it is considered the applicant has understated the magnitude of change it is generally agreed that there will not be a significant effect.

C1106 Fanellan Road linking to the A831 via Black Bridge

8.108 Receptors include road users travelling along Fanellan Road, Black Bridge and the associated unnamed road connecting them with the A831. The C1106 Fanellan Road runs from east to west through the site connecting Hughton and Eskadale with Fanellan and Kilmorack via Black Bridge. Views for users of C1106 Fanellan Road and the A831 are represented by VP1, VP2 and VP10 with significant effects noted previously in analysis above.

Minor Roads to the North

8.109 Receptors include road users travelling to Wester Balblair, the minor roads connecting Ruilick, Ruisaurie and Drumindorsair to the A831, the route between Togormack and Drumindorsair, and the connecting route between Farley and Torgormack are illustrated to some degree by VP3, VP4, VP9 and VP13.

8.110 Visibility from these minor roads is limited to short sections of these routes. Views along them are predominantly from elevated positions which look out over a rural

landscape towards woodland and significant tree cover fringing the north / northeast site boundary. Electricity transmission infrastructure is a common site throughout the landscape with the existing 400kV OHL and substation being discernible in many transient views along these routes.

8.111 Whilst it is considered the applicant has understated the magnitude of change as Negligible as opposed to Low at both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development it is generally agreed that the effects would not be significant.

8.112 While the effects from these receptors are not considered significant this is dependent on the degree to which the upper part of the proposed development is screened by the retained woodland beyond the northern site boundary. Should woodland be removed or windthrown, the buildings will likely to be prominent on the hill crest.

Minor Roads to the South

8.113 Receptors include road users travelling between Culburnie and Fanellan, connecting Creraig with Culburnie, the routes between and connecting the A833, Kiltarlity and Tomnacross (including Allarburn Drive and Post Office Brae). These are illustrated to some degree by VP5, VP6 and VP7. Users of these routes will experience pockets of visibility north or west towards the proposed development along the majority of these routes. Significant effects have been noted previously at VP5, VP6, and VP7 in analysis above.

Minor Roads to the West

8.114 Receptors include road users of the existing residential road corridor connecting Crask of Aigas to the A831. There are only very limited, glimpsed views towards the site given there is significant screening provided by intervening vegetation, topography around Tòrr Mòr and mature trees at Ruttle Wood. Pockets of open land alongside allow some views eastwards where the existing 400kV overhead line is a noticeable feature above Ruttle Wood. This is illustrated to some extent by VP12.

8.115 Whilst it is considered that the applicant has understated the magnitude of change as Negligible as opposed to Low at the early and longer-term operation of the proposed development, it is generally agreed that the effects would not be significant.

Railway Line

8.116 Rail users on the line between Inverness and Beauly will have transient, intermittent views across the lower lying landscape towards the elevated site. Views are limited to a relatively short section of the railway line as it curves around the southern edge of Beauly illustrated to some extent by VP8 located in the station car park.

8.117 The view faces southwest towards the proposed development with open views across flat farmland, mature trees and other vegetation in the middle distance with

distant mountains in the background. Human influences are present in the outlook including telegraph poles, agricultural buildings, residential development at the eastern edge of Wester Balblair along with the existing 400kV towers and overhead lines converging at Beauly Substation. While the proposed development site is visible from this location in the background, it is largely obscured by existing vegetation in the middle distance.

8.118 Although it is considered that the applicant has understated the magnitude of change as Negligible as opposed to Low at early and longer-term operation of the proposed development, it is generally agreed that the effects would not be significant.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact

8.119 Volume 2 EIAR Chapter 8: Landscape Character and Visual Amenity covers the cumulative assessment of the proposed development however, it states that this is based on in-combination effects i.e. the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development combined with other proposed developments within the study area, but it does not assess the additional effects of the proposed development. No attempt is made to address or comment on additional or combined landscape and visual effects with all the baseline developments together. Therefore, it is difficult to understand the contribution the substation would make to overall effects. Additionally, there is a lack of clarity / consistency showing the location of cumulative developments; distance between cumulative developments; the assessment does not include cumulative effects with other similar / related developments already in operation, such as Balblair substation; and there is no assessment of sequential effects on receptors using routes passing through the study area.

8.120 Also, there is no reference to specific receptors, including settlements and VPs, which have not been assessed for cumulative visual effects. Instead, reference is made more generally to receptors within certain areas or distances relative to the proposed development. This has made the cumulative assessment vague, and it is difficult to understand the difference between the assessment of the proposed development alone and the combined effects. The assessment of additional cumulative effects, along with specific receptors such as the VPs, settlements, roads and other recreational routes would have drawn more specific conclusions.

8.121 Without a cumulative analysis of each viewpoint the reader has to rely on the assessment of visual receptors which incorporates all the viewpoints and makes it harder to understand. This approach has also been taken for the proposed Spittal to Beauly OHL which is currently pending consideration. While the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) do not explicitly ask for viewpoints to be assessed (this was the case for the previous GLVIA2 now superseded), however, viewpoints should be assessed in order to gauge the extent of significant effects. It is unusual that this has not been provided by the applicant as the vast majority of landscape consultants undertake a cumulative viewpoint assessment within the submitted LVIA for an application of this nature and scale.

8.122 The LVIA concludes that there would be significant cumulative effects only with the proposed Beauly to Spittal 400kV OHL and Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL which would connect into the proposed development. Both OHLs are clearly associated with the substation and their location in the same area highlights its prominent ridge crest position. Whilst this is generally agreed, the LVIA considers that significant landscape and visual effects to receptors extend between 1km to 2km at most which is judged to be an underestimation. It is considered that significant effects extend beyond the applicant's assessment up to approximately 3km, particularly to the south and southwest, represented by VP5, VP6 and VP7 and extending to higher ground beyond these viewpoints. Additionally, it is considered that the proposed rerouted Beauly to Denny OHL will also add to the cumulative effect from such viewpoints where the OHL are often seen breaking the skyline and drawing the eye to the along the transmission routes to the larger scale converter station buildings on the higher ground.

8.123 During the construction phase of the Spittal to Beauly 400kV OHL, works would extend the area affected north and west beyond the proposed substation although the level of activity would be less intensive than the proposed substation construction. Much of the construction activity associated with Fanellan is screened from the northwest, however, it is anticipated that extensive vegetation clearance would be required for the OHL corridor through Ruttle Wood leading to a significant cumulative landscape effect on LCT 227 and LCT 229. The loss of woodland through Ruttle Wood would be highly visible and potentially and likely increase visibility of construction works at the proposed substation from the north. Receptors south of the proposed development would also see construction of both developments in combination leading to a significant cumulative visual effect.

8.124 Once operational, the OHL would increase the area of LCT 227 and 229 affected by transmission development due to the anticipated permanent vegetation loss within an artificially straight corridor through Ruttle Wood leading to a significant cumulative landscape effect. The cleared OHL operational corridor through Ruttle Wood will appear as a substantial, abnormal straight line through woodland, particularly in views from the north. The presence of towers over the crest of the hill and terminal towers for the OHL are predicted to draw the eye to the location of the substation, making the proposed development more noticeable, leading to a significant cumulative visual effect.

8.125 During the construction phase of the Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL, works would extend the area affected south and east although the level of activity would be less intensive than that of the proposed substation construction, however, receptors south of the proposed development would see both development construction works at the same time leading to a significant cumulative landscape effect on LCT 229 and a significant cumulative visual effect.

8.126 Once operational, the OHL would increase the area of LCT 229 affected by transmission development and the effect would be more intense leading to a significant cumulative landscape effect on LCT 229. The OHL terminal towers are anticipated to draw the eye to the proposed substation making it more noticeable leading to a significant cumulative visual effect.

Summary of Landscape and Visual Impacts

8.127 It is considered that the proposed development would cause significant direct and indirect landscape effects during construction, once works have been completed and longer term at 15 years of operation and beyond. These would primarily be in the Enclosed Farmland (LCT 229), where most of the development footprint and visibility lies, with more limited effects from Farmed Strath – Inverness (LCT 227).

8.128 As noted, significant visual effects during construction, during early operation and in the longer term would extend beyond the 2km noted by the applicant to approximately 3km on higher ground. These effects are experienced from various locations including dwellings, settlements, Core Paths and roads mainly located to the south and southeast of the site. From these views the proposed development would be seen to occupy the ridge of farmland and forest with the proposed converter station buildings prominent either on or near the skyline which is already occupied by the Beauly Denny OHL.

8.129 The proposed earthworks would screen much, but not all, of the proposed development and appear as an adverse feature in the landscape from a number of locations. The effects will not diminish until the extensive woodland mitigation planting has matured which will help to better integrate the proposed development into the landscape. Even at 15 years of operation, the proposed earthworks will still not completely screen the proposed development from all locations with residual significant effects remaining for some receptors, albeit less adverse than at the construction phase and once works have been completed.

8.130 With several similar or related existing and proposed electricity transmission developments in the wider study area the proposed development would contribute to cumulative landscape and visual effects. The most significant combined effects would be with the 2 proposed 400kV Spittal to Beauly and Beauly to Peterhead OHLs that would connect with the proposed substation seen alongside the existing Beauly to Denny OHL. Again, it is considered that significant cumulative effects would also extend to approximately 3km, particularly to the south and southwest. The applicant considered that significant effects would only occur to between 1km and 2km, but this has understated the cumulative impact.

8.131 Whilst there are unlikely to be significant simultaneous or successive effects on specific visual receptors with other related developments in the study area it is considered the proposed development would contribute to overall cumulative change to the landscape character and cumulative effects would be experienced sequentially along some linear receptors including surrounding roads and Core Paths.

8.132 Given the scale of the proposed development, site location on an elevated ridge top location alongside the number of associated and similar developments in the study area, significant landscape, visual and cumulative effects are inevitable in the shorter term but will continue once complete and longer term once operational. This is based on the development as depicted in visualisations which may not adequately represent all proposed mitigation measures that are available to the applicant, such as more natural shaping of earthworks, specifying in keeping

external colour finishes of the proposed infrastructure, and additional on and off-site roadside structural planting within surrounding estate grounds, all of which are recommended to be secured by way condition.

Construction Impact

8.133 The development of a project of this scale will have temporary impacts including, for example, construction traffic, construction noise, dust, and waste. Such impacts are expected throughout the construction period. It is anticipated that construction of the project would take approximately 3 years with a further 2 years to commission and reach full energisation. It is for these reasons that the applicant has a commitment to a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). The finalised details of which, following appointment of the project contractor, would require approval of the Planning Authority in consultation relevant consultees. In addition, the applicant has also committed to the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) to oversee the project. This can usefully dovetail with a Planning Monitoring Officer role to monitor compliance with the conditions attached to any consent.

8.134 The applicant notes that as the construction phase has been refined, they aim to proceed on the basis of working hours of 07:00 to 19:00 over 7 days throughout the full year to deliver the proposed development within the programme for Pathway to 2030 projects. Heavy goods vehicle traffic hours will be restricted to Monday to Friday 08:00 to 19:00 and Saturday 08:00 to 13:00 with no deliveries proposed on Sunday or recognised bank holidays in Scotland. Any out of hours working would have to be agreed in advance with the Highland Council. During the commissioning phase of the proposed development the applicant notes there may be requirement for 24 hours a day, seven days a week working and potential for out of hours working. Again, such working hours would require approval from the Council.

8.135 A number of representations have raised concerns with regards to the proposed intensity of works over a significant period of 3 years. The applicant has proposed working hours between 07.00 to 19.00, 7 days a week, which offers no respite to local communities in the surrounding area. This cannot be accepted by Environmental Health and more reasonable working hours limiting construction on site between 08:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00 and 13:00 on Saturday with no works on Sunday to at least give some level of break in works over the weekend. While these more restrictive working hours, alongside the Black Bridge replacement works now proposed to make the route to site viable for heavier construction vehicles, they will highly likely push the work programme beyond the 3 years initially noted; Environmental Health are clear that it will not support 7 days a week working. The working hours can be controlled by condition to provide some level of respite to the local community which is not currently planned.

8.136 While construction activities typically result in some level of disturbance with such impacts experienced in the short-term, given the scale of this nationally significant project, the construction period is expected to be substantial. Given this extended timeframe, it is essential that the prolonged nature of the works is considered when determining appropriate working hours and identifying the best practicable means

of mitigating noise and vibration.

8.137 Given the ongoing working hours noted above, local residents will experience little or no respite from construction noise throughout the week. EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 14: Noise and Vibration includes a desk-based assessment of construction noise, carried out in accordance with BS5228: Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites. BS5228 recommends noise limits of LAeq,T 65dB for daytime, 55dB for evenings, and 45dB for nighttime. Given the proposed working hours include evenings and weekends, the assessment has applied a limit of 55dB.

8.138 The assessment identifies 73 properties within the study area and concludes that the 55dB limit will be exceeded during all phases of construction at up to 42 properties. Furthermore, 14 properties are predicted to experience noise levels above 60dB, indicating a high impact and a major significant adverse effect. During construction phases of the proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion and the Black Bridge replacement, noise levels are also expected to exceed 55dB. Levels may reach as high as 71dB at the nearest noise-sensitive receptor (NSR), exceeding the daytime limit of 65dB and indicating a significant adverse impact.

8.139 Whilst it is noted that the predicted noise levels do not account for any reductions from mitigation measures that could potentially reduce the levels noted, no specific mitigation scheme has been proposed by SSEN to date. The applicant intends to submit a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) once the principal contractor is appointed. This plan will include mitigation measures, noise monitoring, and community consultation in line with BS5228. Environmental Health has requested that hours of construction works are more clearly defined. This can be controlled by condition.

8.140 Chapter 14 includes a desk-based assessment of potential vibration impacts during construction, carried out in accordance with BS5228: Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites. However, the specific activities likely to generate vibration are not yet confirmed and will be determined once the principal contractor is appointed. The assessment considers vibratory compaction, percussive and vibratory piling, and dynamic compaction.

8.141 The assessment concludes that vibration impacts are generally low for most activities, except for dynamic compaction, which is expected to have a medium impact. The predicted vibration level for dynamic compaction is 9.4mm/s. This level is likely to result in complaints from residents and is only considered tolerable if prior warning and explanation are provided. It approaches the threshold of 10 mm/s, which is typically regarded as intolerable for anything more than brief exposure.

8.142 If dynamic compaction is required, mitigation measures must be implemented to reduce its impact with potential mitigation strategies, including maintaining good communication with neighbouring property owners and keeping the public informed. It is expected that best practicable means (BPM) will be employed to minimise vibration impacts. As such, a Construction Vibration Management Plan (CVMP) can be controlled by condition.

8.143 Developers must also comply with reasonable operational practices with regard to construction noise so as not to cause nuisance. 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. It is also expected that the developer and contractors would employ best practicable means to reduce the impact of noise from construction activities at all times.

8.144 Timing of deliveries (HGVs and abnormal loads) shall also be agreed through a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with construction traffic avoiding school travel times and identified community events. Given that the route across the Black Bridge is unviable for heavier loads, a condition is attached noting that the replacement of the bridge is required prior to any other works commencing. In addition to the requirement for submission and agreement on a CEMP, the Council will require the applicant to enter into a legal agreement and provide a financial bond with regard to the developer's use of the local road network (a Section 96 Wear and Tear Agreement).

8.145 The proposed development has the potential to cause localised and temporary impacts on air quality. These may arise from foundation construction activities, vehicle movements along access tracks, and exhaust emissions from construction machinery. The EIAR states that these impacts will be managed through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will be prepared following the appointment of the principal contractor. This plan must include detailed air quality mitigation measures and monitoring arrangements which can be controlled by condition.

8.146 Blasting is anticipated as part of earthworks and will be managed through a Blasting Management Plan to minimise environmental and amenity impacts. The plan will detail procedures for safe execution, vibration control, and compliance with best practice standards. A Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) will also incorporate blasting controls, following BS 5228 guidance. Advance notification of blasting times will be communicated to surrounding NSRs and will be scheduled to avoid sensitive periods for wildlife, for example bird breeding season between March and May, along with minimising nuisance to residents, farmers and businesses. Pre-construction surveys and monitoring will inform timing and mitigation for blasting operations.

8.147 A condition of permission would be for a Community Liaison Group to be established. Given the size and duration of the proposed development there may be disturbance over a prolonged period, not only the significant levels of construction traffic, noise and dust but other issues such as constrained parking and access in proximity to access routes used for recreation. The Community Liaison Group (CLG) 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. It is proposed that Local Ward Members are invited to participate in the CLG.

8.148 Where required, vegetation would be carefully removed from within the site, including trees and hedgerows subject to any ecological considerations relating to

timing and method of working. Existing vegetation would be retained wherever possible. Two properties at Upper Fanellan Cottages along with an agricultural yard and structures associated with Fanellan Farm will be required to be demolished to facilitate construction of the proposed development. These properties fall within the Lovat Estate and are in common ownership with the application site, which the applicant is looking to secure control over.

8.149 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 16: Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation notes that construction workers will use existing accommodation in the wider area (hotels, guesthouses, rental properties) rather than purpose-built facilities within the site.

Roads, Transport and Access

8.150 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 12: Traffic and Transport covers the roads and traffic impacts of the proposed development. The applicant has now taken on-board long-standing planning advice, going back years to early pre-application engagement, that routing traffic through Kiltarlity would not be accepted by the Council as the Roads Authority. Additionally, the applicant has been aware for the same period that the most appropriate access solution remains via a suitably replaced Black Bridge to allow traffic to access the site from the northeast via the A831 onto the C1106 Fanellan Road, bypassing Kiltarlity, with no works commencing until this is complete.

8.151 Black Bridge will be replaced with a new bridge. As this is outwith the proposed application site boundary this will need to be dealt with by a separate planning application. SSEN intend to submit this planning application by June 2026 with community consultation events recently carried out in Kiltarlity and Beauly on 4 December 2025 as part of the Proposal of Application Notice process (25/04411/PAN). The existing three span reinforced concrete bridge structure has been under use / load restrictions since 1992 with recent investigation works indicating that repairs to the structure would likely not return the structure to its full load capacity with unknown final costs and time to achieve this. As such, a full bridge replacement has been selected as the preferred development option which would provide a structure that will facilitate site access to the proposed substation.

8.152 Whilst this approach is generally welcomed, the Transport Planning Team noted it would have been preferred if the applicant had taken on board this previous advice from the outset, instead of initially proposing the route through Kiltarlity via the C1108 and U1604 roads. This would not have been supported given these are substandard routes unsuitable for the nature and scale of traffic that a development of this type and size would likely generate. Additionally, the alternative option of access through Beaufort Estate was subsequently considered with an updated Transport Assessment (TA) submitted as SEI (EIAR Volume 4, Appendix 12.2 Transport Assessment). This route raised separate concerns from Historic Environment Scotland, Historic Environment Team, Forestry Officer and Access Officer given the significant levels of traffic proposed through the Estate and the implications to cultural heritage, designated designed landscape and woodland, Core Paths and lack of clarity regarding how the traffic would be managed through this route. The Transport Planning Team noted that whilst there appeared to be some merits from a roads and transport perspective, additional mitigation would be required to support that as a viable means of access. This was

then discounted by the applicant following the concerns raised by the key consultees noted.

8.153 While the applicant has not provided any further updated TA or CTMP with specific details regarding the currently proposed access via the Black Bridge, the previous information submitted originally with regards to the Kiltarlity route, and then the later SEI with regards to the Beaufort Estate route, contained significant inconsistencies and omissions. These included the following for the initial proposed Kiltarlity route:

- The CTMP predicts up to 600 daily vehicle trips during peak construction, whereas the TA suggests 112 daily two-way trips (68 HGV and 44 non-HGV).
- Figures for timber removal (120 HGV movements) and trips associated with the Black Bridge replacement are unclear and are not be included in peak calculations.
- The proposal to convoy heavy vehicles is strongly opposed due to accelerated pavement deterioration and safety risks.
- The TA incorrectly identifies the A831 as an “Agreed Route” for timber transport; it is a “Consultation Route” and subject to restrictions.
- No cumulative assessment has been provided for other major energy projects in the area, contrary to best practice and policy requirements.

8.154 Likewise, these included the following for the subsequent proposed Beaufort Estate route:

- As above, peak daily trips prior to the Black Bridge replacement were estimated at 600 in the CTMP compared to 112 in the TA.
- As above, timber removal (120 loads) and traffic associated with the Black Bridge replacement were excluded from peak calculations.
- No clear methodology for converting journey figures into two-way trips was provided.
- Material quantities and assumptions underpinning trip generation remain unexplained.
- Cumulative impacts from other transmission projects, such as the proposed Spittal to Beauly OHL, and Beauly to Peterhead OHL amongst other schemes within the wider surrounding area currently at various stages within the planning process, were not assessed.

8.155 Although the Transport Planning Team previously objected to the proposed route through Kiltarlity, and noted that additional mitigation would be required to support the route through Beaufort Estate as a viable means of access, the use of the Black Bridge offers the best outcome with regards to minimising the detrimental impact on the local community and is a welcomed concession from SSEN. Even so, the supporting information provided up until this point by the applicant with regards to roads and traffic has been less than ideal. The Transport Planning Team consider that without an effective cumulative traffic impact assessment being undertaken it has no understanding of the likely cumulative demands on the A831 between the A862 and the C1106 road over Black Bridge. Given this is a Consultation Route under the Timber Transport Route Designation, reflecting that it is not up to an agreed standard for unrestricted large commercial vehicle

movements, it will likely require improvements to physically accommodate the probable very high commercial vehicle movements, whilst remaining safe and available for other users.

8.156 The Roads Authority will require SSEN to establish and operate a Traffic Management Coordinator role for the duration of this development and this will be controlled by condition. The role will be required to:

- Determine the likely types, levels and patterns of construction-related traffic associated with all power-related development due to be impacting on the local public roads in that area during the period of development for the Fanellan substation.
- Implement a suitable monitoring regime to identify the quantum, types and movement patterns of construction vehicles and determine the nature and scale of trips from each of the impacting developments in the area.
- Establish operating agreements and protocols with each of those developments to best spread the impacts of such construction traffic to avoid unacceptable peaks and conflicts. These agreements / protocols also need to determine how each individual development will contribute towards any road repairs / remedial works that may be needed throughout the life of this process.
- Undertake regular inspections into the condition of the impacted sections of local public roads throughout the period of developing the Fanellan Substation and establish a regime for taking appropriate remedial action to keep the routes safe and usable by all during that period, including vulnerable road users and non-construction traffic.
- Establish a protocol for engaging with and updating the Local Area Roads Office on the findings from the above and seeking permissions for undertaking any roads repairs / remedial works that may be needed.
- Work directly with local events coordinators and the local community to avoid conflicts with such events throughout the duration of the Fanellan Substation development.

8.157 The framework under which this role will be operated, including the intended arrangements for how the above functions will be undertaken, and the naming of the person responsible and demonstrating their experience and capability to undertake such a role will be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to any works commencing on site. As does the naming of the person responsible and demonstrating their experience and capability to undertake such a role.

8.158 An updated detailed CTMP to cover the new Black Bridge route will be required prior to commencement of works at the proposed development. The CTMP will be required to set out the proposed management measures that will be implemented to assist with minimising impacts from construction traffic on the local road network, the users of those roads and the communities and facilities that are located along those routes. These measures will be supplementary to, and need to complement, any physical road improvements required to safely accommodate the proposed construction traffic, as such, the CTMP shall be agreed prior to work commencing on site. The measures set out in any CTMP should be developed using feedback from engagement undertaken with Community Councils and the

Community Liaison Group. The CTMP shall include, but not be limited to:

- The predicted traffic types, numbers and profile of movements throughout the construction period. This should be justified through clarifying the anticipated quantum of plant, workforce and bulk materials needed and should include any assumptions made in support of those figures.
- The intended routing of such construction traffic from the proposed origins of materials, ports and workforce accommodation.
- The management measures that will be required to mitigate the impacts of such construction traffic on neighbours to and wider users of the routes impacted. This includes measures required when mitigation works are being delivered to existing local public roads.
- The measures that will be taken to deal with any rerouting of bus and school transport services during the periods when the Black Bridge will not be available for use and when use of existing local public roads will not be available when required physical mitigation works are being delivered.
- Clarifications on the steps that will be taken to avoid conflicts with other high traffic-generating events in the local area that will also be requiring use of the routes covered by this CTMP.
- The measures that will be taken for managing points of conflict between construction traffic routes where they interact with local public roads and wider users of them.
- The measures proposed for keeping local public roads free from mud and other construction-related debris.
- Justifications on the adequacy of the management measures proposed, alongside any physical works required to the public roads impacted.
- Avoidance of construction traffic routing past schools during opening and closing times, or on routes at times when school children are dropped-off and pick-up by school transport services and appropriate traffic speeds through communities located along access routes;
- Utilise sources of materials and alternative means of transport to limit the numbers/frequencies of construction vehicles having to use the local public road network wherever possible;
- No convoying of HGV or staff vehicles with drivers asked to resolve by spacing journeys to/from the site;
- Agreed routes to be used by all site staff, contractor, sub-contractor and deliveries, including any abnormal loads;
- Details of how Abnormal Loads journeys will be managed;
- Mitigation measures deterring / preventing construction traffic using non-designated routes to/from the site;
- Collaboration with contractors for other proposals in the surrounding area to effectively integrate the management of their traffic operations to minimise impacts to the local public road network they will be sharing for construction access;
- Products and materials to this development such as aggregate, concrete, staff minibuses if used etc. should mark their vehicles with a unique number identifier on the front, sides and rear of the vehicles and a named substation specific identifier enabling easy identification in the event of problems arising such as speeding or discourteous driving. This is a well-established effective practice across the Highlands. It also helps to avoid issues with

traffic from other developments being incorrectly associated with this proposal;

- Set up a single point of contact for local residents to use in the event of problems or concerns with telephone and website details provided as a minimum along with additional consideration of social media as appropriate. Details should be provided to Community Councils for their notice boards/websites;
- Toolbox talks established with all suppliers, contractors, site staff etc. to encourage careful and courteous driving with particular attention to driving through villages and settlements; and
- Mitigation measures to prevent mud, dust and other construction related material being brought onto the local public roads and where this has happened, having procedures for quickly identifying and removing such material.

8.159 SSEN are proposing some local public road improvements and the Roads Authority notes that it is likely improvements will also be required on the A831. These are to be agreed and implemented prior to the routes being used for construction access and will be controlled by condition.

8.160 In addition to the above, the applicant will be required to enter into a formal "Wear and Tear" Agreement with The Highland Council acting as the Roads Authority. Such an agreement should be established in accordance with Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and will require a suitable Road Bond or other form of financial guarantee. This is to protect the Council from any extraordinary expenses in having to repair any damage inflicted to the local public road network that the Promoter fails to rectify to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority. This Agreement will need to make reference to and take account of the proposed functions of the Traffic Management Coordinator and the implications of multiple developments impacting on the intended construction access routes consecutively.

8.161 Transport Planning recommend that the proposed development will be required to support the development and delivery of dedicated facilities for pedestrians and cyclists along the routes due to be impacted by the substation works. The nature and scale of such mitigation is to be agreed with the Council and should be developed in accordance with previously agreed approaches for the expansion of Beauly substation (21/04988/FUL). An active travel scheme will be required by condition.

8.162 With regards to Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL) inspections and assessments will be required to be undertaken for structures routing from Invergordon and Nigg to determine what, if anything, may be required to make those structures suitable for the intended AIL loadings, before further consideration is given to making use of these ports for such activities. Transport Planning recommend the final Abnormal Load Route Assessments and required mitigation be submitted to and accepted by the Planning Authority prior to works commencing. Any required mitigation identified will need to be fully implemented prior to the movement of such loads happening.

8.163 Transport Scotland has no objection to the proposed development with regards to the potential impact on surrounding trunk roads. They recommend conditions are

attached to safeguard the trunk road network during construction and delivery phase controlling abnormal load routing, traffic management, and mitigation measures to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the A82 trunk road.

8.164 Transport Scotland has noted that permission would be required from them as the Trunk Roads Authority if any works were proposed within the boundary of a Trunk Road; an Advisory Note is proposed to address this. Any trunk road works will require compliance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, the Specification for Highway Works, and the Disability Discrimination Act: Good Practice Guide for Roads. Additionally, a Minute of Agreement with the Trunk Roads Authority will be necessary prior to commencement of works.

8.165 The majority of representations received in objection to the proposed development made reference to the detrimental impact that increased traffic would have if passing through the centre of Kiltarlity. While the proposed development would result in a significant increase in vehicle movements, including HGVs, on the road network, the proposed replacement of Black Bridge prior to any commencement of works at the substation will generally keep traffic routed away from settlements in the surrounding area. This can be controlled by condition, along with the mitigation measures outlined above which are deemed appropriate to minimise disturbance to road users and surrounding communities.

8.166 Although Transport Planning's objection to the application remains unresolved, there is merit in what has now been proposed by the applicant with routing via the replacement Black Bridge being the optimal way forward. Should this have been proposed from the outset, this would have avoided considerable abortive work, and resulted in a better informed and more accurate Transport Assessment within the EIAR. As it stands, elements of the applicant's assessment of traffic impacts are substandard, and have either been understated, lack clarity or have simply not been evaluated in the supporting information provided. This therefore results in a substantial amount of more work being required post determination of the application through preparation of the CTMP. This approach is reflective of the tight timescale required to determine this application, which is of strategic importance to the ASTI framework of projects in the region. Owing to a further planning application being needed associated with the Black Bridge, the applicant and Transport Planning Team will have ongoing dialogue and the ability to refine this approach through the provision of an updated Transport Assessment through the determination of the bridge, which is now critical to the phasing and implementation of the permission that may be granted for the Fanellan Hub.

8.167 The nature and scale of traffic impacts that this development will generate on the impacted routes in the local area over the proposed significant construction period will be substantial, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. To cater for that, the proposed development should be required to support the development and delivery of dedicated active travel facilities for these vulnerable road users. This has been recognised in the previous proposals for substations in the wider surrounding area, such as Beauly substation expansion (21/04988/FUL) with a £133,000 contribution conditioned for the planning permission towards active travel improvements on the A862 in the centre of Beauly and south towards Kirkhill linked to the delivery of the Beauly Firth Loop active travel route.

8.168 This was based on the worst-case scenario of 72 HGV movements per day predicted to be generated by the development with the approach accepted by SSEN previously. Given that this proposed development will also be impacting the A862 and other route in the wider area, Transport Planning recommend the delivery of active travel improvements in the local area is required. These should be active travel improvements that support the existing or emerging aspirations of the local communities and The Councils Sustainable Travel Team and can be met either through direct delivery by the applicant, suitable financial contributions towards such improvements, or through a combination of both.

8.169 The scale of such mitigation should be proportionate to those sought for the Beauly substation expansion based on the scalable predicted HGV construction traffic impacts. However, as noted, further clarity is still required for the predicted construction vehicle numbers associated with the proposed development. Therefore, the required scale of active travel mitigation will be determined after those clarifications have been sought and reviewed.

8.170 While EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8: Landscape Character and Visual Amenity along with Chapter 16: Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation notes the potential impacts to recreational receptors at the site and in the surrounding area, the Council's Access Officer considers that the applicant has failed to identify all the recreational receptors on and near the proposed development. Therefore, they consider the applicant has understated the likely impact of the proposed development on public access during both the construction and operational phases and has objected to the application.

8.171 The Council's Access Officer generally welcomes the applicant utilising the Black Bridge route to site as the potential alternative route through Beaufort Estate, having raised concerns that it could lead to significant conflict with those using the popular Core Path IN20.05 East Lodge to West Lodge Beaufort Castle. That said, the construction works required to replace the Black Bridge will likely lead to a negative impact on Core Path IN03.04 Lovat Bridge to Black Bridge, set back from the north banks of Beauly River. The Access Officer considered that the applicant did not fully appreciate the popularity of this route or the constraints associated with Core Paths, with only limited details provided with regards to safeguards of the path during construction and after works has been completed.

8.172 Additionally, other recreational elements appear to be missing from the applicant's assessment including canoeing and swimming in the River Beauly, parking for the Core Path and local walks at the old church by the Black Bridge. These aspects are all expected to be addressed within the forthcoming planning application for the bridge replacement works.

8.173 For the Fanellan Hub, although they noted the recent submission of an Outdoor Access Plan (OAP, June 2025) they considered there is still a lack of clarity critical to understanding the impact, management and mitigation of the development at Fanellan on public access rights. Highland Council's Access Officer has requested a number of amendments and clarifications to the OAP should including more detailed diversion routes; specification and location of gates; consistency between different fencing plans; justification for fences and gates around SUDS;

improvement to path linkage from the southwest corner of the site; and clarity as to which areas are intended to be excluded from access rights and which are not.

8.174 While the concerns raised by the Access Officer are noted, it is considered that a condition requiring an appropriately detailed OAP, that takes on board the recommendations referenced, will adequately deal with the issues raised and will need to be agreed prior to any works commencing.

8.175 Subject to securing the aforementioned mitigation measures, the transport and public access related impacts of the proposal are considered to be acceptable and can be appropriately managed through the conditions attached. As such, the proposal has been found to be in accordance with the transport and access policies contained within the Development Plan.

Operational Noise

8.176 The applicant has recognised the noise nuisance that can arise from operational substations and the need to ensure that this is limited in respect of existing noise sensitive properties. EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 14: Noise and Vibration has assessed operational noise using BS 4142:2014 and BS 8233:2014 standards. Baseline monitoring confirmed a very quiet rural environment, with night-time background levels typically between 23 to 25dB LA90. Predicted operational noise from the substation and converter station is low, with most equipment housed indoors and acoustically treated. External cooling systems and valve coolers are the main contributors to noise.

8.177 The BS 4142 assessment predicts a maximum excess of +2dB during daytime and +4dB at night at the nearest receptors, both including a conservative 4dB tonal penalty. Absolute noise level increases are around 3dB, which is widely regarded as the threshold for a perceptible change. Internal noise levels, with the assessment undertaken with the window partially open as standard practice when predicting internal noise levels from an external source, are predicted to remain well below guidelines of 30dB and meet NR20 criteria. Therefore, there will be a relatively minor impact on residential amenity with no additional cumulative impacts anticipated.

8.178 Noise mitigation has been embedded in the design of the proposed development, including housing transformers and other infrastructure indoors, acoustic treatment of chimneys and louvres, and landscaping. Further optimisation of valve cooler design and specification of low-noise equipment will be explored during detailed design. An updated noise impact assessment will be provided at that stage, secured by condition.

8.179 Environmental Health considers operational noise of the proposed development a key issue given the quiet rural setting and previous complaints with regards to other substations. While it noted that Chapter 14 and associated supporting information predicts low impacts, the assessment does not fully meet the Council's stricter criteria that noise should not exceed background levels and that 100Hz tones remain below 30dB at property curtilages. Although Environmental Health concede that predicted exceedances are minor, they may still affect amenity during sensitive periods, particularly evenings and weekends; however,

the predicted exceedances above background levels were not considered significant enough to warrant objection from Environmental Health. Additionally, Environmental Health understand that, at the detailed design stage, further mitigation measures could be implemented to reduce noise levels further, albeit not necessarily to background levels. The stated limits were therefore accepted as the maximum noise levels at the surrounding Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSR). Environmental Health considered this approach reflects a balanced consideration of what may be technically feasible and the principle of ensuring that noise is minimised as far as reasonably practicable.

8.180 Environmental Health initially requested a number of further details noted in their consultation response including a supplementary BS 4142 assessment focused on amenity hours (Monday to Friday between 18:00 and 23:00, Saturday between13:00 and 23:00 and Sunday all day), detailed analysis demonstrating compliance with the 100Hz limit and manufacturer or supplier documentation confirming cooling systems will not operate during night-time hours.

8.181 The noise assessment also considered the cumulative impact of the proposed development in conjunction with both existing and future infrastructure projects. It confirms that the existing substation at Balblair will have no impact due to its distance from both the proposed development site and the assessment area. The assessment also identifies potential cumulative effects arising from the Beauly to Denny OHL (including both existing line and proposed diversion), along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Spittal to Beauly OHL. The noise assessment concludes that noise impacts from these OHL are not significant, therefore, the cumulative noise effects are not considered to be adverse.

8.182 In order to ensure the amenity of the existing residents is protected, conditions will include a Design and Operational Management Plan, Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan, revised Noise Impact Assessment compliance with the mitigation set out within the noise appraisal, and ongoing compliance monitoring to demonstrate that the noise emitted from the substation has not exceeded the pre-development noise levels at noise sensitive properties.

Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)

8.183 No statutory designated sites for nature conservation lie within or immediately adjacent to the application boundary. Habitat surveys including UKHab and National Vegetation Classification were undertaken in December 2022 and April 2024. This confirmed no Annex I habitats or priority peatland within the footprint of the proposed development. The proposed site is dominated by modified grasslands and arable land, with limited areas of broadleaved and coniferous woodland. Habitat loss is therefore not considered significant.

8.184 The proposed development could affect the designated European site Inner Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA) located approximately 4.3km to the northeast of the site. As such, the site's status means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, and c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations') apply. Consequently, the Council is required to consider the effect of the proposal on these before it can be consented (commonly known

as Habitats Regulations Appraisal).

8.185 Breeding bird surveys were undertaken between April and July 2023 with the scope agreed with NatureScot through 24/04588/SCOP. Additional bird survey work and flight activity surveys were also conducted in 2023. NatureScot consider the surveys appear to have been undertaken to recommended survey guidance.

8.186 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 10: Ornithology notes the site supports low densities of farmland birds, including a small number of red-listed species such as lapwing, skylark, and yellowhammer. These were scoped out due to the limited scale of habitat loss and availability of similar habitat nearby. Schedule 1 raptors were scoped in with osprey, red kite, peregrine and honey-buzzard confirmed within 2km of the site. 2 breeding pairs of osprey were recorded with nest sites screened by topography and beyond typical disturbance distances. Blasting areas are over 900m from nests. 1 breeding pair of red kite and peregrine, and a honey-buzzard were also identified. Mitigation measures such as pre-construction checks, seasonal restrictions, protection zones are considered appropriate and are controlled by condition.

Inner Moray Firth SPA

8.187 The applicant has carried out an assessment of impacts on the Inner Moray Firth SPA Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). NatureScot generally agree with the conclusions set out in the assessment of the SPA.

8.188 With regards to greylag geese, it noted the proposed development does not have a potential detrimental impact on the designation. NatureScot note there is little evidence that greylag geese utilise the area for foraging on a regular basis. Regardless, the loss of the proposed development area as a potential foraging site will not significantly affect the total foraging area available to greylag geese associated with the Inner Moray Firth SPA.

8.189 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 9: Ecology and Nature Conservation has identified the need for additional mitigation and compensatory measures. It is likely that a European Protected Species License will be required from NatureScot for bats and badgers. Where a license for European Protected Species (EPS) from NatureScot will be required by the applicant before they can proceed with the development, they should satisfy themselves that the European Protected Species Licensing tests set out in the Protected Species (EPS) (Schedule 2 of the Habitats Regulations 1994 (as amended) are likely to be met before an application can be approved. If not, the applicant could risk being unable to make practical use of any planning permission or committing an offence.

Protected Species

8.190 Protected species surveys were undertaken in June and July 2023 and between April to August 2024. Surveys included a search for protected and priority species within the red line boundary and with suitable species-specific buffers. Direct evidence of bats, pine marten, red squirrel, common lizard and otter were recorded during the surveys. Additionally, habitat suitable for supporting common toad, brown hare, hedgehog and terrestrial invertebrates were noted during surveys.

The embedded mitigation and compensation measures detailed within EIAR Chapter 9 Ecology and Nature Conservation are considered sufficient and must be implemented in full during the construction process.

8.191 Beauly and District Slamon Fishery Board objected to the application raising significant concerns regarding potential impacts on fish and aquatic ecology, particularly Atlantic salmon (an IUCN Red List species) and sea trout within the River Beauly catchment. It raised concerns regarding water quality risks as they considered insufficient evidence was provided by the applicant that construction activities (both the substation and Black Bridge works) will avoid pollution from runoff and construction debris; noise and vibration disturbance from construction activity and heavy goods traffic affecting fish behaviour and welfare; minimal reference to spawning grounds; no reference in the application to safeguarding salmon spawning areas with assurance sought that these will not be impacted; further details of the significant biodiversity enhancement that goes beyond just mitigation in line with relevant policy.

8.192 Chapter 9 notes that fish and fish habitat were scoped out of detailed assessment with the justification provided by the applicant that watercourses within and adjacent to the site are shallow (less than 70cm depth) and unlikely to support significant fish populations or spawning habitat. Consequently, no direct survey or impact assessment for salmonids or other fish species was undertaken.

8.193 The Council's Scoping Opinion (24/04588/SCOP) requested consideration of aquatic interests, including potential impacts from siltation, sediment loading, pollution risk, obstruction to migration, and disturbance of spawning beds. The applicant considers that these matters will be addressed through embedded mitigation measures, principally the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs), which aim to control runoff, sediment, and pollution during construction which can be controlled by condition.

8.194 Further discussion with NatureScot and the BDSFB noted anecdotal records of Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FWPM) elsewhere in the River Beauly, though none at the Black Bridge crossing. Best practice survey methods were recommended for associated bridge works.

8.195 The hydrological and downstream aquatic impacts were considered in the separate Volume 2 Chapter 13: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils which confirms the proposed development lies within the River Beauly catchment, approximately 90m from the watercourse at its closest point, with several minor tributaries nearby. While the River Beauly supports salmon and sea trout populations, the assessment concludes that significant impacts on fisheries are not anticipated. While the potential risks during construction including pollution incidents, sedimentation, runoff carrying cement, hydrocarbons, or chemicals alteration of surface water drainage patterns, again, the applicant considers that these are either controlled through the embedded mitigation measures, principally the CEMP and GEMP which can be controlled by condition.

8.196 Species surveys identified a number of different species within the site including Bats which are a European Protected Species). 2-day bat roosts and 1 maternity

roost of common and soprano pipistrelle were confirmed within a structure to be demolished. Numerous trees with potential roost features (PRFs) occur within and near the proposed works footprint. In the absence of mitigation, roost loss would be a significant adverse effect at a local scale. Chapter 9 and associated supporting information proposes a comprehensive mitigation and licensing strategy which includes:

- Timing of demolition outside maternity and hibernation periods.
- Pre-works surveys and supervision by a licensed bat ecologist.
- Installation of compensatory roost features (bat boxes, including heated maternity box).
- Sensitive lighting design and habitat enhancements.

With these measures, residual effects on bats are assessed as not significant and the mitigation measures can be controlled by condition.

8.197 Multiple badger setts were recorded within the wider study area, including 8 within the proposed works footprint (both subsidiary and outlier setts). The applicant notes that the loss of these setts and some foraging habitat is unfortunately unavoidable. Licensing under the Protection of Badgers Act will be required separate to the planning process. Mitigation measures include pre-construction surveys, exclusion zones, and timing restrictions. With these measures, residual effects on badger are assessed in the EIA as not significant and the mitigation measures can be controlled by condition.

8.198 Great crested newt and pine marten were surveyed and found absent or of negligible importance.

8.199 The proposed development incorporates the mitigation hierarchy and will be supported by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Species Protection Plans (SPPs), and an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). A Landscape and Habitat Management Plan will deliver biodiversity enhancements, including woodland, wetland, and species-rich grassland creation.

Forestry, Woodland and Trees

8.200 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 15 Forestry covers the impacts of the proposed development on trees and woodland. Chapter 15 splits the arboricultural (trees and tree groups) assessment from the forestry assessment. The forestry and arboriculture assessment also takes into account the impact on trees and woodlands as a result of the proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion (25/02993/S37).

8.201 The Arboricultural Survey Findings note that 3 category “A” individual trees and 1 group of “A” trees would need to be removed. Of the category “B” features, 14 individual trees, 6 groups and 10 partial groups, would need to be removed.

8.202 The two proposed developments noted will result in the removal of approximately 7.09ha of forestry which represents around a quarter of the forestry within the study area. Of this, 3.76ha is predominantly native and 3.33ha is predominantly productive conifer. While 6.83ha of on-site native planting and 1ha of off-site native planting of compensatory planting is proposed by the applicant, the Forestry

Officer does not agree with this approach.

8.203 They note that the timber industry is important to the Highlands and where productive conifer woodland is lost to development an equivalent area of productive conifer woodland is expected to be created through compensatory planting. This approach is confirmed in the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal and has been applied to numerous other developments. Therefore at least 3.33ha of productive conifer woodland compensatory planting is required to provide sufficient woodland-related net public benefit. The Forestry Officer accepts that this 3.33ha of productive planting could be provided off site while the native planting already proposed could be accepted on site, the quantum of which should not reduce owing to its primary landscape and visual screening function.

8.204 A number of veteran trees (T78, T79 and T80) have been identified and are to be retained in accordance with a Veteran Tree Management Plan (VTMP), but this plan does not appear to have been provided by the applicant to date, with its submission to be conditioned. The VTMP is requested in this instance to protect these trees from development or construction activity. In this case the mature trees adjacent to the C1106 Fanellan Road. The VTMP would highlight these trees as being of particular importance when considering a site layout and identify any additional protection measures that may be required. This could include extra precautions such as an increased Root Protection Area (RPA) over and above the BS5837:2012 cap of 15m and greater separation distances from proposed development to ensure that there is no future conflict. The British Standard also states that there must be no construction or hard surfacing within the RPA of veteran trees.

8.205 Given the multiple amendments to the access route to site noted earlier before the applicant agreed to utilise the replacement Black Bridge, the Forestry Officer was unsure of the potential impact on visually and ecologically significant roadside oak trees as a result of transportation of Abnormal Indivisible Loads in the wider surrounding area. For example, some of the large, mature oak trees around Tomich and Dunballoch are protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Confirmation of the proposed route to the site and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment will be controlled by condition to confirm there are no significant adverse impacts on existing mature trees.

8.206 The Forestry Officer also made reference to the removal of 20 visually significant individual trees from the site that will require some specimen tree planting to compensate. The applicant will need to provide at least 20 individual field margin or roadside tree planting with extra-heavy standards to deliver an immediate visual effect, on top of the proposed woodland planting within the site.

8.207 While woodland creation is shown around the southeastern sides of the proposed substation in the Landscape Mitigation Plan drawings (Volume 3, Figure 8.11) and these show woodland creation these areas of planting also appear in the Biodiversity Net Gain Report Appendix. Therefore, confirmation is required that the proposed on-site woodland creation is purely compensatory planting and cannot be counted towards BNG. Additionally, the Compensatory Planting Strategy (February 2025) notes 6.83ha of on-site planting as "new woodland

planting" and the 1ha of off-site planting as "compensatory planting". Although there is no detail of the compensatory planting at this stage there is confirmation of the intention to provide a Compensatory Planting plan to Scottish Forestry and the Planning Authority; this can be controlled by condition.

8.208 NPF4 Policy 6 Forestry, woodland and trees notes that development will not be supported where it will result in any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees or have an adverse impact on their ecological condition. Whilst the proposed development will result in the loss of trees noted within the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as Long-Established Plantation Origin (LEPO1860) the site is mostly plantation origin woodland planted much more recently within the last few decades after World War 2 with a much smaller area of native birch woodland within the eastern portion of the site. Therefore, the majority of ancient woodland remnants have been vastly reduced which means that there would be scope for development. NPF4 defines Ancient Woodland as land that has maintained continuous woodland habitat since at least 1750, which is not the case within this site.

8.209 Whilst there is some conflict with NPF4 Policy 6 the Development Plan has to be assessed as a whole. Given this is national scale development relating to the significant transmission network upgrades, and the trees and woodland impact have already undergone cycles of planting and harvesting at the site, it is considered that the proposed development could be supported, on balance, subject to the various conditions noted.

8.210 Although the Forestry Officer's objection is noted, given the further clarification required with regards to a number of points noted above, it is considered that these matters can be mitigated and controlled by conditions requiring the submission of an Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Removal and Protection Plans, Specimen Tree Planting Plan and Maintenance Programme, Compensatory Planting Plan and Veteran Tree Management Plan (VTMP).

8.211 Given that a Memorandum of Understanding has been concluded between the applicant and the Council, there is no longer the requirement for a Section 75 legal agreement to secure off-site compensatory planting and enhancement measures requested by the Forestry Officer. That said, in this case, given the potential for woodland removal in the immediate surrounding area beyond the application site boundary, there is scope for the developer to work with key stakeholders, such as Lovat Estate and Eilean Aigas Estate for example, to explore further opportunities for planting that would help to further mitigate the landscape and visual impacts well into the operational lifetime of the facility. Given the benefits associated with securing additional planning with these surrounding estates, it is being recommended that any areas identified for additional planting are secured by way of condition, which in turn entails the applicant obtaining the agreement of affected landowners.

8.212 The applicant noted that woodland within the study area has been subject to various felling applications, woodland grant schemes and management plans. Two forest management plans are currently active within the study area with forestry predominantly managed by Lovat Estate and Eilean Aigas Estate. The proposed development presents an opportunity to facilitate additional tree planting

beyond the site boundary that would help to further mitigate the landscape and visual impacts of the infrastructure. The finalised planting arrangements would be agreed between the applicant, the Council and landowners involved.

Biodiversity

8.213 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. As a result, this project is expected to make a contribution toward the delivery of biodiversity enhancements in vicinity of the site. The habitats present across the site have been subject to a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report. The applicant's assessment of BNG has quantified the biodiversity impact of the development, predicts the resultant change of biodiversity value, and provides recommendations for biodiversity enhancement (net gain).

8.214 The assessment was based upon desk research and walkover habitat surveys. The assessment followed DEFRA guidance utilising the biodiversity metric with the biodiversity of the site summarised using SSEN Transmission's biodiversity project toolkit which uses habitat as a proxy to determine biodiversity impacts.

8.215 The Outline Landscape and Habiatat Management Plan (OLHMP) details that due to the size of the development off-site enhancement is required to meet the required 10% Net Gain. Highland Council's Ecology Officer agrees with the aims and proposals outlined in the OLHMP which include extending and enhancing the existing woodland, and creation of species rich grasslands. The Ecology Officer however has stated that until these details are provided, they are unable to fully assess if the site is compliant with NPF4 Policy 3. Additionally, they note the planned creation of 5 SUDS attenuation basins which will be planted with wetland and marginal species. Again, no further information on off-site locations or further details of these proposals has been provided.

8.216 A variety of habitats are proposed across the site informed by the findings of EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 9: Ecology and Nature Conservation. On the proposed landforms, areas of woodland and woodland edge planting would be developed which would, over time, provide further screening of the proposed development, while providing additional habitat and connectivity for wildlife with existing and adjacent habitat.

8.217 Areas that cannot be planted because of technical constraints, such as OHL corridors and site security zones, would be seeded with a species-rich neutral grass and wildflower seed mix designed to provide a sward of natural appearance using commonly found local species including species attractive to pollinators. The margins and banks of the SuDS basins would be seeded with a wet meadow or pond edge seed mix, while the bases of the SuDS basins would be seeded with a wetland seed mix such as Emorsgate EM8 Meadow.

8.218 In terms of the mixture for wetlands, areas to be handed back to the landowner would be seeded with a grass seed mix designed to provide a semi-improved sward of natural appearance, similar to the surrounding land, while being suitable for grazing by sheep. Small clumps of trees and shrubs, as well as hedgerows, could also be introduced to provide additional longer-term screening, or to soften

the appearance of the new landforms, subject to agreement with the landowner who would manage the grazed areas. Again, this is to be explored further with the applicant.

8.219 The Ecology Officer noted that the OLHMP indicates off-site enhancement is required to achieve 10% net gain; further details have been detailed regarding where this would be located. Although the applicant submitted further information in support of biodiversity enhancement, which suggests the development is set to achieve 22% biodiversity net gain, the additional supporting information is lacking sufficient detail required to review and assess the calculations. The Ecology Officer requested the BNG toolkit be provided to clarify matters, but the applicant has yet to provide these details.

8.220 Given the deficit noted within the BNG report along with no further details specified regarding the site currently proposed for restoration and enhancement measures, this has resulted in an objection from the Ecology Officer, as they cannot confidently assess whether the proposed development would satisfy Policy 3 Biodiversity of NPF4 without these details.

8.221 While the Ecology Officer's objection is noted, given the significant number of current and upcoming applications relating to electricity transmission and associated infrastructure in Highland, SSEN are in the process of preparing an overarching strategy for the delivery of off-site biodiversity enhancement across the region. The biodiversity enhancement and compensation measures required for this application can be secured by way of the overarching Memorandum of Understanding recently concluded with SSEN.

8.222 In summary, the proposed development can achieve positive biodiversity effects providing that sufficient off-site habitat creation measures are identified, quantified, 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.

Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Soils

8.223 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 13: Geology, Soils and Water assesses the potential effects of the proposed development on hydrology, hydrogeology, geology and soils during both the construction and operational phases. A desk study and field investigations informed the appraisal, including soil and peat surveys, watercourse mapping, and private water supply risk assessments. The study area is located wholly within the River Beauly catchment, with several small watercourses crossing the site and discharging to the River Beauly. The site lies outwith any Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA). Potential Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs) were noted although these are sustained by surface water rather than groundwater.

8.224 The site lies within the River Beauly catchment and includes several small watercourses flowing through or adjacent to the development footprint. 2 private water supplies are identified within 1km (Culburnie, and Aigas Power Station) and a non-operational well within the site boundary. The EIAR confirms shallow groundwater levels (typically between 0 and 3m) and minimal peat presence (only

isolated pockets recorded in 4 trial pits) with no significant contaminated land issues identified.

8.225 Baseline flood risk mapping indicates no fluvial flood risk within the site, although localised surface water flooding may occur in low-lying areas. The EIAR concludes that, with appropriate mitigation, including a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) along with adherence to SEPA Pollution Prevention Guidelines, the effects on water quality, flood risk and soils will not be significant. Watercourse crossings will be designed to accommodate the 1:200-year flood event plus climate change allowance, and culverts will be avoided where possible.

8.226 SEPA initially raised concerns regarding the proposed development due to insufficient flood risk information. It considered the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) relied on assumptions about embankment height and lacked surveyed cross-sections with potential flood risk increases from landraising and culvert blockage, particularly affecting receptors near Forest Lodge. A revised FRA was requested to include surveyed cross-sections, baseline and post-development scenarios, blockage modelling, sensitivity testing (+20%), and compensatory storage proposals. SEPA also requested planning conditions requiring a 10m buffer from watercourses and the use of bottomless culverts or bridges for crossings. Although the applicant submitted an amended FRA, outstanding concerns remain around a particular culver (Culvert C02) and the potential flood risk to the Hill View property.

8.227 A further submission of the current revised FRA (October 2025) updated modelling using precautionary flow values which confirmed no detrimental impact to existing developments. SEPA confirmed they have no objection subject to the buffer and culvert conditions noted.

8.228 As with SEPA, the Flood Risk Management Team (FRMT) initially raised concerns regarding the proposed development due to insufficient flood risk information. While the FRA considered flood risk from all sources and included hydraulic modelling of the small watercourse crossing the site, the modelling was based on assumptions rather than site-specific topography. It also assumed the presence of an artificial raised bund along the left bank of the watercourse.

8.229 FRMT required the FRA to be updated to incorporate measured cross-sections of the watercourse and to include scenarios where the informal bund is absent, given its potential susceptibility to erosion or failure. The revised FRA was to demonstrate that there would be no loss of floodplain capacity or conveyance and no increase in flood risk to others.

8.230 Following submission of the current revised FRA (October 2025) the amended hydraulic modelling incorporated site-specific topography and proposed modifications to the watercourse, including the creation of a two-stage channel with an inset floodplain. FRMT confirmed that these measures significantly reduce flood risk without adversely affecting sensitive receptors.

8.231 In terms of drainage, FRMT was content with the proposed arrangements noted in the Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA), which split the site into multiple

catchments with discharge limited to pre-development rates. Storms up to and including a 1 in 200-year event plus climate change allowance will be managed within the site. A condition is recommended requiring submission of the final surface water drainage design for review.

8.232 The Flood Risk Management Team, Environmental Health and SEPA have no concerns in relation to the water environment. Controls including Pollution Prevention Plans and Waste Management Plans are expected within a project specific CEMP.

8.233 The Geology, Soils and Water Chapter also incorporates an assessment of private water supplies (PWS) within 1km of the site. The assessment identifies 2 properties within the study area, Culburnie and Aigas Power Station, as having registered private water supplies. The report states that the contractor will implement Good Environmental Management Practices (GEMPs) to minimise the risk of any incidents that could affect these supplies. In addition, the principal contractor will be required to consult with property owners regarding any potential unregistered PWS located within 250m of the works. If any such supplies are identified, the contractor must assess the potential impact and, where necessary, implement appropriate mitigation measures.

8.234 The assessment concludes that, taking into account the proposed GEMPs, the likely impact on the 2 PWS identified is minor and not significant. However, the applicant will be required to carry out a further investigation to identify any unregistered PWS within 250m of the site. A report detailing any necessary mitigation measures to prevent contamination or physical disruption must be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. This report should also include proposals for monitoring before, during, and after construction and can be controlled by condition.

8.235 Scottish Water have not raised concerns with regards to the proposed development. A review of their records indicated that there are no Drinking Water Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive within the vicinity of the site that may be affected. However, Scottish Water highlighted the presence of live infrastructure near the development area and advised the applicant to identify any potential conflicts and contact the Asset Impact Team for appraisal. They note that written permission must be obtained before any works commence within the area of Scottish Water apparatus.

8.236 Scottish Water reiterated its policy that surface water connections to the combined sewer system will not be accepted, except in exceptional circumstances for brownfield sites, subject to significant justification. Developers are required to submit a Pre-Development Enquiry (PDE) to Scottish Water prior to any formal technical application.

Built and Cultural Heritage

8.237 The site is not situated within any built heritage designations. There are 2 non-designated heritage assets located within the site area to be developed. They consisted of a possible clearance cairn or dyke dating to the post-medieval period, the second is not specified. No prehistoric or medieval remains have been

identified. One heritage asset was noted within the wider site red line boundary – a possible stone bank associated with the Allt na Feanna burn or field clearance which is of low heritage value.

8.238 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 11 Cultural Heritage assesses potential impacts of the proposed development on cultural heritage, including archaeological sites, historic buildings, and landscapes. Both the site and a wider 1km study area were assessed to identify any heritage assets which considered both direct physical impacts during the construction phase along with the impacts on the setting once operational.

8.239 The baseline was informed through a combination of desk-based research, walkover survey, and archaeological monitoring. 23 heritage assets were identified across the 1km study area. Ten non-designated assets were noted within the site which include prehistoric pits, cairn, medieval grave, post-medieval cottages). Thirteen designated assets were noted within 1km of the site and which include a combination of Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as Kiltarlity Old Parish Church (SM5570) and Culburnie Ring Cairn and Stone Circle (SM2425), Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape (GDL00052) along with various other categories of Listed Buildings associated with Kilmorack Old Parish Church (Category B Listed, LB7122) and Beaufort Castle (Category A Listed, LB8068) and Estate. In addition to those assets noted within the study area, 4 Scheduled Ancient Monuments are located beyond 1km; there is potential visibility of the proposed development from the following locations: Belladrum, chambered cairns (SM2435), Dun Mor, fort (SM4979), Dun Mor, fort, Ballindoun (SM2423) and Phoineas Hill, enclosure (SM4729).

8.240 Whilst it is considered that the applicant has understated the visual impact of the proposed development from a number of heritage assets, particularly from the chambered cairns at Belladrum, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) confirmed that the effects will reduce to not significant once the substation has been operational longer term and the associated landscaping and planting has taken hold. Additionally, it is considered that the applicant has understated the potential impact on the well-used Core Path that passes through the grounds of Beaufort Castle with the ZTV indicating views towards the proposed development. However, mature woodland enclosing the estate and local topography will provide substantial screening, limiting views to the higher elements of the substation and converter station only. Again, whilst underestimated by the applicant it is considered that the effect is not significant overall in and around Beaufort Castle, the wider Estate grounds and various associated listed buildings.

8.241 Historic Environment Scotland noted its disappointment that visualisations to aid assessment of the potential historic environment impacts of the proposed development discussed at the Scoping stage were not submitted with this application. While no further visualisations were provided within the EIAR to support the applicant's assessment of the impacts on the historic environment, they considered that any impacts on the setting of Beaufort Castle and its GDL are unlikely to raise issues of national interest. HES raised an objection to the SEI on the basis that the access route during the construction phase would pass through the Beaufort Estate and had potential to have a detrimental impact on the Category A-Listed Beaufort Castle, Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed

Landscape Designation, and other Listed Buildings within the Estate such as East Lodge and Gate Piers. Although the objection is noted, it is considered that these concerns can be controlled by condition requiring the construction access routing via the replacement Black Bridge therefore avoiding Beaufort Estate and Kiltarlity. Given that this objection has not been removed to date, any minded to grant planning permission decision would be subject of prior referral to Scottish Ministers.

8.242 The Council's Historic Environment Team is satisfied that the EIAR contains an adequate assessment of the potential archaeological impacts. While it considers there is at least moderate potential for additional buried, unrecorded features and deposits, these are not expected to be significant. It is satisfied with the proposed mitigation measures to retain the 3 identified assets within the site so they can be preserved alongside the substation which will be controlled by condition along with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation and cultural heritage issues covered through best practice within the Construction Environment Management Plan.

Economic Impact

8.243 Policy 11 Energy of NPF4 requires the assessment of the economic impacts associated with the proposed development. The effect of introducing Policy 11c) of NPF4 relating to the need for energy development to maximise socio-economic benefits, of which community benefit forms a part, means that this is now material to the determination of an application. 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.

8.244 The development of grid infrastructure has been identified as a national priority together with investment in renewable energy. The development of substation projects as presented within this application are not only beneficial in strengthening the robustness of the country's grid network but also result in further job and investment opportunities through the development of associated supply chains. The development is required to facilitate the connection of wind farms / renewable schemes (at various stages in the planning process) to the national grid which will allow the export of electricity generated to consumers. The relationship of the development to the economic and social benefits of renewable energy developments is therefore relevant, in a positive way.

8.245 EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 16: Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation considers how the proposal might be expected to affect the local economy. During construction, the proposed development is expected to generate 318 Person Years of Employment (PYE) in the Highland region. This is comprised of direct 207 PYE, indirect 45 PYE and induced 66 PYE. More broadly across Scotland this is expected to generate 3,040 PYE, comprised of direct 1,710 PYE, indirect 567 PYE and induced 764 PYE. Further afield still across the UK as a whole this is expected to generate 6,590 PYE, comprised of direct 2,620 PYE, indirect 1,910 PYE and induced 2,060 PYE. The Socio-Economic chapter reports that this would equate to £35.2 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) locally (for local contractors across Highland with £25 million direct, £5.62 million indirect and £4.72 million induced). The GVA would be £331 million for Scotland and £701 million for the

UK.

8.246 The applicant considers there would be only a relatively small-scale effect on the tourism industry and these sectors are likely to benefit from expenditure by workers during the construction and development phases and to a lesser extent during the operation and maintenance phases given the relative lack of visits required once the site is functioning. While they note that most tourism receptors will experience negligible or minor impacts, they concede some receptors would experience moderate temporary effects during the construction phase, such as: Aigas Field Centre wildlife site due to their proximity to the site and sensitivity; Beaufort Castle Garden and Designed Landscape given the change to views and traffic movements; as well as fishing locations along the River Beauly with views of the Black Bridge. No significant long-term adverse impacts are expected once the substation becomes operational.

8.247 The Highlands is experiencing significant construction activity in the transmission network. The approval of the proposed development would have a positive economic impact, particularly during the proposed construction period which is expected to last at least 3 years with an additional 2 years to commission and reach full energisation, although significantly less impact at the operational stage. The project could offer investment / opportunities to the local, Highland, and Scottish economy including businesses ranging across construction, haulage, electrical and service sectors. There is also likely to be some adverse effects caused by construction disruption and construction traffic. These adverse impacts are most likely to be within the service sector particularly during the construction phase when additional traffic, HGV's and / or abnormal loads are being delivered to site. These will be temporary in nature and managed through the identified mitigation measures.

8.248 Whilst the potential economic benefits are noted during the construction phase these diminish significantly with the applicant confirming that operations, maintenance and contractor teams will only be required at the facility on an ad-hoc basis with no set number of employees required on site. Operations and maintenance would be regionalised with teams for Fanellan being based out of the SSEN Inverness depot, Inverness is also the offshore centre for the HVDC element therefore it is expected that most workers routinely attending the site will be based in Highland. Additionally, there will be no security presence on site with the facility monitored remotely.

8.249 In light of NPF4 Policy 11c) requirement for development proposals to only be supported where they maximise socio-economic impacts, in July 2023 the applicant launched a consultation on plans for their first ever community benefit fund. This is a £10 million fund which will see SSEN working with communities across the north of Scotland to channel funds into local projects. Community benefit however remains a non-material planning consideration and therefore the existence or absence of this fund can be given no weight in the decision-making process.

8.250 Following the Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023, the UK's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero also published its "Response to the consultation on Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure". Given

this, the applicant is expecting further community benefit funding opportunities, in the region of £100 million to be available for local projects.

8.251 A further recent announcement was made by the UK Government on 10 March 2025 that the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will deliver an energy discount scheme for homes close to overhead transmission pylons required to deliver Clean Power 2030, with this scheme to be rolled out across England, Wales and Scotland. The statement explains that communities could get £200,000 worth of funding per km of overhead line and £530,000 per substation. Whilst the bill is still making its way through Parliament, and it is expected to get Royal Ascent in early 2026, it remains unclear if the current detail will remain unaltered or what the scheme eligibility / commencement cut-off date will be. Again, although this emerging scheme may deliver socio-economic benefits, it is also to be regarded as another form of community benefit which at the present time should be given no weight in the decision-making process.

8.252 Given the above and considering NPF4 Policy 11 section c), were planning permission to be granted a contribution could be secured by way of a planning condition which requires the applicant to commit to the delivery of the socio-economic benefits of the scheme in line with those set out within the EIAR. The recommendation before Members is to include such a condition to maximise the socio-economic benefits of the proposed development, with the applicant agreeing to such an approach for previous substation applications.

Other Material Considerations

8.253 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 substation would not be illuminated at night for normal operation. Floodlights are to be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness, during the over-run of planned works or when sensor activated as security lighting for night-time access. A light would also be provided permanently at the access gates. The use of LED lighting to provide a focused area of illumination, with external lighting controlled by PIR sensors and angled in a downwards direction can significantly reduce the effects of light pollution and should be utilised. Full details of the specification of lighting are to be provided and can be controlled by condition.

8.254 The applicant is seeking planning permission in perpetuity for the development. However, in the event of decommissioning, the EIAR states that it would be carried out in line within with the best practice processes and methods at that time and managed through a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan. This can be secured through a planning condition.

8.255 Given the complexity of major developments, and to assist in discharge of conditions, the Planning Authority usually seeks that the developer employs a Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO). The role of the PMO, amongst other things, would include the monitoring of, and enforcement of compliance with, all conditions, agreements and obligations related to this permission (or any superseding or related permissions) and shall include the provision of a bi-monthly

compliance report to the Planning Authority.

8.256 Representations have raised concerns regarding the issue of accommodation for construction workers with the applicant noting that hotels, guesthouses, rental properties etc. in the wider surrounding area will be used for the workforce rather than purpose-built facilities within the site. If this was to change and any workforce accommodation was required in future it would require a separate planning application.

8.257 Potential radioactive contamination in peat from the Chernobyl disaster was noted in representations. Neither SEPA nor the Council's Contaminated Land Team raised concerns regarding the excavation works on site.

8.258 There are no other material considerations.

Non-Material Considerations

8.259 Non-material considerations raised in representations relate to the speculative need for the development, any resulting developer's return, the perceived oversupply of renewable energy generation in the north of Scotland and reference to constraint payments. Such matters are not material to the determination of this application, with the Scottish Government having declared a climate and nature crisis, with there being an urgent need to reduced emissions. Transmission infrastructure to support this is identified as a national development and as such receives in principle support. While there are various renewable projects in the wider surrounding area, at different stages within the planning process, all such proposals require assessment on their own merits and are rightly subject of individual applications. NPF4 makes clear that grid capacity should not constrain renewable development.

8.260 Representations raise concerns that there is a lack of community benefit associated with the proposed development. Whilst this can aid the just transition towards net zero, this is currently a voluntary arrangement and not a material planning consideration as previously explained in the socio-economic section of this report.

8.261 Representations raise concerns that the associated proposed OHL connections have not been included as part of the proposed development. Although it is correct that a grid connection is required to connect the substation with the national electricity grid, this will be subject to a separate consenting process (Section 37 of the Electricity Act) with SSEN Transmission as the applicant for regulatory reasons. If the proposed OHL development is consented, its connecting associated infrastructure is subject to a separate consenting process with those proposals requiring assessment on their own merits, having regard to any potential in combination cumulative effects.

8.262 Representations raise concerns regarding the impacts upon property prices and right to a view. These are not material planning considerations as these are deemed private rather than public interests. Residential amenity, including visual amenity across the wider area is however a material consideration and has been assessed.

8.263 Representations raise concerns that there has been a lack of community consultation associated with the proposed development. Community consultation has been carried out by the applicant in line with their statutory obligations for a national scale planning application.

8.264 Representations raise concerns regarding potential for fire risk. This is covered by other legislation which should not be replicated through planning.

8.265 Representations raise concerns regarding security risks to the facility. Whilst design measures can be used to reduce the risk such as fencing, surveillance, and access control gates, attacks in any form, such as from drones, is not a matter than be factored into a planning decision, but are a consideration for the network operator, with the design of the network to be resilient to any outages.

8.266 Representations raise concerns about the potential health impacts from the proposed facility which they consider would adversely impact health and wellbeing of residents within the surrounding area. The Planning Authority is not responsible for the applicant complying with standards and requirements of other authorities. Even so, the applicant has confirmed that the proposed development would be constructed and operated in line with all adopted British standard guidelines and regulations as it relates to substations.

8.267 Whilst various other legislation such as Fairer Scotland Duty, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC), amongst others, were raised in relation to the application it is considered that relevant policy and guidance has been reviewed and assessed during the consideration of the proposed development.

8.268 There are no other non-material considerations.

9. Matters to be Secured by Planning Legal Agreement

9.1 Given that the applicant has concluded an MoU with the Council covering off-site compensatory planting and biodiversity enhancement, no Section 75 legal agreement is required to be concluded prior to the issue of any forthcoming planning permission. Given the potential for woodland removal in the immediate surrounding area beyond the application site boundary there remains scope for the developer to work with key stakeholders, such as Lovat Estate and Eilean Aigas Estate for example, to explore further opportunities for land management planting that would beneficial for biodiversity enhancement and help to further mitigate the landscape and visual impacts well into the operational lifetime of the facility. Such measures are to be finalised through planning conditions which will entail the applicant obtaining the agreement of affected landowners.

9.2 A wear and tear legal agreement will also be required under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act. This would include the provision of a Road Bond or similar security. The agreement would take account of any neighbouring developments that might progress concurrently with the works proposed and would make provision for a mechanism for apportionment of costs between respective developers.

9.3 There also remains scope for a financial contribution towards active travel improvements if not undertaken by the applicant directly. The detailed active travel provisions are to be secured by condition, with any monetary payment expected to be made under Section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, with any offsite active travel connections potentially requiring subsequent planning permission(s).

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Scottish Government and The Highland Council each have policies offering support to projects which increase the capacity of the grid network, particularly for strategically important infrastructure which enables significant levels of investment in renewable energy. NPF4 offers strong support for such development, identifying developments of this nature to be of national importance.

10.2 All relevant matters have been taken into account in the appraisal of this application. The proposed Fanellan 400kV substation and HVDC converter station represent a critical component of the UK and Scottish Governments' renewable energy and electricity transmission strategy. The principle of development is firmly established in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which identifies Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure as a national development. This designation reflects the urgent need to deliver grid capacity upgrades to meet the 2030 renewable energy targets and the legally binding net zero target by 2045. The requirement for this project has been confirmed by Ofgem under the Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) framework, and its delivery is integral to the British Energy Security Strategy.

10.3 The proposal will deliver substantial national and regional benefits by strengthening the transmission network, enabling new onshore and offshore renewable connections, including the Western Isles HVDC link enabling the export of electricity generated from large-scale renewable projects on the islands, and facilitating the export of renewable energy from the north of Scotland to areas of demand across the UK. These benefits must be afforded significant weight in the planning balance and align with NPF4 Policies 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises), 11 (Energy), and 25 (Community Wealth Building), as well as HwLDP Policy 69 (Electricity Transmission Infrastructure).

10.4 Support for the principle of this type of development is clear in national and local planning policy. The review of the LVIA indicates that the proposed development will result in significant landscape and visual impacts, including cumulative impacts, that extend to approximately 3km, beyond the range considered by the applicant. This is unsurprising given the applicant's site selection and the scale of the development. An elevated, ridge-top location and the scale of the converter station buildings (up to 27.5m in height) and associated infrastructure, results in landscape and visual effects that cannot be easily mitigated, particularly in the short to medium term, experienced from the scattered rural settlements located on higher ground to the south and southeast looking towards the development. These significant adverse effects will be experienced during construction and early operation but also to a lesser extent in the longer-term impacting residents, users of Core Paths and sections of the local road network. While mitigation measures,

such as extensive earthworks, screening, and woodland planting along with appropriate finish colours to the infrastructure to blend with the surrounding landform, will reduce these impacts over time, residual effects will still endure into operational lifetime of the facility. The cumulative impact alongside the proposed associate Beauly to Peterhead OHL, Spittal to Beauly OHL and Beauly to Denny diversion, will further intensify these effects. It is for this reason that officers are advocating further engagement, led by SSEN, to explore additional roadside structural screen planting across surrounding estates to help mitigate these effects as far as practicable.

10.5 Construction impacts will be significant and prolonged, with a 3-year build period and a further 2 years to commission and energise the site. These timescales may well increase further given the restriction to working hours requested along with the prior replacement of Black Bridge to allow for heavier loads to avoid passing through Kiltarlity. The scale of works, extended hours, and associated traffic movements will result in notable amenity impacts for local communities. Environmental Health has highlighted the need for robust controls on noise, vibration and working hours, alongside dust and air quality management. These will be addressed through conditions requiring a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan, Air Quality Management Plan, and ongoing compliance monitoring. A Community Liaison Group and Planning Monitoring Officer will also be secured to ensure transparency and engagement throughout the construction phase. Finalised details of the working hours proposed will need to be confirmed and agreed with Highland Council and will also be controlled by condition.

10.6 These impacts can be managed through best practice construction management techniques to ensure surrounding interests, particularly road access, recreational route access and the amenity of local communities, is safeguarded from the key impacts of the development. The recommended suite of 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, with local ward member participation. Officers have incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission, with this having been derived from the EIA undertaken. Monitoring of construction and operational compliance has been secured through conditions.

10.7 Transport impacts have been a key concern since pre-application discussion with Roads Authority confirmed construction traffic, particularly the routing of heavy goods vehicles and abnormal indivisible loads, passing through Kiltarlity via the C1108 and U1604 roads would not be supported given these are substandard single-track roads unsuitable for the scale of traffic anticipated. After several months and extensive engagement with officers, the applicant has now confirmed in writing their agreement to the access being via the replacement Black Bridge and A831 with works to be completed prior to the commencement of works to the Fanellan Hub, avoiding Kiltarlity and Beaufort Estate. This is a major concession. One which pushes the construction period for Fanellan Hub out considerably, allowing time for careful consideration and robust management of all construction traffic related impacts. This amended routing via the Black Bridge can be

controlled by condition, along with a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), abnormal load route assessments, active travel improvements, with a Section 96 Wear and Tear Agreement also being required to safeguard the local road network.

10.8 The development has attracted a substantial level of public interest, with objections raising various concerns noted within the report. Whilst the unease of those in the local community is evident and the comments submitted articulate legitimate material planning considerations, the Development Plan, particularly NPF4 Policy 11 Energy, heavily favours such schemes, when applying the planning balance to reach a decision. The strong expression of community opposition to this project, has however influenced the applicant's decision to amend the proposed traffic routing, as well as helped to inform officer recommendation on this application. Whilst significant impacts will occur beyond the applicant's assessment, which has understated the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, there is a recognition within NPF4 Policy 11 that such impacts are to be expected from grid transmission and distribution infrastructure and they will generally be considered to be acceptable where appropriate design mitigation has been applied and impacts are localised. This is why the extent and severity of the landscape and visual, including cumulative effects, are considered, on balance, to marginally remain within acceptable limits, subject to further structural estate wide screen planting being introduced.

10.9 The host Kiltarlity Community Council, Crown and City Centre Community Council, Invergordon Community Council, Kilmorack Community Council, Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Council, Knockbain Community Council and Muir of Ord Community Council all objected to the application with their various concerns referenced in the report. There is clear concern within the local community with regards to the proposed development. These comments have been noted and assisted with the assessment of the application along with consideration of the adequacy of mitigation measures proposed.

10.10 In addition, the Council's Transport, Access, Forestry and Ecology Officers have all maintained objections given the insufficient supporting information provided by the applicant. Whilst their objections are noted, appropriate conditions can mitigate and control the concerns referenced. Likewise, whilst Historic Environment Scotland raised concerns regarding the proposed alternative route to site through Beaufort Estate, it is considered that these concerns have been dealt with given the replacement Black Bridge will be used and this can be controlled by condition. Several consultees have requested planning conditions be attached to any grant of planning permission. These are all to be applied to effectively ensure that their specific interests are secured.

10.11 The application is supported in the context of the Development Plan and in particular NPF4 Policy 11 Energy and HwLDP Policy 69 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure which provide underlying support for renewable energy development which is consented in this area. In balancing the considerable national and regional benefits of the proposal against its adverse localised impacts, it is concluded that the scheme accords with the principles and policies of the Development Plan, when taken as a whole and applied in the round.

10.12 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.

11. IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Resource: Not applicable

11.2 Legal: If the Committee determine that the application should be refused, the application may be subject to an appeal prior to determination by Scottish Ministers.

11.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable

11.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The application allows for the connection of renewable energy to the grid therefore helping to deliver a contribution toward climate change targets.

11.5 Risk: Not applicable

11.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

12. RECOMMENDATION

12.1 **Action required before decision issued:** Yes – notification to Scottish Ministers should Historic Environment Scotland not withdraw its objection. Whilst it is deemed that their objection can be resolved through appropriate conditions controlling the route to site, notification to Scottish Ministers is a formal requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Notification of Applications) (Scotland) Direction 2007.

12.2 **Subject to the above, it is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to:**

A. Officers writing to Historic Environment Scotland seeking the withdrawal of their objection based on the recommended traffic routing condition restricting access through the Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape Designation, and failing any withdrawal, proceeding with notification to Scottish Ministers;

B. Members granting delegated authority to the Area Planning Manager-South to agree the finalised condition wording, with any substantive amendments to be subject to prior consultation with the Chair of the South Planning Applications Committee; and

C. The following conditions and reasons.

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. **Accordance with the Provisions of the Application**

The development shall be constructed and operated in accordance with the provisions of the Application and the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) except in so far as amended by the terms of this consent. The operational land associated with this substation shall be as per the fence line boundary, as identified on LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0301 REV P06 Site Layout Plan and LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0302 REV P06 Site Layout Plan, with this being the extent to which the statutory undertaker's permitted development rights apply under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, Class 40, Part (1)(d), (e) and (f).

Reason: To identify the extent and terms of the development consent.

3. **Schedule of Mitigation**

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

Thereafter, the approved Schedule of Mitigation shall be implemented in full unless otherwise approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the identified mitigation through the EIA Report is carried out in accordance with the approved details.

4. **Offsite Biodiversity Enhancement and Compensatory Planting**

1. Within 18 months of the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) for the written approval of 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 and for peatland restoration achieves at least a 1:10 ratio of loss to offsetting;
    b) Details and timing of habitat and enhancement delivery, including plans confirming compensatory tree planting, defining tree numbers, species mix, ground preparation, plant size, plant spacing and protection measures along with 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;

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.

5. **External Materials and Site Levels**

No development shall commence until elevation, and cross section drawings of the proposed above ground infrastructure, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. These details shall include:

a) The external materials, colours and finishes of all external buildings and structures. The details shall include the use of a non-reflective finish;
b) All boundary treatments and internal fencing and any other enclosures;
c) Parking areas and EV charging units;
d) Any raised areas of hardstanding to support all onsite infrastructure; and
e) 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.

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 until such time as the development is decommissioned

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

6. **SF6 Gas**

The onsite infrastructure shall utilise Sulphur Hexafluoride(SF6) free technology, with an environmentally friendly alternative to be introduced, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority following receipt of further justification for any limited use of this by the developer, including details of associated mitigation measures to restrict, monitor and report any gas leakages during the operational lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding the environment and minimising pollution.

7. **Construction and Reinstatement Phasing Plan**

No development shall commence until a detailed Construction Phasing Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall:

a) Include phasing drawings for each aspect of the site enabling works, platform construction, building and above ground infrastructure, and progressive site reinstatement and landscaping works, with associated timescales;
b) Cut and fill calculations which demonstrate the anticipated material extraction and placement from each element of the required groundworks; and

c) Prioritise the installation of the roadside / boundary bunds and landscape planting along the C1106 Fanellan Road within the earliest practical phase of the construction period.

Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan, unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in appropriate phases in accordance with the range and scale of impacts assessed and measured in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

8. **Landscaping**

No development shall commence until details of a scheme of hard and soft landscaping works have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. Details of the scheme shall include:

a) All earthworks and existing and finished ground levels in relation to an identified fixed datum point;
b) A plan showing existing landscaping features and vegetation to be retained;
c) The location and design, including materials, of any existing or proposed walls, fences and gates;
d) All soft landscaping and planting works, including plans and schedules showing the location, species and size of each individual tree and/or shrub and planting densities; and
e) A programme for preparation, completion and subsequent on-going maintenance and protection of all landscaping works.

Landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme. 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.

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.

Reason: In order to ensure that the approved landscaping works are properly undertaken on site.

9. **Landscaping / Screening Bunds**

No development shall commence until full details of the proposed bunding, have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. This shall include:

a) Plans, elevations, cross-sections, finished ground levels, fencing and landscaping and planting details;
b) Phasing and timescales for the implementation of the bunds.
c) The bunds shall be contoured and profiled, with the soil from the siteworks to be reused to form the bund; and
d) A programme for preparation, completion and subsequent on-going maintenance and protection of all landscaping works during the construction phases of the development.

Thereafter, the bunds shall be constructed in full in accordance with the approved details and maintained as such for the operational lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that construction works are screened at the earliest practical point within the project's construction.

10. **Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems**

No development shall commence until full details of all surface water drainage provision within the application site (which should accord with the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and be designed to the standards outlined in Sewers for Scotland Second Edition, or any superseding guidance prevailing at the time) have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. Thereafter, only the approved details shall be implemented and all surface water drainage provision shall be completed prior to the first occupation of any of the development.

Reason: In order to ensure that water and sewerage infrastructure is carefully managed and provided timeously, in the interests of public health and environmental protection.

11. **Watercourse Buffer**

No earthworks are to take place within 10m of the top of bank of any watercourse on site apart from those associated with an approved watercourse crossing.

Reason: To ensure that development does not encroach onto riparian buffer strips.

12. **Watercourse Crossings**

All new and upgraded culverts and bridges within the development site shall be designed to accommodate a 1 in 200 year plus climate change flood event.

Reason: To ensure that all water crossings are free from flood risk and do not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere.

13. **Construction Environment Management Plan**

There shall be no Commencement of Development until a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) containing site specific details of all on-site construction works, post construction reinstatement, drainage and mitigation, together with details of their timetabling, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The CEMP shall be informed by the site and ground investigation works and best practice guidance.

a) A site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the construction period other than peat and other carbon rich soils), including details of contingency planning in the event of accidental release of materials which could cause harm to the environment, evidencing all proposals comply with SEPA's guidance and the requirements of the waste management licensing regime as appropriate;
b) Details of the location, layout, formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access

tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil, fuel and chemical storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing required for the construction period;

c) Site specific details for management and operation of any concrete batching plant (including disposal of pH-rich waste water and substances);
d) 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;
e) A Pollution Prevention and Incident Plan incorporating a Pollution Prevention Plan, Pollution Incident Plan and a Pollution Control Monitoring Plan, this shall provide measures to protect watercourses, groundwater, management of natural surface hydrological flows (flushes, springs, etc.) and protection of peatland/soils, arrangements for the storage and management of oil and fuel and other chemicals on the site and sewage disposal and treatment;
f) A drainage management strategy, demonstrating how all surface and waste water arising during and after construction is to be managed and prevented from impacting on the water environment and to mitigate flood risk;
g) A surface water and groundwater management and treatment plan, including details of the separation of clean and dirty water drains, and location of settlement lagoons for silt laden water
h) Details of temporary site illumination, including measures to ensure light spill/pollution is minimised and avoids habitats within the site and does not extent beyond the immediate working area, and not beyond the site boundary;
i) Protected Species Plans. The Plan shall be informed by protected species surveys carried out by a suitably qualified person. The surveys shall inform the mitigation measures required to protect these species during construction of the Development. The Plan shall provide mitigation measures, as required, and a timetable for implementation.
j) Details of the construction of the access into the site, including associated drainage and the creation and maintenance of associated visibility splays;
k) Details of post-construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas not required during the operation of the Development;
l) A Construction Noise Management Plan including details of the management of noise and vibration during construction and post-construction restoration, including that caused by construction traffic, to the lowest practicable levels and in accordance with BS 5228:2009 “Code of Practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Part 1: Noise and Part 2: Vibration” (or any updated version/document which superseded this document) and how any properties likely to be affected by construction noise will be kept informed;
m) Construction Method Statements for all roads/tracks to be altered/formed within the development site including their width, likelihood of widening or passing places, means of drainage (which shall have regard to SUDS principles), means of construction, and edge reinstatement including verge width. The specification shall be accompanied by relevant plans at a scale sufficient;
n) A phasing plan for the construction works; and

o) A written scheme which details the methodology for dealing with any revisions to any of the documents required under this part. Any revised documents will require to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the revisions being implemented on site.
p) Procedures for measuring and reporting emissions of dust and air pollutants (including those from construction related transport emissions) at appropriate locations to ensure compliance with Scottish Government short-term air quality objectives.
q) Procedures for controlling the emission of dust, dirt, and air pollutants during construction.
r) Other relevant environmental management as may be relevant to the development.

The Development shall be implemented in accordance with the CEMP approved 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 EIA Report accompanying the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented.

14. **Construction Noise Management and Vibration Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (CNVMP) which demonstrates how the developer will ensure the best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction noise and vibration, is submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The CNVMP shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

a) Mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 14, Sections 14.17 and 14.21 of the EIA.
b) Details of how best practicable means will be implemented to minimise construction noise and vibration.
c) Proposals for monitoring and controlling noise/vibration from blasting, dynamic compaction, and piling.

Thereafter the development must proceed in accordance with the approved CNVMP, and all mitigation measures must be in place prior to the commencement of construction, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

15. **Construction Traffic Routing via Black Bridge**

a) All vehicles associated with the development hereby approved including staff accessing the site in their own vehicles, shall only access and exit the site via the A831 and the C1106, via the Black Bridge.
b) The C1108 and U1604 roads through Kiltarlity shall not be used by any vehicles associated with the proposed development.
c) If alternative temporary routing is proposed, it may only be used where full details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Roads Authority, with any routing through the Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape Designation subject

to prior consultation and agreement in writing by Historic Environment Scotland.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, road safety and protecting the historic built environment.

16. **Public Road Improvements**

Prior to construction of any part of the development, full details of all public road improvements required to support the construction and ongoing operational access needs of this development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter, the public road improvements agreed shall be constructed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with Transport Scotland any affected Community Councils and Local Ward Members.

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

17. **Site Access and Visibility Splays**

Prior to construction of any part of the development, the site access and visibility splays, as illustrated on LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0103 REV P05, shall be constructed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with Transport Scotland.

Reason: To ensure that the standard of access layout complies with the current standards and that the safety of the traffic on the trunk road is not diminished. It will also ensure that drivers of vehicles leaving the site are enabled to see and be seen by vehicles on the trunk road carriageway and join the traffic stream safely.

18. **Traffic Management Coordinator**

No development shall commence until the appointment of a Traffic Management Coordinator role is established for the duration of this development, along with any other associated developments, to manage all construction traffic and has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Roads Authority, any affected Community Councils and Local Ward Members. The Traffic Management Coordinator will be required to:

a) Determine the likely types, levels and patterns of construction-related traffic associated with all power-related development due to be impacting on the A831 during the period of development for the Fanellan Substation.
b) Implement a suitable monitoring regime to identify the quantum, types and movement patterns of vehicles using the A831 and determine the nature and scale of trips from each of the impacting developments in the area.
c) Establish operating agreements and protocols with each of those developments to best spread the impacts of such construction traffic on the A831 to avoid unacceptable peaks and conflicts. These agreements / protocols also need to determine how each individual development will contribute towards any road repairs / remedial works that may be needed throughout the life of this process.
d) Undertake regular inspections into the condition of the impacted sections of the A831 throughout the period of developing the Fanellan Substation

and establish a regime for taking appropriate remedial action to keep the route safe and usable by all during that period, including vulnerable road users and non- construction traffic.

e) Establish a protocol for engaging with and updating the Local Area Roads Office on the findings from the above and seeking permissions for undertaking any roads repairs / remedial works that may be needed.
f) Work directly with local events coordinators and the local community to avoid conflicts with such events throughout the duration of the Fanellan Substation development.

The framework under which this role will be operated, including the intended arrangements for how the above functions will be undertaken, shall be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to any works commencing on site.

Reason: To secure effective management, coordination and compliance with the environmental mitigation and management measures associated with the development during the construction phase.

19. **Construction Traffic Management Plan**

No development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to manage all construction traffic with the exception of abnormal indivisible loads (AIL), has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Roads Authority, any affected Community Councils and Local Ward Members. The CTMP shall be carried out as approved in accordance with the timetable specified within the approved CTMP. The CTMP shall include:

a) Heavy goods vehicle traffic hours shall be restricted to Monday to Friday 08:00 to 19:00 and Saturday 08:00 to 13:00 with no deliveries proposed on Sunday or recognised bank holidays in Scotland with compliance monitoring measures and reports of any breaches to the Community Liaison Group.
b) Predicted traffic types, numbers and profile of movements throughout the construction period. This should be justified through clarifying the anticipated quantum of plant, workforce and bulk materials needed and should include any assumptions made in support of those figures.
c) The intended routing of such construction traffic from the proposed origins of materials, ports and workforce accommodation.
d) The management measures that will be required to mitigate the impacts of such construction traffic on neighbours to and wider users of the routes impacted. This includes measures required when mitigation works are being delivered to existing local public roads. As previously stated, we will not accept convoying of commercial goods vehicles.
e) Full details of protocols and compliance monitoring to ensure that all vehicles associated with the proposed development, including staff accessing the site in their own vehicles, only access and exit the site via the A831 and the C1106, via the Black Bridge, with any breaches reported to the Planning Authority, any affected Community Councils, Local Ward Members and Community Liaison Group.
f) The measures that will be taken to deal with any rerouting of bus and school transport services during the periods when the Black Bridge will not be

available for use and when use of existing local public roads will not be available when required physical mitigation works are being delivered.

g) Clarifications on the steps that will be taken to avoid conflicts with other high traffic-generating events in the local area that will also be requiring use of the routes covered by this CTMP.
h) The measures that will be taken for managing points of conflict between construction traffic routes where they interact with local public roads and wider users of them.
i) The measures proposed for keeping local public roads free from mud and other construction-related debris.
j) Justifications on the adequacy of the management measures proposed, alongside any physical works required to the public roads impacted.
k) 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 shall 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 shall be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant, to be approved by Transport Scotland and the Roads Authority before delivery commences.
l) Network Rail's Abnormal Loads Team shall be contacted given the route to site would pass over Railway Overbridge 302/030 on the A862 public road at Beauly if the proposed development was approved.
m) Ensure that effective access can be provided to all existing properties and businesses who are also reliant on the roads impacted by this development;
n) Provisions for emergency vehicle access;
o) A timetable for implementation of the measures detailed in the CTMP;
p) The provision of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 under which the developer shall 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 shall be carried out by the developer to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority;
q) Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred and measures for keeping any affected Community Councils and Local Ward Members informed and dealing with queries and any complaints regarding construction traffic ensuring effective lines of communication with existing residents, businesses and appropriate local representation groups in the area so that two-way information sharing can happen about the implications of construction traffic impacts and the development of solution driven improvements to the CTMP.

Reason: In the interests of road safety and to ensure adequate road safety measures are in place including measures to minimise conflict with routes to schools, cyclists and local events and to mitigate the adverse impact of construction traffic on the safe and efficient operation of the local and trunk road network.

20. **Abnormal Indivisible Load Construction Traffic Management Plan**

No delivery of abnormal indivisible load (AIL) shall be made to site until an Abnormal Indivisible Load Construction Traffic Management Plan (AIL-CTMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority, in consultation with Transport Scotland, affected Community Councils, Police Scotland and the local Roads Authority. The AIL-CTMP shall provide a detailed protocol for the delivery of AILs, including details of their proposed routing on the local and trunk road network, with any accommodation measures required. The details shall include but is not limited to:

a) A review of maximum axle loading on structures along the access route;
b) A review of overhead services along the access route;
c) A review in summer conditions of roadside vegetation along the access route and clearance of any vegetation that may interfere with construction traffic;
d) A review of road works or road closures that could affect the movement of construction traffic;
e) Full details of all road improvements and mitigation measures needed to facilitate abnormal load movements shall be agreed with Transport Scotland and the Local Roads Authority. The said measures shall be fully implemented to the satisfaction of Transport Scotland and the Local Roads Authority. Such measures may include: the removal of street furniture, modifications to bridges and culverts, junction and carriageway widening and/or edge strengthening, road safety improvements and traffic management. These measures are to be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant;
f) A detailed protocol for the delivery of abnormal loads prepared in consultation and agreement with interested parties. The protocol shall identify any requirement for convoy working/and or escorting of vehicles and include arrangement to provide advance notice of demountable signs or similar approved, when required to alert road users and local residents of expected abnormal load movements. All such movements on Council maintained roads shall take place outwith peak times on the network including school travel times and shall avoid community events;
g) A detailed assessment of structures along the routes of any Highland Council Road shall be carried out in consultation with and the satisfaction of the Council's Structures Section;
h) A contingency plan prepared by the abnormal laud 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; and
i) A detailed delivery programme for abnormal load movements which shall be made available to Highland Council and community representatives.

The AIL-CTMP shall be prepared in consultation with all interested parties and thereafter be carried out as approved.

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

21. **Traffic control measures**

Prior to the movement of any components and/or construction materials, any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any loads being transported shall be undertaken by a recognised QA traffic management consultant, to be approved by the Planning Authority, in consultation with Transport Scotland.

Reason: To ensure that the transportation of abnormal loads will not have any detrimental effect on the trunk road network

22. **Active Travel**

No development shall commence until full details of active travel improvements from site to and along the A831 and the A862 through Beauly have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Roads Authority, the Council's Sustainable Travel Team, any affected Community Councils and Local Ward Members. The approved active travel improvements, and any associated works, shall be implemented in full prior to the first commissioning of the development or as otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure appropriate active travel improvements are sought given the impacts to the local

23. **Outdoor Access Plan**

No development shall commence until a detailed Outdoor Access Plan of public access across the site (as existing, during construction and following completion) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The plan shall include details showing:

a) All existing access points, paths, core paths, tracks, rights of way and other routes (whether on land or inland water), and any areas currently outwith or excluded from statutory access rights under Part One of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, within and adjacent to the application site;
b) Any areas proposed for exclusion from statutory access rights, for reasons of privacy, disturbance or effect on curtilage related to proposed buildings or structures;
c) All proposed paths, tracks and other routes for use by walkers, riders, cyclists, canoeists, all-abilities users, etc. and any other relevant outdoor access enhancement (including construction specifications, signage, information leaflets, proposals for on-going maintenance etc.);
d) Any diversion of paths, tracks or other routes (whether on land or inland water), temporary or permanent, proposed as part of the development (including details of mitigation measures, diversion works, duration and signage).

The approved Outdoor Access Plan, and any associated works, shall be implemented in full prior to the first occupation of the development or as otherwise may be agreed within the approved plan.

Reason: In order to safeguard public access during the construction and

operational phases of the development.

24. **Working Hours**

Unless otherwise authorised in writing by the Planning Authority, construction activities associated with this development (including the loading and unloading of delivery vehicles, plant, or other equipment) for which noise is audible out with the site boundary, shall not take place outside the following hours:

- Monday to Friday: 08:00 – 19:00 hrs
- Saturday: 08:00 – 13:00 hrs
- At no time on Sunday

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

25. **Operational Management Plan**

Prior to the energisation of the development, a site Operational Management Plan shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This plan shall detail:

a) An updated Schedule of Mitigation (SM) as it relates to the operational phase of the development highlighting mitigation set out within each chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and SEI, as well as the conditions of this consent;
b) Processes to control / action changes from the agreed SM;
c) Landscape management and drainage maintenance.

Thereafter, the OMP shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details from first commissioning of the development until the cessation of the use of the development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of environmental amenity, pollution prevention, maintaining water quality, and provision of adequate parking and charging facilities.

26. **Noise Impact Assessment**

Following completion of the detailed design stage, and prior to the commencement of development, the applicant must submit a revised noise impact assessment for the written approval of the Planning Authority. This assessment shall:

a) Include a BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 assessment focused on residential amenity hours, defined as:
    - Monday to Friday: 18:00–23:00
    - Saturday: 13:00–23:00
    - Sunday: All day
b) Incorporate any additional mitigation measures introduced during detailed design, particularly in relation to the cooling system.
c) Include a Design and Management Plan for the buildings, outlining how operational practices and design features will be implemented to minimise noise emissions.

The development must proceed in accordance with the approved assessment. All mitigation measures must be implemented prior to the commencement of

operation and maintained in perpetuity.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

27. **Operational Noise Specifications**

The Rating Level of noise emissions from any plant, machinery, equipment, or other sources within the operational area of the substation, when determined in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 – Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound, shall not exceed the levels specified in the table below:

Receptor	Daytime Rating Level (dB)	Night-time Rating Level (dB)
NSR 1 – Fanellan Croft	20	19
NSR 2 – Allordale	29	27
NSR 3 – Forest Lodge	27	25
NSR 5 – 3 Fanellan	26	24
NSR 6 – Fanellan Farm	27	27
NSR 7 – Lower Fanellan	24	24

These limits apply to the identified receptors and to any dwelling that is lawfully existing, or remains in residential use, or has planning permission for residential use at the date of this consent, unless revised through a subsequent approved noise impact assessment.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

28. **Operational Noise - Plant**

The noise emissions from any plant, machinery, equipment, or other sources within the operational area of the substation site, when measured and/or calculated as an $L_{Zeq,5min}$, in the 100Hz one third octave frequency band must not exceed 30dB, at the curtilage of any noise sensitive premises.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

29. **Operational Noise – Cooling System**

Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit details of the manufacturers or suppliers' data or other relevant documentation to demonstrate that the cooling system will not operation during night-time hours (23:00hrs – 07:00hrs).

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

30. **Operational Noise – Compliance Monitoring**

Prior to the operation of the development, the applicant shall submit a scheme of compliance monitoring for the written approval of the Planning Authority. This scheme shall detail how the applicant will demonstrate compliance with the consented noise limits

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

31. **Operational Noise Assessment**

Within two months of the development becoming operational, the site operator shall, at their own expense, appoint an independent consultant to assess the level of noise in terms of compliance with consented noise limits. The site operator shall submit the report of the independent consultant's assessment for the approval of the Planning Authority within four months of the development becoming fully operational.

If the assessment identifies that noise level exceeds the prescribed noise limits, the assessment report shall include a scheme of mitigation to be enacted, including timescales for implementation, to ensure compliance with consented noise limits.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

32. **Blasting Management Plan**

Prior to the development commencing the applicant shall submit, for the written approval of the Planning Authority, a management plan prepared by a suitably qualified and competent person in accordance with PAN 50 Annex D: The Control of Blasting at Surface Mineral Workings. The method statement should include but is not limited to the following:

a) The best practicable measures to be taken to reduce the impact of air overpressure and vibration at sensitive properties;
b) A scheme for the monitoring of vibration from blasting including the location of monitoring points and equipment to be used;
c) The proposed methods for providing the public with advance warning of any blasting.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved method statement and all approved mitigation measures shall be in place prior to any blasting taking place or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. No blasting operations shall take place out with the hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday and not at all on Saturdays, Sundays, or recognised public holidays in Scotland.

Ground vibrations as a result of the blasting operations shall not exceed a peak particle velocity of 6mms-1 in 95% of all blasts within any 6-month period. No individual blast shall exceed a peak particle velocity of 12mms-1 as measured at noise sensitive properties. The measurement shall be the maximum of three mutually perpendicular directions taken at ground surface at any vibration sensitive building.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

33. **Blasting Operations**

No blasting operations should take place between March and mid-July inclusive, in order to avoid disturbance while ospreys are displaying, incubating or brooding small young.

Reason: To minimise disturbance to nature conservation interests within the application site and ensure the protection of protected species and habitats.

34. **Blasting Operations and Protected Species**

Shall a new osprey nest site be identified within disturbance distance (350-750m) of the proposal blasting site, embedded measures within the Bird Species Protection Plan shall be implemented including establishing disturbance protection zones and seasonal working restrictions where required.

Reason: To minimise disturbance to nature conservation interests within the application site and ensure the protection of protected species and habitats.

35. **Private Water Supply**

Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall carry out an investigation to identify any unregistered private water supplies that may be adversely affected by the works.

A report detailing the findings and any necessary mitigation measures to prevent contamination or physical disruption must be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The report must also include:

- Monitoring proposals for before, during, and after construction.
- Contingency measures in the event of an incident resulting in contamination or disruption to a supply.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

36. **Environmental Clerk of Works**

No development shall commence until the terms of appointment of an independent Environmental Clerk of Works ("ECoW") by the Company have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The terms of appointment shall:

a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the environmental commitments provided in the EIA Report, as well as the following (the ECoW works):
    i. The Pre-Construction Ecological Survey under Condition 38;
    ii. The Construction Environmental Management Plan under Condition 13;
    iii. The Habitat Management Plan under Condition 37;
    iv. The Specimen Tree Planting Plan and Compensatory Planting
    v. Plan under Conditions 43 and 44;
    vi. Require the ECoW to report to the nominated construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority any

incidences of non- compliance with the ECoW works at the earliest practical opportunity;

b) Require the ECoW to submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site; and

Prior to the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development or the expiration of the operational period of the consent (whichever is the earlier), details of the terms of appointment of a suitably qualified, experienced, and independent ECoW by the Company throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

The ECoW shall be appointed on the terms approved throughout the decommissioning, restoration and aftercare phases of the Development

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

37. **Habitat Management Plan**

There shall be no Commencement of Development until the finalised Habitat Management Plan (HMP), which will include details of any offsite enhancement, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

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

a) The HMP shall provide provision and details for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken against the HMP objectives and reasonable measures for securing amendments or additions to the HMP in the event that the HMP objectives are not being met
b) Until otherwise approved in advance in writing by the Planning Authority, the approved HMP (as amended from time to time with written approval of the Planning Authority) shall be implemented in full in line with the timescales set out in the approved plan.

Reason: In the interests of good land management and the protection of habitats.

38. **Pre-Construction Ecological Survey**

A pre-construction survey is required to be undertaken not more than 3 months prior to works commencing and a report of the survey has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. 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. 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 ensure that the site and its environs are surveyed and the development does not have an adverse impact on protected species or habitat.

39. **Nesting Birds**

Construction works have the potential to disturb nesting birds or damage their nest sites, and as such, a nesting bird survey should be made, not more than 24 hours prior to the commencement of development if this coincides within the main bird breeding season (March - August inclusive) and throughout the breeding bird season if new areas are being developed or there has been a break in construction. All wild bird nests are protected from damage, destruction, interference and obstruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Some birds (listed on schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act) have heightened protection where it is also an offence to disturb these birds while they are in or around the nest.

Reason: To ensure all nesting birds are protected as per the legislation.

40. **Data**

GIS Shapefiles shall be supplied of the compensation and enhancement areas to the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

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

41. **Arboricultural Method Statement**

Prior to any site excavation or groundworks, a suitably qualified Arboricultural consultant shall be employed by the applicant to produce an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) which details how the trees on site and along the proposed haulage route to the site are to be protected and also to ensure that the approved Tree Protection Plans are implemented to the agreed standard. Stages requiring supervision shall be set out in the AMS for the written agreement of the Planning Authority and certificates of compliance for each stage are to be submitted for approval.

Reason: To ensure the protection of retained trees throughout the construction period.

42. **Tree Removal and Protection Plans**

No development, site excavation or groundwork shall commence until all retained trees have been protected against construction damage using protective barriers located as per the Tree Removal and Protection Plans (suite of 9 drawings) and in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction, or any superseding guidance prevailing at that time). These barriers shall remain in place throughout the construction period and shall not be moved or removed during the construction period without the prior written approval of the Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure the protection of retained trees, which are important amenity assets, both during construction and thereafter.

43. **Specimen and Amenity Tree Planting Plan**

No development shall commence until a detailed Specimen and Amenity Tree Planting Plan and Maintenance Programme has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority.

a) The Plan shall include the planting of no less than 20 No. extra-heavy standard individual field margin or roadside trees; and
b) The Plan shall provide structural planting of trees and vegetation along open sections of paths, public roads and field boundaries within surrounding estate land to assist in filtering views for path and road users and from residential properties towards the substation and associated connecting infrastructure, and strengthen the landscape character of the area. The Plan shall:
i) be prepared through site survey to confirm the accuracy of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility modelling presented in EIA Figure 8.3 Screening ZTV;
ii) identifying suitable areas where planting would be beneficial for the amenity of road users and residents within a 3km study area;
iii) identify areas where agreement has been reached with landowners which can be planted at the earliest possibility; and
iv) confirm the planting specification and maintenance programme.

Planting shall be implemented during the first planting season prior to or following commencement of development, or as otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and mitigating landscape impacts.

44. **Compensatory Planting Plan**

No development, including tree felling, shall commence until a detailed Compensatory Planting Plan (including future maintenance) has been submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, following consultation with Scottish Forestry and any other relevant stakeholders.

a) The areas of planting shall be no less than 10.16 hectares in size, consisting of 3.33 hectares of off-site productive conifers species and 6.83 hectares of on-site native species, and all planting shall be located within the Highlands.
b) The areas identified for compensatory planting may also need to be considered under The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, where this exceeds the current thresholds.
c) The Compensatory Planting Plan must follow the same process as required for preparing a woodland creation proposal, as set out in the Scottish Forestry publication: Woodland Creation Application Guidance.
d) The Compensatory Planting Plan must be prepared by and then implemented under the supervision of a suitably qualified forestry consultant, approved by the Planning Authority. The appointed forestry consultant must provide a detailed schedule of supervision, with compliance monitoring reports to be issued at agreed stages.
e) The approved Compensatory Planting Plan must be implemented in full, prior to first commissioning of the development. The compensatory planting shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved scheme,

until established to the full satisfaction of the Planning Authority and then shall remain as woodland in perpetuity.

f) To comply with the Felling Permission exemptions, woodland removal must not begin until the applicant can demonstrate that construction work is imminent. In the event that development fails to commence within 3 years of the initial felling, then the land use shall revert back to woodland and the area must be replanted within 12 months, to a specification approved by the Planning Authority.

g) Where compensatory planting takes place on land located outside the planning application boundary and/or is not under the ownership of the applicant, agreement must be secured between the applicant and the landowner.

h) The applicant must provide the Planning Authority with a GIS shapefile clearly identifying the approved area(s) of woodland removal and the associated area(s) of compensatory planting.

Reason: To protect Scotland's woodland resource, in accordance with the Scottish Government's policy on the Control of Woodland Removal.

45. **Veteran Tree Management Plan**

No development, site excavation or groundwork shall take place until a Veteran Tree Management Plan (VTMP) for all veteran and potential veteran trees within and adjacent to the site potentially affected by the development has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The VTMP shall be prepared and overseen by a suitably qualified arboricultural professional.

Reason: To ensure the protection of veteran trees throughout the construction period and beyond.

46. **Written Scheme of Investigation**

No works in connection with the development hereby approved shall commence unless an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and a programme of archaeological works has been carried out in accordance with the approved WSI. The WSI shall include details of how the recording and recovery of archaeological resources found within the application site shall be undertaken, and how any updates, if required, to the written scheme of investigation will be provided throughout the implementation of the programme of archaeological works. Should the archaeological works reveal the need for post excavation analysis the development hereby approved shall not be occupied or brought into use unless a Post-Excavation Research Design (PERD) for the analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The PERD shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

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

47. **Lighting**

Prior to the first commissioning of the development, details of any operational 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.

48. **Public Art**

Within 18 months of the commencement of development a scheme for the inclusion of public art either on or off site, including types and locations of artworks, public parking (if applicable) and the management and maintenance thereof, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to first commissioning of the development, unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, and thereafter maintained for the operational lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and creation of place.

49. **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 Planning Authority. The submitted Scheme shall make reference to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report(EIAR) (July 2024) and 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 Planning Authority; 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); to maximise the local socio-economic benefits of the development to the wider community; and to make provision for publicity and details relating to any local employment opportunities.

50. **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 the Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO) appointment shall:

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

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

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

51. **Community Liaison Group**

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

The group shall act as a forum for the community to be kept informed of project progress and, in particular, shall 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.

The group 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 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.

REASON FOR DECISION

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

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

REASONED CONCLUSION

The Council is in broad agreement with the findings of the Environmental Appraisal for the construction and operation of a 400 kV substation and converter station and associated infrastructure, site access, landscaping and demolition works at land 300m NW of Fanellan Farmhouse, Kiltarlity. Whilst the proposed development would give rise to some visual, including cumulative effects, amenity and traffic effects, particularly during the construction period but also extending longer terms into the operational phase of the development, the Highland Council is satisfied, on balance, that the environmental effects of this development can be addressed sufficiently by way of mitigation.

The Council has incorporated the requirement for a schedule of mitigation within the conditions of this permission. Monitoring of construction and operational compliance has been secured through Conditions 2, 3, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 36, 37, 38, 50 and 51 of this permission.

FOOTNOTE TO APPLICANT

INFORMATIVES

Initiation and Completion Notices

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) requires all developers to submit notices to the Planning Authority prior to, and upon completion of, development. These are in addition to any other similar requirements (such as Building Warrant completion notices) and failure to comply represents a breach of planning control and may result in formal enforcement action.

1. The developer must submit a Notice of Initiation of Development in accordance with Section 27A of the Act to the Planning Authority prior to work commencing on site.
2. On completion of the development, the developer must submit a Notice of Completion in accordance with Section 27B of the Act to the Planning Authority.

Copies of the notices referred to are attached to this decision notice for your convenience.

Flood Risk

It is important to note that the granting of planning permission does not imply there is an unconditional absence of flood risk relating to (or emanating from) the application site. As per Scottish Planning Policy (paragraph 259), planning permission does not remove the liability position of developers or owners in relation to flood risk.

Scottish Water

You are advised that a supply and connection to Scottish Water infrastructure is dependent on sufficient spare capacity at the time of the application for connection to Scottish Water. The granting of planning permission does not guarantee a connection. Any enquiries with regards to sewerage connection and/or water supply should be directed to Scottish Water on 0845 601 8855.

Septic Tanks and Soakaways

Where a private foul drainage solution is proposed, you will require separate consent from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). Planning permission does not guarantee that approval will be given by SEPA and as such you are advised to contact them direct to discuss the matter (01349 862021).

Contaminated Land

There is the potential for contamination at this site due to its use as a Substation. As the proposed development would not appear to materially change the risk of potential contamination at the site, an investigation is not required at this stage. However, please be aware of potential health and safety issues for site workers and be advised that all sites with a former industrial/commercial use have been prioritised by the Highland Council under duties conferred by Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and may require investigation in the future. In addition, land contamination issues may affect property value. Should you wish to discuss potential contamination issues or commission your own investigation, please contact Community Services, Contaminated Land for advice.

Local Roads Authority Consent

In addition to planning permission, you may require one or more separate consents (such as road construction consent, dropped kerb consent, a road openings permit, occupation of the road permit etc.) from the Area Roads Team prior to work commencing. These consents may require additional work and/or introduce additional specifications, and you are therefore advised to contact your local Area Roads office for further guidance at the earliest opportunity.

Failure to comply with access, parking and drainage infrastructure requirements may endanger road users, affect the safety and free-flow of traffic and is likely to result in enforcement action being taken against you under both the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

Further information on the Council's roads standards can be found at: http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport

Application forms and guidance notes for access-related consents can be downloaded from:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/101/permits_for_working_on_public_roads/2

Mud and Debris on Road

Please note that it an offence under Section 95 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 to allow mud or any other material to be deposited, and thereafter remain, on a public road from any vehicle or development site. You must, therefore, put in place a strategy for dealing with any material deposited on the public road network and

maintain this until development is complete.

Construction Hours and Noise-Generating Activities

You are advised that construction work associated with the approved development (incl. the loading/unloading of delivery vehicles, plant or other machinery), for which noise is audible at the boundary of the application site, should not normally take place outwith the hours of 08:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00 and 13:00 on Saturdays or at any time on a Sunday or Bank Holiday in Scotland, as prescribed in Schedule 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 (as amended).

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

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

Transport Scotland Roads Directorate

The applicant should be informed that the granting of planning consent does not carry with it the right to carry out works within the trunk road boundary and that permission must be granted by Transport Scotland Roads Directorate. Where any works are required on the trunk road, contact details are provided on Transport Scotland's response to the Planning Authority which is available on the Council's planning portal.

Trunk Road modification works shall, in all respects, comply with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and the Specification for Highway Works published by HMSO. The developer shall issue a certificate to that effect, signed by the design organisation.

Trunk Road modifications shall, in all respects, be designed and constructed to arrangements that comply with the Disability Discrimination Act: Good Practice Guide for Roads published by Transport Scotland. The developer shall provide written confirmation of this, signed by the design organisation.

Any trunk road works will necessitate a Minute of Agreement with the Trunk Roads Authority prior to commencement.

Protected Species – Halting of Work

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

https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-species

Asbestos

Prior to demolition of any structures or buildings a pre-demolition asbestos survey should be undertaken and SEPA waste consignment notes retained for demonstrating appropriate removal and disposal of all asbestos containing materials (ACM) in accordance with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012, and current waste regulations.

Signature:	Bob Robertson
Designation:	Acting Area Planning Manager – South
Author:	Roddy Dowell

Document Type	Document No	Version No	Date Received
Plan 1 – Location Plan (Supplementary)	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0006 REV P02		6 March 2025
Plan 2 – Location Plan	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0001 REV P09		6 March 2025
Plan 3 – Site Layout Plan	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0002 REV P08		6 March 2025
Plan 4 – Site Layout Plan	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0003 REV P08		6 March 2025
Plan 5 – Site Layout Plan	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0004 REV P07		6 March 2025
Plan 6 - Site Layout Plan	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0112 REV P07		7 March 2025
Plan 7 - Site Layout Plan	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0113 REV P07		7 March 2025
Plan 8 – Site Layout Plan - HVDC	ASTI-ECD ASTIDC-STAN-MMD-BLDG-INFR-LAY-A-0002		6 March 2025
Plan 9 – Elevation Plan - HVDC	ASTIDC-STAN-MMD-BLDG-INFR-ELE-A-0022 REV P04		6 March 2025
Plan 10 – Access Road Junction with C1106	LT459-SWE-XX-XX-D-X-0103 REV P05		6 March 2025
Plan 11 – Landscape Plan (1 of 2)	701112533_WSP_LUD_FNB_DR_LA_0001 P03		6 March 2025
Plan 12 – Landscape Plan (2 of 2)	70112533_WSP_LUD_FNB_DR_0001 P01		6 March 2025

Appendix 1 – Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations

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

Appendix 3 – Viewpoint Assessment Appraisal – Visual Impact

Appendix 4 – Appropriate Assessment

Appendix 1 – Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4, 2023)

A1.1 National Development 3 – Strategic Renewable Electricity generation and Transmission Infrastructure
1 - Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises
2 - Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
3 - Biodiversity
4 - Natural Places
5 - Soils
6 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees
7 - Historic Assets and Places
11 - Energy
20 - Blue and Green Infrastructure
22 - Flood Risk and Water Management
23 - Health and Safety
25 - Community Wealth Building
29 - Rural Development
33 - Minerals

Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP, 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
52 – Principle of Development in Woodland
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
74 - Green Networks
77 - Public Access

Area Local Development Plans

A1.3 The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) (2024) does not contain

land allocations related to the proposed development. The area plan's focus is mainly on regional and settlement strategies and identifying specific site allocations.

Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

A1.4
- Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)
- Developer Contributions (Nov 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)
- Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
- Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
- Trees, Woodland and Development (Jan 2013)
- Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)
- Standards for Archaeological Work (Mar 2012)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)

OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Other National Policy and Guidance

A1.4
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 – interim and annual targets replaced by Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill in November 2024
- Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (July 2024)
- UK Government Clean Power Action Plan (Dec 2024)
- The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
- Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency (2023)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)
- 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)
- Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure: Government Response, UK Department for Energy and Security and Net Zero (2023)
- Advising on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats in development (NatureScot, Feb 2024)

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

National Policy

A.2.1 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) forms part of the Development Plan and was adopted in February 2023. NPF4 comprises three distinct parts. Part 1 sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in the future. Outlining that Scotland is facing unprecedented challenges and that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, and build a wellbeing economy while striving to create great places. Therefore, NPF4 sets out that choices need to be made about how we can make sustainable use of our natural assets in a way that benefits communities.

A.2.2 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 c) New and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations. This proposal aligns with part c) and therefore, is classed as a national development, and as such received in principle support.

A.2.3 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.

A.2.4 Part 2 of NFP4 sets out the National Planning Policy which cover three themes: Sustainable Places, Liveable Places, and Productive Places; within which there are a total of 33 policies and many of these consist of distinct sub-policies. These 33 national planning policies form part of the development plan and will be assessed along with the Council's LDP policies for development management decisions. The most relevant policies are outlined below.

A.2.5 Part 3 provides a series of annexes that provide the rationale for the strategies and policies of NPF4, which outline how the document should be used, and set out how the Scottish Government will implement the strategies and policies contained in the

document. With Annex A: 'How to use this document' noting that the policies within Part 2 should be read as a whole and '…it is for the decision maker to determine what weight to attach to policies on a case-by-case basis….' It goes on to state that '…where a policy states that development will be supported, it is in principle, and it is for the decision maker to take into account all other relevant policies….'.

A.2.6 Many of NPF4's policies are relevant to consideration of the proposal, but attention is particularly drawn here to the following key policies. Policy 1 - Tackling the climate and nature crises aims to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis. It requires 'significant weight' to be given to those crises in decision making.

A.2.7 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. Biodiversity measures can be secured through several conditions including the landscaping strategy, the Habitat Management Plan and the requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain.

A.2.8 Policy 4 - Natural Places aims to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. Policy 4 section e) 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, traffic and roads, historic environment, hydrology, water environment and flood risk, trees, biodiversity, decommissioning and site restoration are all addressed. These matters are all addressed in the report above and subject to conditions are considered to be acceptable.

A.2.9 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.

A.2.10 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. A socio-economic condition can be secured. Further measures outwith the planning application can be developed through the Council’s Social Values Charter.

Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP)

A.2.11 The principal HwLDP 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.

A.2.12 As the development would provide additional grid capacity for the transmission network and would help to facilitate an increasing proportion of 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.

A.2.13 In this regard, the site does not benefit from specific policy designations. The HwLDP does confirm the boundaries of Special Landscape Areas. Policies 28, 57, 61 and 67 seek to safeguard these regionally important landscapes. The impact of this development on landscape is primarily assessed in the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report. HwLDP

A.2.14 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, avoid incremental expansion of one particular development type within a landscape as well as drainage, road access and servicing implications.

A.2.15 HwLDP Policy 57 – Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage requires all development proposals be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting. It does acknowledge the nearby internationally important Inner Moray Firth SPA North Inverness Lochs SPA. It also acknowledges the nationally important Category A Listed Beaufort Castle, Beaufort Castle Gardens and Designed Landscape Designation along with other listed buildings within the Estate. There are also various Scheduled Monuments in the wider surrounding area.

A.2.16 HwLDP 61 – Landscape requires all development to be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed. This will include consideration of the appropriate scale, form, pattern and construction materials, as well as the potential cumulative effect of developments where this may be an issue.

A.2.17 HwLDP Policy 67 - Renewable Energy sets out that ‘renewable energy development should be well related to the source of the primary renewable resource needed for operation’. It states that ‘The Council will consider the contribution of the proposed development in meeting renewable energy targets and positive/negative effects on the local and national economy as well as all other relevant policies of the Development Plan and other relevant guidance.’

Area Local Development Plans

A.2.18 The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) (2024) does not contain land allocations related to the proposed development. The area plan's focus is mainly on regional and settlement strategies and identifying specific site allocations.

A.2.19 The IMFLDP contains policy on Nature Protection, Preservation and Enhancement (Policy 2). This sets out that major development will only be supported where it is demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity within and adjacent to a site. This is similar to the approach taken in NPF4 and will be considered in the relevant sections of this report.

A.2.20 The IMFLDP also sets out that developers will be required to demonstrate that adequate capacity to serve the proposal exists or can be created by a programmed improvement or via direct developer provision or funding. Where this is appropriate, the need for enhancements to infrastructure will be highlighted in this report.

Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022), Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023), and Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland (2023)

A.2.21 These policies are relevant given the proposed development for electricity transmission infrastructure plays a key role in transferring renewable energy generated from various wind, hydro and battery energy storage schemes across Highland into homes and businesses across the rest of Scotland and the UK. The Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement supersedes the previously adopted Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement which was published in 2017. The document sets out a clear ambition for onshore wind in Scotland and for the first time sets a national target for a minimum level of installed capacity for onshore wind energy being 20 Gigawatts (GW). This is set against a currently installed capacity of 10.3GW (June 2025). Therefore, a further 9.7GW of onshore wind requires to be installed to meet the target. It is however acknowledged that targets are not caps. In delivering such a target Scotland would play a significant role in meeting the requirement of 25 to 30 GW of installed capacity across the UK identified by the Climate Change Committee.

A.2.22 Like the previous iteration of the Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement, the document recognises that balance is required and that no one technology can allow Scotland to reach its net zero targets. The document is clear that in achieving a balance, environmental and economic benefits to Scotland must be maximised. In taking this approach, this echoes Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy. Benefits to rural areas, such as provision of jobs and opportunities to restore and protect natural habitats, are also highlighted in the document.

A.2.23 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.

A.2.24 To deliver the ambition for onshore wind, the Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland was introduced in September 2023. The document focuses on necessary high-level actions by Government and the Sector to support onshore wind delivery. Jointly, Government and the Sector are committed to working together to ensure a balance is struck between onshore wind and the impacts on land use and the environment. The document looks to expediate decision making and consent implementation to achieve 20 GW of installation by 2030, meaning we should be seeing faster decisions on applications that are already in the system, with more consents being built out.

Appendix 3 – Viewpoint Assessment Appraisal – Visual Impact

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
VP1 – Fanellan Road (C1106) 0km from the site View West	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	High, High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users), Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant, Significant,**	High, High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users), Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant, Significant,**
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	High, High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users), Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse/neutral (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant, Significant**	High, High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users), Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse/neutral (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant, Significant**
	During construction		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
							Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions and EIAR Volume 4 Appendix 8.4 Visual Effects The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in and around Fanellan Road along with road users on the route. Views from the area around the junction Fanellan Road near Butlers Cottage look south-west towards the proposed development. Within the view the landscape is predominantly rural in character with farmland fringed by an uneven hedgerow and stock fencing is visible beyond in middle-ground of the view. Existing OHL and towers are visible in the background of the view above woodland. The proposed development site is visible from this location but filtered to a certain extent by the uneven roadside hedgerow boundary with more distant views somewhat obscured by the existing roadside vegetation adjacent to Fanellan Road. Whilst the magnitude and significance of effects are broadly agreed it is noted that: • Whilst the earthworks shown at Year 0 screen much, but not all, of the proposed development these are, in themselves, intrusive, blocking a more open rural view.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	• By year 15 built development is completely screened by trees and the earthworks are not distinguishable. Effects would become less adverse but the change from the baseline is still considered to be of High magnitude. Whilst woodland is a common landscape element in the existing view, the planting blocks a formerly more scenic outlook and it is considered the planting is crudely depicted in the photomontages. • It is considered effects on road users would be at a lesser level than for residents, reflecting their lower sensitivity There are limited cumulative effects given the earthworks will screen views of the proposed reconfigured Beauly to Denny OHL, Spittal to Beauly OHL and Peterhead to Beauly OHL.							
VP2 – Sunnybrae and Bredaig 0.2km from the site View North	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate/Neutral Adverse (residents), Moderate Minor/Neutral Adverse(road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant	Medium, Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate/Neutral Adverse (residents), Moderate Minor/Neutral Adverse(road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	High	Major Adverse (residents), Major Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in and around Sunnybrae and Bredaig along with road users on the C1106 Fanellan Road. The viewpoint is located off Fanellan Road between Sunnybrae and Bredaig properties looking es north-east towards the proposed development. As with VP1 the landscape is predominantly rural in character with farmland fringed by stock fencing and mature trees along the roadside. Ground levels rise within the middle ground obscuring low level views of Ruttle Wood beyond the existing tower and OHL to the northeast. The proposed development site is visible from this location beyond the property in the middle ground, woodland plantation and existing tower and OHL. The construction and Year 0 effects are generally agreed. Whilst screening the proposed development, the landforms providing the screening appears as angular from this direction and creates an intrusive feature. However, by year 15, extensive woodland growth will screen the landforms							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	and appears as an element typical of the baseline landscape. It is considered that effects would remain Medium in magnitude as it is still a noticeable change, and significant for residents. There are cumulative effects given the proposed reconfigured Beauly to Denny OHL, Spittal to Beauly OHL and Peterhead to Beauly OHL will all be seen within the view, however, the additional OHL will be seen alongside existing transmission infrastructure and is relatively well contained within the landform.							
VP3 – Wester Balblair 1.9km from the site View South West	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low, Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant	Low, Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low/Medium, Low/Medium	Minor/Moderate Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Minor/Moderate Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant,	Low/Medium, Low/Medium	Minor/Moderate Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Minor/Moderate Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
					Not Significant			
			During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in and around Wester Balblair along with road users on the A831, which forms part of a recognised tourist route and rural road corridor, along with the Wester Balblair road connecting to the A831. The viewpoint is located off a local road that forms the main northern access route to the village of Wester Balblair. The view encompasses the rural landscape on the fringe of Wester Balblair which is heavily influenced by existing infrastructure including the Beauly substation in the middle							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	distance and quarry. The existing OHL and towers are prominent within the outlook and break the skyline in multiple locations. The proposed development site is visible in the background through intervening vegetation and large-scale infrastructure. It is considered the effects at the operational stage would be marginally higher in magnitude as the proposed converter station buildings would be easily visible on the skyline rather than “barely perceptible” as stated within the LVIA. Regardless, it is generally agreed that effects would not be significant. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly Denny OHL diversion which will appear in the foreground of the view with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL which will appear in the background of the view. The proposed Spittal to Beauly OHL is relatively is hidden from view behind existing vegetation and landform. Altogether, it creates a somewhat cluttered outlook, however, whilst there are cumulative effects it is considered that these are not significant as the additional proposed OHL will be seen alongside existing transmission infrastructure that is generally contained within the landform. The cumulative effects are not significant.							
VP4 – Ruisaurie 2.4km from the site View South West	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low, Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant	Low, Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users),	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users),	Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users),	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users),	Not Significant, Not Significant
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in and around Ruisaurie along with road users on the Wester Balblair road linking the scattered properties in the surrounding area to the A831. The viewpoint is located off a local road near Ruisaurie and faces southwest towards the proposed development. Within the elevated view the landscape is predominantly rural in character although with some noticeable detractors such as overhead lines and towers. Beauly Substation is also visible in the middle ground adjacent to Wester Balblair with existing overhead lines and towers present across the middle-distance converging at Beauly substation. The proposed development site is visible from this location with the undulating landform, summit of Tòrr Mòr and existing vegetation within the background landscape partially screening the site. It is considered that effects at the operational stage would be marginally higher in magnitude as the proposed converter station would be easily visible rather than “barely perceptible” as stated in the LVIA. However, it is generally agreed that effects would not be significant. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion which will appear in the middle distance of the view with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and Beauly to Spittal OHL seen in the background of the view. Whilst not to the same extent as VP3 it creates a slightly disordered outlook. Even so, whilst there are cumulative effects it is considered that these are not significant as the additional proposed OHL will be seen alongside existing transmission infrastructure that is generally contained within the expansive landform from this viewpoint. The cumulative effects are not significant. The visualisation appears very dark which makes it a struggle to discern the proposed development and fully review and assess the landscape and visual effects along with the cumulative impacts.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
VP5 – Tomnacross Primary School, Kiltarlity 2km from the site View North West	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Low/Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate Neutral/Adverse (residents) Minor Neutral/Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant	Medium, Low/Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate Neutral/Adverse (residents) Minor Neutral/Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents),	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents),	**Significant, Significant**

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
				Moderate Adverse (road users			Moderate Adverse (road users	
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of those using Tomnacross Primary School, residential receptors in and around Kiltarlity along with road users on the Tomnacross Road connecting to the C1108 Kiltarlity Road and A833. This view is located at the entrance to Tomnacross Primary School to the south of Kiltarlity looking northwest. The middle distance is made up of the rural landscape beyond Kiltarlity and mature woodland with ground levels rising in the background towards Tòrr Mòr and the dense mixed plantation and native woodland at Ruttle Wood. Upper Fanellan Cottages and the existing OHL and towers are visible to the front in gaps between the established woodland. The existing towers break the skyline. The proposed development site is visible from this location in the background. The construction and year 0 operational effects are broadly agreed. The converter station is prominently located near the skyline. It is considered that both the building and newly planted earthworks represent a very noticeable change in the landscape. The year 15 effects are considered to be higher than those assessed by the applicant. Whilst the extensive woodland development partially screens the converter station, the upper portion remains an easily visible intrusion on the skyline.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	Effects will likely diminish if the buildings were depicted in the proposed recessive colours instead of light grey. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Beauly Denny OHL diversion which will appear in the middle distance of the view with the proposed and Beauly to Spittal OHL. Whilst this is seen to a lesser extent in the background of the north eastern portion of the view the OHL towers and lined break the skyline above the distant hills and draw the eye. As noted at other viewpoints this creates a cluttered outlook leading to significant cumulative visual effects.							
VP6 - Culburnie 0.7km from the site View North	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium/High, Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate/Neutral Adverse (residents),	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant	Medium/High, Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate/Neutral Adverse (residents),	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
				Minor/Moderate Adverse (road users)			Minor/Moderate Adverse (road users)	
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium	Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium/High	Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium/High	Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in and around Culburnie along with road users on the C1108 Culburnie Road, The view is located off the local road between Culburnie and Fanellan and faces north. Open grassland and farmland is seen in the foreground slopes down to the mature broadleaved woodland in the middle ground. The ground rises with a number of scattered properties along Fanellan Road in view beyond woodland in the middle distance with background views of peaks and distant mountains. The existing overhead lines are a							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	noticeable feature within the view and break the skyline at multiple locations. The proposed development site is clearly visible from this location beyond the properties along Fanellan Road. The effects are considered to be higher than those assessed within the LVIA, including higher magnitude assessments at all stages. Whilst the screening earthworks help to conceal the proposed development at year 0, the converter station remains highly visible near the skyline and the earthworks appear intrusive. At year 15 it is considered the woodland planting has developed sufficiently to conceal the earthworks and most of the proposed development, appearing as a characteristic element of the wider landscape. However, the upper portion of the converter station remains visible, leading to an overall significant, but slightly less adverse effect for residents. Effects will likely diminish if the buildings were depicted in the proposed recessive colours instead of light grey. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Beauly Denny OHL diversion which will appear prominent with both the towers and the lines extending beyond the skyline at multiple locations. Whilst the proposed and Beauly to Spittal OHL is seen to a lesser extent in the background of the view it will also appear above the hills in the background. Again, all the OHL and towers will draw the eye from this viewpoint. As noted at other viewpoints this creates a busy outlook leading to significant cumulative visual effects.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	The visual representation of the compensatory planting at Year 15 of operation appears artificial and incongruous.							
VP7 – Crearag 1.2km from the site View North East	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant	Medium, Low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium/High, Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate/Neutral Adverse (residents), Minor/moderate/Neutral Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant	Medium/High, Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Moderate/Neutral Adverse (residents), Minor/moderate/Neutral Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant, Significant,** Not Significant

				Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low		Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
			During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App		High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium	Major Adverse (residents) Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Major Adverse (residents) Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	THC		High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium/High	Major Adverse (residents) Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium/High	Major Adverse (residents) Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in and around Creraig along with road users. This elevated view is located off a local road between Creraig and Culburnie, facing northeast at a higher elevation than VP6. Set. A mobile home and a line of telegraph poles which runs parallel to the woodland is seen in the foreground of the outlook, open grassland and farmland beyond								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	in the middle distance with background views of peaks and distant mountains. The existing overhead lines are a noticeable feature within the view and break the skyline at multiple locations. The Proposed Development Site is clearly visible from this location on the opposite hillside, beyond the properties along Fanellan Road and within the context of the existing overhead line and buildings. This view is a similar direction and context to VP6. Although more distant, views are from a higher elevation and more of the built infrastructure would be visible. Whilst the area of view occupied is slightly smaller than VP6 the changes are more obvious from this viewpoint and effects at year 15 remain largely adverse. Effects will likely diminish if the buildings were depicted in the proposed recessive colours instead of light grey. As with VP6, this viewpoint at a higher elevation than the previous viewpoint, illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Beauly Denny OHL diversion which will appear prominent with both the towers and the lines extending beyond the skyline at multiple locations. Whilst the proposed and Beauly to Spittal OHL is seen to a lesser extent in the background of the view it will also appear above the hills in the background. Again, all the OHL and towers will draw the eye from this viewpoint. As noted at other viewpoints this creates a busy outlook leading to significant cumulative visual effects. The visual representation of the compensatory planting at Year 15 of operation appears artificial and incongruous.							
	App	High (residents	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road/rail users),	Not Significant,	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road/rail users),	Not Significant, Not Significant,

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
VP8 – Beauly train station car park 3.1km from the site View South West		), Medium (road users)		Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant		Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road/rail users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road/rail users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road/rail users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road/rail users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road/rail users)	Not Significant,	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road/rail users)	Not Significant, Not Significant,

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
		(road users)			Not Significant,			
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents) Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents) Minor Adverse (road/rail users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of rail users, road users on the A862 and within the car park along with residential receptors in Beauly. The view is located at Beauly train station car park and faces southwest towards the proposed development with open views across flat farmland, mature trees and other vegetation in the middle distance with distant mountains in the background. Human influences are present in the outlook including telegraph poles, agricultural buildings, residential development at the eastern edge of Wester Balblair along with the existing 400kv towers and overhead lines converging at Beauly Substation. The proposed development site is visible from this location in the background, but it is largely obscured by existing vegetation in the middle distance. It is broadly agreed that effects would be negligible due to distance and foreground character. The applicant makes reference to the mitigating effects of colour on buildings; however, these are not depicted in the visualisation provided.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Beauly Denny OHL diversion seen in the outlook, however, towers and overhead lines in the middle distance and beyond are generally contained by mature trees and vegetation with limited skylining. The proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL appears to be screened from view. The cumulative effects are not significant. As with other VPs the visualisation appears very dark which makes it a struggle to discern the proposed development and fully review and assess the landscape and visual effects along with the cumulative impacts.							
VP9 – Togormack and Broallan 1.7km from the site View South	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road/rail users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road/rail users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in Togormack, Broallan and Drumindorsair along with road users on the Kilmorack road linking the scattered properties in the surrounding area to the A831.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	The elevated view is located off the local road between Torgormack and Drumindorsair and faces south towards the proposed development. The landscape is predominantly rural in character with occasional scattered development and individual properties. The outlook is across rolling farmland with the wooded slopes of Tòrr Mòr and Ruttle Wood in the middle distance. The existing 400kv towers and overhead line sits below the skyline. The proposed development site is located beyond the peak of Ruttle Wood and Tòrr Mòr. It is broadly agreed that effects would be low at the construction phase then negligible during operation given Tòrr Mòr and Ruttle Wood screen the vast majority of the proposed development with only a portion of the tallest structures appearing marginally above the ridge line. Whilst the effects are considered not significant if the intervening woodland was to be felled then the visibility may be more extensive from view from upland locations to the north of the proposed development. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL and proposed Beauly Denny OHL diversion seen in the middle distance of the outlook. The proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL extends into the glen in the distance. Whilst noticeable, towers and overhead lines in the middle distance and beyond are generally contained by the hills in the distance. The cumulative effects are not significant. Again, the visualisation appears very dark which makes it a struggle to discern the proposed development and fully review and assess the landscape and visual effects along with the cumulative impacts.							
VP10 – Kilmorack	App	High (residents), Medium	Medium, Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents),	**Significant, Significant,** not	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents),	**Significant, Significant**, not

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
0.5km from the site View South West		(road users)		Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	significant, not significant		Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	significant, not significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** not significant, not significant	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**, not significant, not significant
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
		(road users)						
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in Kilmorack along with road users on the A831 which forms part of a recognised tourist route and rural road corridor. The view is located at the junction between the A831 and a Kilmorack road that crosses the River Beauly to the south at Black Bridge. The view is looking southwest towards the proposed development across the rural and wooded in character. The existing 400kv towers and overhead line are prominent in the gaps in vegetation and with a number of the existing Beauly Denny OHL towers breaking the skyline. The proposed development site is visible from this location adjacent to the existing 400kv overhead lines in the background of the view beyond the mature vegetation on Tòrr Mòr.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	It is broadly agreed that effects would be significant during the construction phase and early operation given the close proximity of the viewpoint. However, by year 15, the proposed development will appears as an element typical of the baseline landscape of existing transmission infrastructure. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL seen through breaks in vegetation along the roadside. The proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion will see additional prominent towers introduced in the foreground of the view which will break the skyline. The proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL is hidden from view by the sloping landform and woodland.							
VP11 – Camault Muir and Glaichbea 2.4km from the site View North West	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low, Negligible	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant	Low, Negligible	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium	Low, Low	Minor/Moderate Adverse (residents) Minor Adverse (road users), Minor/Moderate	Not Significant, Not Significant,	Low, Low	Minor/Moderate Adverse (residents) Minor Adverse (road users), Minor/Moderate	Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant, Not Significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
		(road users)		Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant		Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low/Medium	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Low/Medium	Minor Adverse (residents), Minor Adverse (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by a mix of residential receptors in Camault Muir and Glaichbea along with road users.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
VP12 – Crask of Aigas 1.1km from the site View North East	The view is located off Post Office Brae and looking northwest towards the proposed development with open views across predominantly farmland enclosed by background views of distant mountains. Beyond the middle distance the topography rises with longer distance views towards Fanellan Road, Tòrr Mòr and Ruttle Wood. The existing 400kv overhead line is a noticeable structure located on the ridgeline beyond Fanellan Road but is set largely below the skyline. The proposed development site is clearly visible from this location. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure with the proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL will introduce additional prominent towers introduced in the background of the view with a portion of the route sky-lining some distance beyond the peaks beyond. The proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion and Beauly to Peterhead OHL will also see additional prominent towers introduced in the middle distance of the view but are contained by the sloping landform behind. The cumulative effects are not significant. It is considered the viewpoint location does not represent the worst-case scenario as the most prominent element, the converter station, is partially screened by a tree in the foreground of the image. This could have been easily resolved with a very minor relocation showing a more representative view of the proposed development site. It is considered that marginally higher effects occur than those assessed by the applicant, particularly for residents, although it is generally agreed that the effect would not be significant.							
	App	High (residents), Medium	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
		(road users)						
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users),	Negligible, Negligible
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by residential receptors in Crask of Aigas along with road users on the A831 which forms part of a recognised tourist route and rural road corridor. This elevated view is located on the local road connecting Crask of Aigas to the A831 and faces east towards the proposed development with the outlook across rural agricultural land beyond scattered properties and private rear garden vegetation towards the vegetated north facing slopes of Tòrr Mòr. The existing 400kv overhead line is seen above intervening vegetation along the skyline with mature woodland within Ruttle Wood on the slopes of Tòrr Mòr obscuring visibility from the majority of long-distance views. The proposed development site is hidden behind the sloping topography and Ruttle Wood. It is broadly agreed that effects would not be significant at all stages of the proposed development. This viewpoint illustrates cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure with the proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion will introduce additional towers in the middle distance of the view that would break the skyline and the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL which is less prominent as it is backclothed by landform and woodland. The proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL will be hidden from view by mature woodland. The cumulative effects are not significant.							
VP13 – Farley	App	High (residents	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users),	Not Significant,	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users),	Negligible, Negligible

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
2.1km from the site View South East		), Medium (road users)		Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant		Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible
		During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users),	Negligible, Negligible
	THC	High (residents), Medium	Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible

				Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low		Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
			(road users)						
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by residential receptors in Farley. This elevated view is located on the local road connecting Farley and Torgormack, facing south/southeast looking towards the proposed development with wide open views across the rural landscape and woodland on lower slopes with distant hills and peaks beyond. The existing 400kv overhead line is seen in the middle distance. The proposed development site is located beyond the peak of Tòrr Mòr and Ruttle Wood. There will be cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure with the proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion will introduce reconfigures towers in the middle distance of the view along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL which are both back-clothed by landform and woodland. The proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL will be hidden from view. The cumulative effects are not significant. As noted with VP9. whilst the effects from this viewpoint are not considered significant this is dependent on the degree to which the upper part of the proposed development is screened by the retained woodland beyond the northern site boundary. Should woodland be removed or windthrown the buildings will likely to be prominent on the hill crest. Additionally, there are locations beyond VP13 further along the track higher up the hillside near Farley where the proposed development would be visible.								

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
VP14 – Belladrum festival grounds 2.4km View North West	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Not Significant, Not Significant	Negligible, Negligible	Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users), Negligible (residents), Negligible (road users)	Negligible, Negligible
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium, low	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor adverse (residents), Minor adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** Not Significant, Not Significant	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users), Minor adverse (residents), Minor adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant,** not significant, not significant
			During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction	During construction
	App	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Low	Minor adverse (residents), Minor adverse (road users)	Not significant, not significant	Low	Minor adverse (residents), Minor adverse (road users)	Not significant, not significant

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	THC	High (residents), Medium (road users)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**	Medium	Moderate Adverse (residents), Moderate Adverse (road users)	**Significant, Significant**
	The baseline is as described in EIAR Volume 2 Chapter 8 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Section 8.3: Baseline Conditions. The area is used by recreational receptors during the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival. This is a low-lying view situated within the grounds of festival site looking east towards the rising landscape and the proposed development with the open, wide ranging rural parkland landscape in the foreground with pockets of woodland with distant hills and peaks in the wider landscape to the south and east are above the treeline. The existing 400kv overhead line is visible within the background of the view below the skyline. The proposed development site is clearly visible from this location which is 2.4km from the site, beyond the extent of significant effects assessed by the applicant. The effects are considered to be higher than those assessed within the LVIA, including higher magnitude assessments at all stages which leads to significant effects at the construction and early operational phase. At year 15 it is considered the woodland planting and landscaping will appear embedded within the landscape. Whilst it is considered that effects will drop to not significant at this point it shows that the applicant has understated the extent of significant effects which can be seen to extend beyond the 2km noted by the applicant.							

			Proposed Development			Cumulative		
Viewpoint	App / THC	Sensitivity of the Receptor the Receptor (Susceptibility / value of the view) High, Medium, Low	Magnitude of Change (Scale of Change / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)	Magnitude of Cumulative Change (Scale / Extent / Duration) (Year 0, Year 15) High, Medium, Low, Negligible	Level of Effect (Magnitude of Change / Sensitivity of Receptor) (Year 0, Year 15) Major Adverse, Moderate Adverse, Minor Adverse, Negligible, Minor Beneficial, Moderate Beneficial, Major Beneficial	Significance (Major and Major-Moderate are Significant. Moderate may be significant) (Year 0, Year 15)
	Effects will likely diminish if the buildings were depicted in the proposed recessive colours instead of light grey. There will be cumulative visual effects with existing OHL and related infrastructure with the proposed Beauly to Denny OHL diversion introducing reconfigured towers in the distance of the view along with the proposed Beauly to Peterhead OHL which are both back-clothed by the sloping landform. The proposed Beauly to Spittal OHL will be hidden from view. The cumulative effects are not significant.							

Appendix 4 - Appropriate Assessment

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

CROMARTY FIRTH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA) AND RAMSAR SITE

25/00826/FUL

Fanellan Substation - construction and operation of a 400 kV substation and converter station and associated infrastructure, site access, landscaping and demolition works

Land 300M NW Of Fanellan Farmhouse
Kiltarlity

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS AFFECTING EUROPEAN SITES

The status of the Cromarty Firth SPA means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations') or, for reserved matters the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended apply. The Cromarty Firth SPA is also designated as a Ramsar site. The requirement to consider this Ramsar site reflects the recent Scottish Government policy change set out in the Chief Planner's letter (9th July 2025) that Ramsar sites in Scotland should be treated as if they were European sites for the purposes of land use change decision making. The following appraisal refers to 'Natura 2000 sites' throughout, which are European sites. For the purpose of this appraisal, Ramsar sites are treated as if they were European sites to reflect the recent Scottish Government policy change.

Where a plan or project that is not directly connected with or necessary to the management for nature conservation of a Natura 2000 site is likely to have a significant effect, the Council, as competent authority must undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the conservation objectives for the qualifying interests of the designated site. The need for Appropriate Assessment extends to plans or projects out with the boundary of the site in order to determine their implications for the interest protected within the site.

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

- Consider whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the SPA/Ramsar for conservation; and, if not,
- Consider, on a precautionary basis, whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- Make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the plan or project for the SPA/Ramsar in view of the SPA/Ramsar's conservation objectives.

In light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA/Ramsar, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Where it cannot be ascertained that there will be no adverse effects on site integrity, and the competent authority is satisfied there are no alternative solutions, the plan or project can only be allowed to proceed if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which in can include those of a social or economic nature. In the event of no alternative solutions and imperative reasons of overriding public interest tests being satisfied, the competent authority must secure necessary compensatory measures to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network is protected.

LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

The Cromarty Firth SPA supports populations of internationally important of breeding and wintering birds. The Cromarty Firth Ramsar site supports the full range of estuarine habitats, of particular importance are the extensive intertidal mudflats, and breeding and wintering birds populations.

The proposal is not connected with or necessary to management of the SPA/Ramsar for conservation. Based on information provided by the applicant, and advice from NatureScot (dated 1st May 2025), the proposal is considered to have a likely significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar, in view of the conservation objectives of one of its qualifying interests, breeding Osprey. **The appraisal carried out by NatureScot dated 1st May 2025 refers exclusively to the Inner Moray Firth SPA. However, confirmation via email on 1st December 2025 from NatureScot states the appraisal dated 1st May also applies to the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar.**

Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is therefore required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the implications of the proposal on the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar, in view of the SPA/Ramsar's conservation objectives of the above-mentioned qualifying interest.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Under regulation 48(3) of the Habitats Regulations, the competent authority is legally obliged to consult NatureScot (including in Scottish Territorial Waters) and to have regard to NatureScot's advice at the appropriate assessment stage. The Appropriate Assessment is informed by advice provided by NatureScot and information submitted by the applicant.

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL APPRAISAL

The proposed Fanellan substation site has connectivity with the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar. Osprey associated with this European site are known to breed within close proximity to the proposal site.

The proposal is considered to have a likely significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar, in view of the conservation objectives one of its qualifying interests, breeding Osprey. This is due to

potential for disturbance to breeding birds during construction, especially through blasting activities, as well as the close proximity of Osprey nests to the proposal site, one of which lies just within disturbance buffer distance (350m-750m as set out in NatureScot guidance on disturbance distances in selected Scottish bird species). Even with topographical shielding, it is likely the nest site will be affected during any blasting works.

To inform the Council's appraisal, NatureScot concluded in their response the proposal **will not adversely affect the integrity of the Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar for breeding Osprey, if the proposal is carried out in strict accordance with the following mitigation**:

- No blasting operations should take place between March and mid-July, in order to avoid disturbance while ospreys are displaying, incubating or brooding small young.
- The applicant will undertake pre-construction surveys for osprey and if a new nest site is identified within disturbance distance (350m-750m) of the proposal site, embedded measures within the Bird Species Protection Plan will be implemented including establishing disturbance protection zones and seasonal working restrictions where required. As identified in the Bird Species Protection Plan, NatureScot should be contacted should any works be proposed to take place within buffer zones.

Niamh Coyne, Highland Council 02.12.2025

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

INNER MORAY FIRTH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA) AND RAMSAR SITE

25/00826/FUL

Fanellan Substation - construction and operation of a 400 kV substation and converter station and associated infrastructure, site access, landscaping and demolition works

Land 300M NW Of Fanellan Farmhouse
Kiltarlity

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS AFFECTING EUROPEAN SITES

The status of the Inner Moray Firth SPA means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations') or, for reserved matters the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended apply. The Inner Moray Firth SPA is also designated as a Ramsar site. The requirement to consider this Ramsar site reflects the recent Scottish Government policy change set out in the Chief Planner's letter (9th July 2025) that Ramsar sites in Scotland should be treated as if they were European sites for the purposes of land use change decision making. The following appraisal refers to 'Natura 2000 sites' throughout, which are European sites. For the purpose of this appraisal, Ramsar sites are treated as if they were European sites to reflect the recent Scottish Government policy change. **NatureScot carried out an appraisal for the Inner Moray Firth SPA dated 1st May 2025 and have subsequently confirmed via email on 1st December 2025 that this appraisal also applies to the Inner Moray Firth Ramsar in light of the Scottish Government Ramsar policy change.**

Where a plan or project that is not directly connected with or necessary to the management for nature conservation of a Natura 2000 site is likely to have a significant effect, the Council, as competent authority must undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the conservation objectives for the qualifying interests of the designated site. The need for Appropriate Assessment extends to plans or projects out with the boundary of the site in order to determine their implications for the interest protected within the site.

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

- Consider whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the SPA/Ramsar for conservation; and, if not,
- Consider, on a precautionary basis, whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- Make an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the plan or project for the SPA/Ramsar in view of the SPA/Ramsar's conservation objectives.

In light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA/Ramsar, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Where it cannot be ascertained that there will be no adverse effects on site integrity, and the competent authority is satisfied there are no alternative solutions, the plan or project can only be allowed to proceed if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which in can include those of a social or economic nature. In the event of no alternative solutions and imperative reasons of overriding public interest tests being satisfied, the competent authority must secure necessary compensatory measures to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network is protected.

LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

The Inner Moray Firth SPA supports populations of internationally important of breeding and wintering birds. The Inner Moray Firth Ramsar site supports important wetland habitats including intertidal flats, saltmarsh and a sand and shingle pit; and breeding and wintering bird populations.

The proposal is not connected with or necessary to management of the SPA/Ramsar for conservation. Based on information provided by the applicant, and advice from NatureScot (dated 1st May 2025), the proposal is considered to have a likely significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar, in view of the conservation objectives of one of its qualifying interests, breeding Osprey.

Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is therefore required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the implications of the proposal on the Inner Moray Firth SPA/Ramsar, in view of the SPA/Ramsar's conservation objectives of the above-mentioned qualifying interest.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Under regulation 48(3) of the Habitats Regulations, the competent authority is legally obliged to consult NatureScot (including in Scottish Territorial Waters) and to have regard to NatureScot's advice at the appropriate assessment stage. The Appropriate Assessment is informed by advice provided by NatureScot and information submitted by the applicant.

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL APPRAISAL

The proposed Fanellan substation site has connectivity with the Inner Moray Firth SPA/Ramsar. Osprey associated with this European site are known to breed within close proximity to the proposal site.

The proposal is considered to have a likely significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar, in view of the conservation objectives one of its qualifying interests, breeding Osprey. This is due to potential for disturbance to breeding birds during construction, especially through blasting activities, as well as the close proximity of Osprey nests to the proposal site, one of which lies just within disturbance buffer distance (350m-750m as set out in NatureScot guidance

on disturbance distances in selected Scottish bird species). Even with topographical shielding, it is likely the nest site will be affected during any blasting works.

To inform the Council's appraisal, NatureScot concluded in their response the proposal **will not adversely affect the integrity of the site for breeding Osprey, if the proposal is carried out in strict accordance with the following mitigation**:

- No blasting operations should take place between March and mid-July, in order to avoid disturbance while ospreys are displaying, incubating or brooding small young.
- The applicant will undertake pre-construction surveys for osprey and if a new nest site is identified within disturbance distance (350-750m) of the proposal site, embedded measures within the Bird Species Protection Plan will be implemented including establishing disturbance protection zones and seasonal working restrictions where required. As identified in the Bird Species Protection Plan, NatureScot should be contacted should any works be proposed to take place within buffer zones.

Niamh Coyne, Highland Council 02.12.2025

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS HEARING PROCEDURE

The following procedure shall be adopted for all Committee meetings (including Council meetings) at which a pre-determination hearing is to be held in respect of a planning application.

There are two types of hearing:

- Discretionary pre-determination hearings where a hearing is requested by a Planning Applications Committee prior to the **Committee** determining a planning application, and
- Non-discretionary pre-determination hearings where a hearing is required by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 prior to the **Council** determining a planning application.

A. Prior to a Hearing

a) The Planning and Development Service shall agree with the Chair of the Committee (or Convener of the Council, as appropriate) whether the hearing should take place at a scheduled Committee meeting (or scheduled Council meeting as appropriate) or at a special meeting and will identify an appropriate venue for the meeting.
b) In complex cases the Planning and Development Service, in consultation with the clerk, may hold a "procedural meeting" to advise the parties about the procedures, to encourage them to co-ordinate their responses to avoid repetitious statements and to agree the order of speaking.
c) The Planning and Development Service will circulate the hearing procedure and inform parties of the date, time and venue of the hearing.

B. At the Hearing

1) If possible and practical to do so, the clerk or the administrator will identify those parties present who wish to participate in the hearing and will distribute copies of this hearing procedure. A list of participants will be passed to the Chair/Convener.

2) The Chair/Convener will open the hearing by welcoming those parties present and will ask for confirmation (1) of the identity of those parties present who wish to participate in the hearing (if it has not proven possible to identify them beforehand), (2) that all persons wishing to participate in the hearing have a copy of this hearing procedure and (3) that all participants understand the procedure. The Chair/Convener will indicate, by name, the order in which the parties taking part will address the Committee/Council.

3) The Chair/Convener will remind parties to focus their comments on the views which they have already expressed in writing. New information should only be presented for the purposes of clarification and if this happens the other parties to the hearing will be allowed to respond to this new information.

4) The planning officer will introduce the application, giving a brief description of the proposed development and the application site, the planning policies against which the application is to be assessed and any other material considerations relevant to the application.

5) The applicants will have the opportunity to present their case (in no more than 10 minutes). Applicants may allot part of their overall time to supporters of the application who have submitted timeous written representations in support of the application (this may include a community council). After the applicants' presentation members of the Committee/Council may ask questions of the applicants.

6) Where a community council has objected to the proposal it will have the opportunity to present its case (in no more than 5 minutes in total). After the community council's presentation Members of the Committee/Council may ask questions of the community council representative(s).

7) Third parties who have submitted timeous written objections to the proposal will have the opportunity to make their representations (in no more than 10 minutes in total). After the third parties' presentation members of the Committee/Council may ask questions of the third parties.

8) The Chair/Convener will ask whether there are any other members of the public who have made timeous objections and have given notice that they wish to speak who have not yet been called. Any such members of the public will have the opportunity to speak for such period as the Chair/Convener permits and the Committee/Council will have an opportunity to ask questions.

9) If appropriate, and at the Committee's/Council's request, any other relevant officer of the Council or statutory consultee present will have an opportunity to identify any concerns or issues they wish to raise.

10) The applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to issues raised by members, officers or third parties which were not covered in the applicants' original presentation.

11) After all parties have concluded their presentations the Chair/Convener will establish whether the Committee/Council has had its requirement for information met. The Chair/Convener will also ask if the parties are satisfied with the way in which the hearing has been conducted and their responses will be included in the minute of the meeting.

Thereafter the Chair/Convener will indicate that the hearing has been completed and all parties will return to the public gallery.

The planning officer will detail the appraisal of, and present the recommendation on, the application, after which the Committee/Council will consider and determine the application.

Guidance Notes

- Applications subject to hearings will normally be scheduled first on a Committee agenda to minimise waiting time by the parties involved.
- Applicants and objectors are expected to take a maximum of **10 minutes** to make their presentations – this timeslot being divided among those wishing to speak for each party. Community Councils presenting their objections are expected to do so within **5 minutes**. If any party wishes longer than these periods then they should indicate this prior to the presentations commencing. The Committee/Council shall decide whether to allow a longer period. Any extension of time should not exceed 5 minutes.
- Where there are a number of objectors wishing to speak, they are encouraged to appoint a spokesperson(s) to present their views as experience has shown that this focuses on the main matters of concern and avoids repetition.
- Any party wishing to use PowerPoint during their presentation MUST notify the clerk at least two clear working days before the date of the meeting so that arrangements can be made.
- Finally, it should be noted that if a hearing has been arranged and all the interested parties (i.e. applicant, objector(s) and any third parties) have been invited to attend or be represented, then the hearing will proceed irrespective of the absence of any of the invited parties when the application comes to be considered. Should a party invited to attend a hearing be unable to be present, that party may submit a short written statement summarising their views which will be read to the meeting by the clerk on their behalf at the appropriate stage in the proceedings. The Committee/Council will hear the parties present and then determine the application.
- All parties who have made representations on an application will be advised by the Planning and Development Service of the Committee's/Council's decision on the application.

Legal Service/Planning and Development Service
August 2012