

Agenda Item	3.1
Report No	PLS/11/26

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** South Planning Applications Committee  
**Date:** 18 February 2026  
**Report Title:** 25/00592/FUL: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc  
Land 1700M SE of Glasha, Tomich, Cannich  
**Report By:** Area Planning Manager - South

### Purpose/Executive Summary

**Description:** Bingally Substation - Construction of a new 400/132kV outdoor Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) substation comprising platform, plant and machinery, control buildings, access, temporary laydown and compound areas, drainage, landscaping and other ancillary works.

**Ward:** 12 - Aird and Loch Ness

**Development category:** National Development

**Reason referred to Committee:** National Development

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

### Recommendation

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

## 1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The proposed development is required to reinforce the electricity transmission network to support the Scottish and UK Government's Net Zero climate change targets which require significant increases in renewable generation. There are consented and future renewable energy projects which would require connection to the national grid arising from the renewable generation policies and the drive to attain net zero. As part of this the existing Beauldy-Denny 275kV circuit is to be upgraded to 400kV to enable future connections and export routes to areas of demand. This upgrade would require the construction of two new 400kV substations at Braco West in Perth and Kinross, and here in the Fasnakyle area. The proposed development comprises:
- Construction and operation of a 400/132kV Air Insulated Substation (AIS) and switchgear building located on a level platform measuring 376m (length) by 271m (width) with its footprint having been marginally reduced through amendments made during the course of the application's determination;
  - On-site substation components include: two 400/132kV Super Grid Transformers (SGTs); a 400/132kV double busbar; space provision for three 400kV bays for future connections; a 132kV double busbar; space provision for four 132kV bays for future connections; a new control building measuring 49m (width) by 24m (length) by 6m (height); and ancillary equipment for all bars, bays and transformers;
  - Formation of associated earthworks, access, drainage, landscaping, security, and the creation of a temporary construction compound and laydown/equipment, four borrow pits and materials storage areas;
  - 9.5km of access track, comprising upgrade of 6.1km of existing track and 3.4km of new track;
  - Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
  - Perimeter 4m high palisade security fencing; and
  - Landscape planting and habitat management.
- 1.2 Enabling developments would involve site clearance, earthworks, public road improvements including an improved bellmouth for the access track off the A831, water and drainage connections, lighting and security fencing and a temporary site compound.
- 1.3 Related to the development, two new permanent tie-in replacement overhead line (OHL) towers (78R and 79R) measuring up to 64m in height, are proposed along the existing Beauldy-Denny OHL. These are required to make the connection into and out of the Proposed Development. To facilitate construction of the substation, short term temporary works are also required. This comprises the construction of two temporary OHL towers (78T and 79T) measuring up to 61m in height, removal of two existing towers (78 and 79), formation of temporary works area, including 50m by 50m tower laydown area, temporary and permanent access track spurs off the main access track. Once the substation is operational, the two redundant temporary towers would be removed. Consent for these tie-in towers has been sought concurrently under

application 25/02301/S37 made under Section 37 of the Electricity Act which will be reported to Committee in due course.

- 1.4 Similarly, other associated work includes a new 132kV grid connection from the Proposed Development to the existing Fasnakyle Substation. At the time of writing, the technology for this connection is yet to be determined, however, public consultation on the intended design has been undertaken, detailing the reuse of the redundant 275kV towers within the Strath floor, as well as the introduction of a short span of above ground line traversing steeper terrain before descending underground following the broad alignment of the substation's access track. The above ground new span of OHL would also require a separate Section 37 consent.
- 1.5 Other planned works include the decommissioning of all redundant existing 275kV plant equipment at the current Fasnakyle Substation, with the introduction of 132/33kV transformers and associated infrastructure at that site. Again, such related works are not within the scope of this application and are anticipated to be undertaken under permitted development rights. Future grid connections are also intended to serve wind farm projects to the south and east, such as the consented Tomchrasky Wind Farm and planned Loch Liath Wind Farm.
- 1.6 It is anticipated that construction of the Proposed Development would take approximately 3 years, subject to a detailed programming of the work. The facility would be staffed on an ad hoc basis for maintenance and fault repair.
- 1.7 The proposed development is classed as national development in National Planning Framework 4. In Annex B – National Developments Statement of Need 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure "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.
- 1.8 The applicant has undertaken statutory pre-application consultation. A Proposal of Application Notice (24/01002/PAN) was submitted to Highland Council in March 2024. The PAN provided an outline of the application details and proposed consultation methods, which included two pre-consultation events held in March and June 2024 at Cannich Hall, for which invitations were sent out to addresses within a 10km radius of the site. The PAN also included details of a project website containing detailed information about the proposed development and where comments could be submitted. The applicant also raised awareness of these events by notifying the host and adjoining Community Councils, contacting local ward members, MSP, MP and placing statutory newspaper adverts.
- 1.9 The proposed development was also subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening by The Highland Council (24/01648/SCRE). It was concluded that an EIA was not required as the potential impact on the receiving environment was not considered to be significant because of the localised nature of the impact.

Nevertheless, the application is accompanied by a voluntary Environmental Appraisal (EA) containing chapters on: Cultural Heritage, Traffic, Transport and Access, Geo-technical Hydrology, Noise, Climate Change, Cumulative Effect, Environmental Management, Landscape Character, Ecology and Ornithology.

1.10 During the course of the application's determination amendments have been made to the development with further information having been provided within an Additional Information Report (AIR) submitted in November 2025. The amendments made and AIR sought to address matters raised by consultees and other interested parties. Amendments made comprised:

- **Substation area:** Reduction in the footprint of temporary and permanent layouts of substation area, overall by approximately 50%, avoiding areas of deepest peat, and allowing for on-site peat re-use.
- **Access track:** The access track design and alignment has been revised in the vicinity of the Corrimony RSPB reserve, seeking to address concerns raised by RSPB in relation to potential impacts on habitats in the reserve, and in order to reduce disturbance to watercourses. Specifically, this includes the introduction of eight culvert watercourse crossings having been changed to bridges. Further ancillary design changes have been made, including amendments to the northern compound to facilitate a new one-way traffic system, bellmouth layout and other minor alignment amendments to the access track.
- **Borrow pits:** In addition to three originally proposed borrow pits, one more borrow pit is proposed in order to reduce the amount of offsite material required for the platform and other infrastructure.

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site covers 611Ha within which the proposed substation would occupy just over 10Ha. The site is located approximately 2.9km south of Tomich and 5.8km south of the existing Fasnakyle Substation. The proposed development also encompasses 9.5km of access track. The access track extends from the proposed substation site and broadly follows a northeasterly direction to connect to the A831, 620m east of Cannich. The land use within the site is a combination of mature and recently felled commercial forestry, and areas of rough grazing. Commercial forestry also predominates the lower hillside slopes separating the site from the valley floor of Strathglass. The topography of the site generally falls from southeast to northwest, from a level of 380m Above Ordinance Datum (AOD) down to 270m AOD with the fall taking place across the side which is around 1km in width, with their being rising ground within forestry further east, and lower ground within Strathglass to the west. The proposed substation platform is proposed to be formed within a gently sloping area of the site at a level of 324m AOD, located east of the existing Beaully-Denny OHL. The OHL crosses the site from northeast to southwest, and access tracks related to construction of the existing OHL and, latterly, forestry operations, are present throughout much of the site.

2.2 The site is not located within any built heritage designations. Comar Wood dun is a Scheduled Monument which lies 1.3km west of the proposed substation's access track. The monument is an enclosed dun, a form of monumental roundhouse, probably dating to the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). It is visible as the remains of a substantial stone-built structure set within a roughly circular stone enclosure. It is

located within woodland on the opposite side of Strathglass from the development. There are numerous listed buildings within 2km of the site, mainly clustered within the village of Tomich.

- 2.3 The site is not located within any natural heritage designation. Designated sites within 5km include:
- Glen Affric National Nature Reserves (NNR), which lies within 100m to the southwest;
  - Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch Special Landscape Area (SLA), 2.6km west;
  - Glen Affric National Scenic Area (NSA), 3.5km west;
  - Glen Affric Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Strathglass Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC), 1.2km west; and
  - Glen Affric to Strathconnon Special Protection Area (SPA), 1.3km west.
- 2.4 The site has been subject to habitat and ecological surveys including statutory and non-statutory designated sites, woodland and peatlands, groundwater dependant ecosystems, mammals and other notable species. The surveys identified four statutory designated sites with ecological interest, none of which would be impacted by the proposed development. The ornithological survey identified three statutory designated sites and one non-designated site with ornithological interest, and the only potential adverse impact being on black grouse at Corrimony RSPB Reserve, during construction, for which mitigation measures are proposed.
- 2.5 The application site is not covered by any landscape designation and forms part of Landscape Character Type (LCT) 222 – Rocky Moorland Plateau, whilst much of the access track lies within LCT 227 – Farmed Strath.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	14.08.2025	25/02301/S37 Bingally 400 kV Substation Overhead Line Tie-in-Install and keep installed two new 400kV steel lattice towers and approximately 1.6km of overhead line (including a temporary diversion requiring two temporary towers) to facilitate the tie-in of the existing Beauly-Denny overhead line into the proposed Bingally 132/400kV substation, associated ancillary infrastructure including access tracks, construction laydown area and compound	Raise Objection pending consideration of proposal by Committee
3.2	01.05.2024	24/01002/PAN - Proposed new 400 kV substation comprising new buildings, platform, plant and machinery, access, laydown/work compound area(s), drainage, landscaping, and other ancillary works (National Development)	PAN reported to Committee
3.3	13.12.2019	19/05046/SCOP Fasnakyle Wind Farm - Construction of wind farm comprising of 46 turbines (height to blade tip 149.9m)	Scoping response issued

3.4 11.01.2017 16/05754/OHL - Glen Affric Hydro Schemes Consent Granted  
(Abhainn Gleann Nam Fiadh - 2000kW, Allt  
Garbh - 1800kW) 33kV Overhead Line Grid  
Connection

#### 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Unknown Neighbour, Schedule 3 Development

Date Advertised: Inverness Courier - 04.04.2025 and 14.11.2025

Representation deadline: 18.04.2025 and 28.11.2025

Timeous representations: 365 Objections

Late representations: 1 Objection

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

- Environmental Impact
  - Irreversible damage to habitats, biodiversity, and protected species (e.g., black grouse, otters, water voles).
  - Loss of ancient woodland, peatlands, and carbon-rich soils.
  - Fragmentation of ecosystems and disruption of wildlife corridors.
  - Insufficient ecological surveys and lack of biodiversity net gain.
- Peat and Carbon
  - Disturbance of deep peat leading to carbon release.
  - No peat depth survey, peat slide risk assessment, or peatland restoration strategy.
  - Contradiction with climate and carbon reduction policies.
- Landscape and Visual Impact
  - Industrial-scale infrastructure in a sensitive, scenic Highland landscape.
  - Severe visual intrusion affecting Glen Affric National Nature Reserve, Affric–Kintail Way, and core paths.
  - Inadequate photomontages and mitigation measures.
- Noise and Amenity
  - Significant construction and operational noise in a tranquil area.
  - Lack of detailed noise modelling or mitigation.
  - Negative impact on residents' wellbeing and visitor experience.
- Flood Risk and Water Management
  - No comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment or climate resilience modelling.
  - Risks to watercourses, wetlands, and downstream flooding.
  - Inadequate drainage design; absence of monitoring plans.
- Traffic and Access
  - Increase in construction traffic on unsuitable single-track roads.
  - Safety risks for pedestrians, cyclists, and school routes.
  - No robust Construction Traffic Management Plan or road maintenance commitments.
  - Disruption of nationally significant recreational routes (Affric–Kintail Way, core paths).
- Tourism and Socio-economic Impact

- Threat to tourism-dependent businesses and recreational assets.
- Loss of tranquillity and scenic quality undermining visitor appeal.
- Socio-economic report omissions and underestimation of tourism importance.
- Cultural Heritage
  - Adverse impact on Corrimony Cairn, Listed Buildings, and historic landscapes.
  - Lack of archaeological surveys and cumulative heritage impact assessment.
- Planning Policy Conflicts
  - Non-compliance with NPF4 and Highland LDP policies.
  - Absence of site selection justification or consideration of alternatives.
- Climate and Net Zero Alignment
  - No Carbon Balance Assessment.
  - Failure to demonstrate contribution to Scotland's climate goals.
  - Lack of adaptation and resilience planning.
- Community Engagement
  - Poor consultation and transparency.

4.3 Non-material planning considerations raised are summarised as follows:

- No Community Benefit
- Fire risk and capacity of the local fire service
- Energy Pricing and Distribution
  - Complaints about electricity costs or where power is sent.
  - Arguments that power should be generated closer to consumers.
- Perceived Profit Motives
  - Objections based on developer profit or shareholder benefit.
- Speculative Future Development
  - Concerns about possible future expansion not part of the current application.
- Impact on Property Values
  - Fear of house price reduction or compensation claims.
- Emotional or Cultural Identity Arguments
  - Comments about impact on Highland culture.
- General Distrust of energy developers and Government
  - Assertions about broken promises or corporate greed.

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

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Strathglass Community Council (host) objects** on the basis of environmental, landscape, ecological, cultural, and amenity concerns. Conflicts with planning policies, particularly regarding biodiversity, peatland, landscape character, and public access. Key concerns include the absence of a full Environmental Impact Assessment despite proximity to Glen Affric NNR, SPAs, SSSIs, and an RSPB reserve; irreversible habitat loss; risks to protected species; visual intrusion in a sensitive upland setting; inadequate noise, traffic, and water management assessments; and failure to justify site selection or explore alternatives. The proposal also threatens tourism, recreation,

and local wellbeing, offers negligible economic benefit, and demonstrates poor stakeholder engagement. Concludes the project is incompatible with its location.

- 5.2 **Beaully Community Council objects** in respect of the volume of construction traffic. The application details suggest construction traffic would go via Beaully and request a planning condition that enforces a route map and controls the use of roads around Beaully to prevent cumulative impact.
- 5.3 **Kiltarlity Community Council objects** in respect of construction traffic, raising concern with potential traffic impacts through Cannich, and the condition of the A831 to facilitate the development, and commitment to road maintenance. Other concerns relate to wider public access and temporary diversions to Core Paths and the Affric-Kintail Way and related tourist impacts. Other impacts include landscape and visual, and effects for the Glen Affric area; inadequate visual material; loss of moorland and sense of wildness, seclusion and tranquillity. Noise is also a concern, as is the extent of public consultation undertaken. The lack of a carbon balance assessment is noted, as are peat, ecology and habitat impacts, notably for the Corrimony RSPB Reserve and Glen Affric NNR, related dust impacts, protected species impacts, lack of biodiversity enhancement and no site restoration strategy. Further water environment related impacts are referenced.
- 5.4 **Access Officer** has no objection. Initial concerns were that the Outline Access Management Plan failed to accurately identify the baseline public access or the proposals' effect during construction and operational phases. Subsequent to discussions with the applicant and revisions to their access management plans, their initial objection was withdrawn, subject to agreement on a temporary diversion of a core path and progress on access management measures. An Outdoor Access Plan must be secured as a suspensive condition, and detail existing and proposed paths, areas for exclusion, proposed routes for all access users, temporary and permanent diversions, with mitigation and signage, to be implemented before development commences.
- 5.5 **Contaminated Land Officer** has no objection. Radon gas has been highlighted in reports and will require to be addressed through detailed design at Building Warrant stage.
- 5.6 **Community Wealth Building Team** has no objection and intend to approach the applicant regarding the Highland Social Value Charter.
- 5.7 **Development Plans Team** has no objection as the proposal is in overall conformity with the approved development plan subject to suitable mitigation being secured. This should address landscape and visual impact, net biodiversity enhancement including compensatory planting and socio-economic benefits. The revised documents offer additional mitigation that is considered sufficient and can be secured by condition or legal agreement.
- 5.8 **Ecology Officer objects** on the basis of lack of details on biodiversity enhancement. A set of conditions are recommended to secure: a minimum of 10% biodiversity enhancement, habitat management, construction environmental management, an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW), and pre-commencement protected species surveys. Their initial concerns regarding incomplete bat survey information, has

however been resolved following the submission of revised details. They now confirm that the bat survey information is adequate and the Bat Protection Plan is sufficient.

- 5.9 **Environmental Health** has no objection and suggest a number of planning conditions: to control hours of arrival and departure of construction vehicles, in order to address adverse impact that may be experienced by properties located near the Link 1 – A831 Drumnadrochit to site access; to control noise and dust during construction; to mitigate any impacts on a private water supply; and to ensure operational noise is within acceptable limits.
- 5.10 **Flooding Team** has no objection subject to planning conditions requiring details of watercourse crossings and details of surface water drainage arrangements.
- 5.11 **Forestry Officer** has no objection and suggests conditions be used to address tree protection during construction and compensatory planting. The total area and type of compensatory planting should be the same as that requiring to be felled to accommodate the development, 41.8Ha (39.85Ha of which is productive conifer and 1.96Ha broadleaf woodland).
- 5.12 **Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)** has no objection. Proposed mitigation measures are broadly acceptable. An archaeological investigation condition is proposed.
- 5.13 **Landscape Officer** has no objection. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) generally accords with GLVIA3, but it under-assesses effects from certain locations. For landscape character, the proposal would have a Medium magnitude and Moderate Adverse effects on the Rocky Moorland Plateau and Farmed Strath LCTs during construction and Year 1, rather than Low magnitude and Minor Adverse as stated by the Applicant. This is due to noticeable changes reducing remoteness. The Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA and its Special Landscape Qualities are not notably affected. Visual effects are broadly assessed appropriately, but the applicant has underestimated impacts at Viewpoints 5, 7 and 9, where it is considered that higher magnitudes and levels of effect during construction and early operation would occur, with some residual effects persisting at Year 15 despite mitigation. Overall, while some under-assessment exists, the development is relatively contained, in a landscape already influenced by infrastructure and forestry, with the proposed mitigation helping to strengthen landscape character.
- 5.14 **Transport Planning** has no objection and welcome that no access will be taken along existing minor roads but will use the proposed construction access off the A831. A condition is sought to this effect. A condition is also requested on details of improvements to the junction of the access with the public road. Conditions are also sought requiring a Construction Traffic Management Plan, such that HGV and AIL (Abnormal Indivisible Load) traffic is not routed through Cannich on the A831, thereby also avoiding the Beauly. The CTMP would also set out a “wear and tear” agreement and assessment of local road structures impacted by the routing of AILs.
- 5.15 **Historic Environment Scotland** has no objection having assessed the potential impact on nearby heritage assets, specifically the Fasnakyle Power Station (Listed Building) and Comar Wood Dun (Scheduled Monument) and do not recommend any alterations to the scheme.

- 5.16 **NatureScot** has no objection. It is unlikely that the proposal will have significant effects on any qualifying interests either directly or indirectly for any designated site, and as such, an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations is not required.
- 5.17 **Scottish Forestry** did not respond to the consultation and are a non-statutory consultee.
- 5.18 **Scottish Water** has no objection although notes that the proposal falls into a Drinking Water Catchments Areas (DWCA). The site also falls in the catchment of the Tomich Borehole that supplies the Tomich Water Treatment Works (WTW), however, due to distance from the borehole and the size of the River Glass catchment, the threat to the borehole from any pollution arising from construction is likely to be low or very low, however pollution protection measures in accordance with their advice should be followed.
- 5.19 **SEPA** has no objection. They originally objected on two main grounds. Firstly, that the development entails culverting of an unacceptable length of watercourse across the site, and secondly that it involves extraction of an unacceptable quantity of peat which has not yet been identified for re-use on site. A condition is sought to secure the submission of a detailed borrow pit restoration plan which should clearly illustrate how the re-used peat will successfully tie in with the surrounding peatland, and to secure mitigation measures in respect of Ground Water Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). Following submission of revised details, SEPA has withdrawn its objection. They welcome that 8 bridges have been introduced to replace culverts and seek a condition on the design of one specific culvert. They also welcome that modifications have been made to the design to reduce the total excavation of peat by approximately 30%, the reduction in excavated catotelmic peat by approximately 50% and that an added 25% bulking factor has been applied to account for uncertainties in excavation volumes. Conditions are also requested on borrow-pit reinstatement and a finalised Peat Management Plan.
- 5.20 **Transport Scotland** has no objection and proposes conditions in respect of abnormal load routing and construction traffic management.

## **6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY**

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

## **7. PLANNING APPRAISAL**

- 7.1 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 requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

## **Planning Considerations**

- 7.2 The key considerations in this case are:
- a) Development Plan and Other Planning Policy
  - b) Energy, Carbon and Economic Impact
  - c) Siting, Layout and Design
  - d) Landscape and Visual Impact
  - e) Construction Impact
  - f) Roads, Transport and Wider Access
  - g) Operational Impact (including Noise)
  - h) Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)
  - i) Habitat Loss and Biodiversity
  - j) Forestry
  - k) Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Soils
  - l) Built and Cultural Heritage
  - m) Other Material Considerations

### **Development Plan and Other Planning Policy**

- 7.3 The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (2024) (IMFLDP) and Supplementary Guidance documents associated with these Local Development Plans.
- 7.4 Appendix 2 of this report provides an assessment of compliance with the Development Plan and Other Planning Policy.
- 7.5 In summary, the principle of development is established in national policy, with the proposed development being of national importance for the delivery of the National Spatial Strategy. NPF4 considers that Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure will assist in the delivery of the Spatial Strategy and Spatial Priorities for the north of Scotland, and that Highland can continue to make a strong contribution toward meeting Scotland's ambition for net zero. Alongside these ambitions, the strategy for Highland aims to protect environmental assets as well as to stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to address climate change. This aim is not new and will clearly require a balancing exercise to be undertaken, which is reflected throughout NPF4.
- 7.6 At 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, none of which have been identified.

## Energy, Carbon and Economic Impact

- 7.7 The proposed development forms part of a network of new grid infrastructure to enable the installation and operation of the existing Beauly to Denny Overhead line (OHL) at 400kV, thereby enhancing its transmission and connection capacity in order to facilitate renewable energy transmission. The proposed substation forms part of a long-term approach to planning for future transmission infrastructure requirements, in order to meet net zero targets set by the Scottish and UK Governments. The proposed substation is part of the upgrade of the Beauly to Denny OHL from 275kV to 400kV in order to facilitate the transmission of more energy from renewable projects. While the project itself does not generate electricity, its function is critical for facilitating low-carbon energy distribution, thereby contributing indirectly to reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to be delivered by renewable energy projects that will connect to it.
- 7.8 Volume 1, Chapter 14 of the EA sets out the amount of GHG produced by the development. The standard way to measure greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, is to compare the climate impact of different gases like methane and nitrous oxide against carbon dioxide (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). The EIAR states that the estimated total GHG emissions during construction would be approximately 67,970 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, with peat excavation and loss accounting for the largest share (around 29,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e). Emissions from raw materials supply and manufacture represent the largest carbon emissions after peat loss and are part of the 38,957 tCO<sub>2</sub>e total from construction. Embodied carbon in materials and transport also contribute substantially. Operational emissions are minimal at around 840 tCO<sub>2</sub>e over 45 years while restored peatland is expected to sequester roughly 1,508 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, partially offsetting construction impacts. When contextualised against UK and Scottish carbon budgets, these emissions represent less than 0.024% of any relevant budget, and the project is assessed as **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant** under IEMA guidance, due to embedded mitigation measures such as peat restoration, low-carbon materials, and efficient construction practices. The table below provides the breakdown of construction phase GHG emissions.

Emission Source	GHG Emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)
Raw materials supply and manufacture	15,368
Material transport	11,218
Construction activities	7,304
Waste	99
Worker transport	4,968
Peat excavation (Biogenic Carbon)	29,013
<b>Totals:</b>	
<b>Excluding biogenic carbon*:</b>	38,957 tCO <sub>2</sub> e
<b>Biogenic carbon* (peat loss):</b>	29,013 tCO <sub>2</sub> e
<b>Overall Total:</b>	67,970 tCO <sub>2</sub> e

\***Biogenic carbon** is the carbon that is stored in biological materials, such as plants or soil.

- 7.9 The revised proposal includes reduction in the footprint of temporary and permanent layouts of substation area by approximately 50% and avoiding areas of deepest peat and allowing for on-site peat re-use. These changes are expected to deliver indirect carbon benefits by reducing peatland impacts, optimising earthworks, and lowering

imported material requirements, though GHG implications are assessed qualitatively due to limited detailed design data. Key measures include peat storage cells for on-site reuse, a reduced development footprint, bridging watercourses to maintain hydrological connectivity, and using borrow pits to minimise transport emissions. These changes collectively aim to limit peat disturbance and preserve carbon sequestration potential, while the updated Peat Management Plan outlines best-practice handling and reinstatement. Despite these improvements, the GHG assessment outcome remains **Minor Adverse and Not Significant** and no material changes were identified for climate change risk or indirect climate change impact assessments, which remain **Not Significant**.

- 7.10 The development is required to enable the connection, transmission, and distribution of electricity from renewable energy developments which have associated carbon savings. The emissions saved from these developments are expected to balance and exceed the losses associated with the proposed development. When climate is considered holistically, the proposal is considered capable of compliance with NPF4 Policies 1 and 2 for Climate and Nature Crises as well as Climate Mitigation and Adaptation, however, that is entirely reliant upon the carbon balance assessments provided within connecting renewable energy development applications, taking a full and accurate account of all associated transmission infrastructure. This requires the methodology for such assessments to be reviewed at a national level in light of the suite of ASTI projects.
- 7.11 In terms of economic impact, the application is supported by a socio-economic report. This concludes that the construction phase is projected to deliver economic benefits across local, regional, and national levels. Within The Highland Council area, the development is expected to generate a total Gross Value Added (GVA) of £2.5 million, comprising £1.8 million in direct impact and additional contributions through indirect and induced effects. At the national scale, GVA uplift in Scotland is estimated in the region of £32.7 million, while the UK-wide impact is estimated at £83.4 million. These figures assume a ripple effect of capital expenditure through supply chains and worker spending, highlighting the project's role in supporting economic growth during the construction phase.
- 7.12 In terms of employment impacts, during construction the project is forecast to support 22 job years in The Highland Council area, including 14 direct positions and 8 through indirect and induced effects. Across Scotland, the development could sustain 292 job years, and at the UK level, this rises to 762 job years. These opportunities offer a short-term boost to local employment and supply chains, particularly in the construction sector, which already accounts for a significant share of jobs in the Highlands. While operational impacts of the individual project are minimal, the cumulative effect of all of the projects under SSEN's Pathway to 2030 programme will contribute to long-term economic resilience.
- 7.13 Public representations have raised concerns relating to amenity impacts on the local area and economic impacts associated with the development having a detrimental impact upon tourism, particularly in respect of landscape and visual impacts on Glen Affric. These issues are addressed in detail under the Siting, Layout and Design, as well as the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report. There are likely to be adverse effects during the construction phase, particularly in relation to construction traffic. This can be addressed by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)

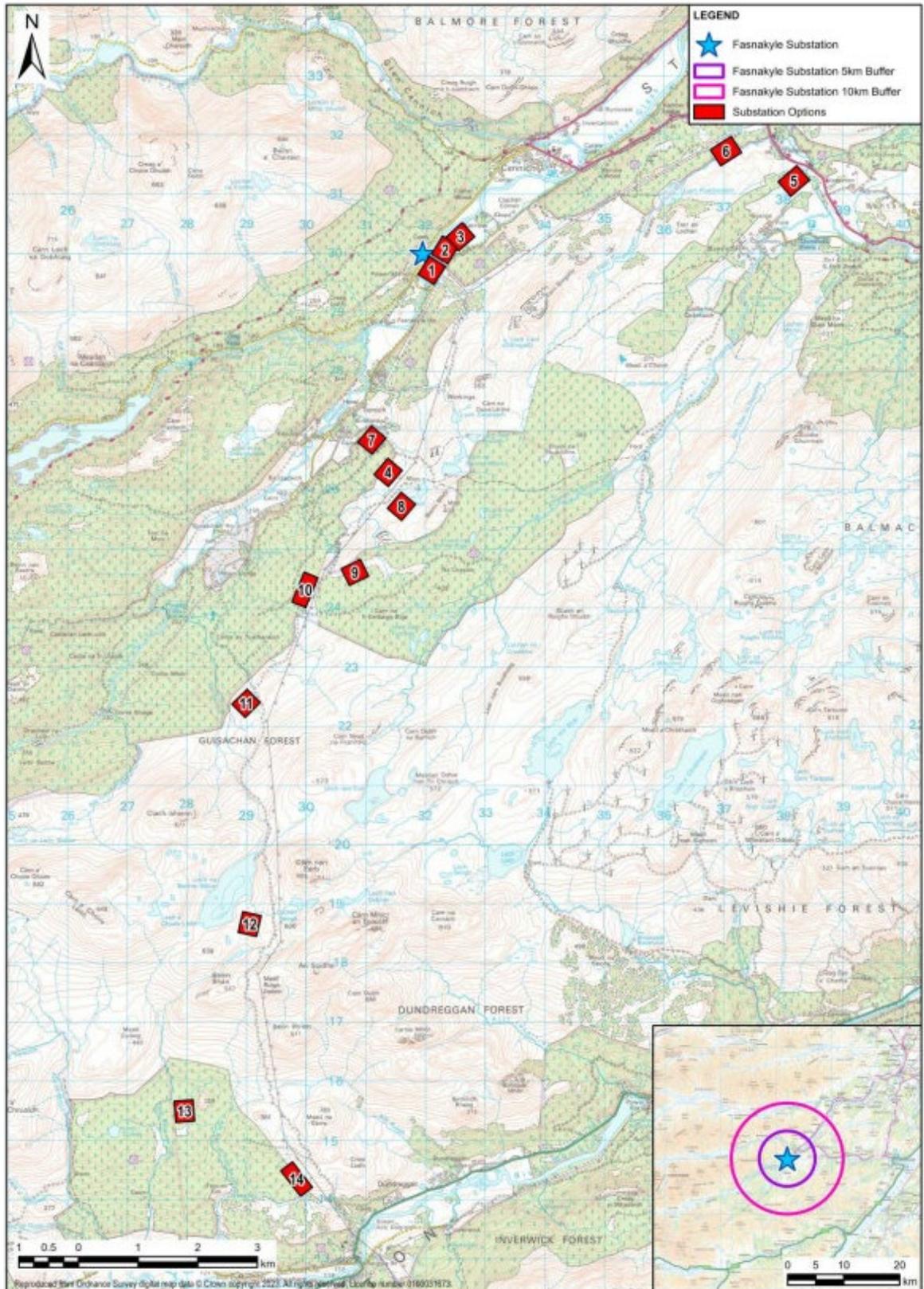
and Access Management Plan. The provision of a Community Liaison Group will also be secured by condition. Many of the impacts will be temporary in nature and managed through the mitigation measures identified in this report. The applicant contends that there will be no long-term detrimental effect on the tourism industry and this is not disputed by Officers.

- 7.14 Given the requirement of NPF4 Policy 11(c) 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. 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". In light of this, the applicant is expecting further community benefit funding opportunities, in the region of £100 million to be available for 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.
- 7.15 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 new high voltage overhead line and £530,000 per substation. As the bill is at an early stage and is making its way through parliament, it remains unclear if this detail will remain unaltered. The applicant has however confirmed that this project would be eligible under such a scheme. 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. The Council's Community Wealth Building Team have also confirmed that it is in regular dialogue with the applicant regarding the Highland Social Value Charter.
- 7.16 Given the requirement of NPF4 Policy 11(c) for development proposals to only be supported where they maximise socio-economic impacts, it is recommended that a planning condition is used 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 application.

### **Siting, Layout and Design**

- 7.17 The EA accompanying the application sets out the site selection process the applicant went through in arriving at the chosen location for the substation. The site selection process comprised a three-stage process. The initial stage involved strategic options appraisal, where the key requirements of the development were deemed to be: proximity to the existing Fasnakyle Substation (within 5km); a site large enough to accommodate the substation size; areas that do not contain environmental designations and minimise impacts on local environmental receptors; and a location with additional capacity to accommodate future connections. 16 sites were identified and taken forward. Next, 14 sites, as shown below, were evaluated using combined multi-criteria analysis, site walkovers and desktop review. All sites were within a 2.5km search area either side of the Beauly – Denny OHL to minimise connections. Using a

red, amber, green (RAG) matrix, 11 sites were then discounted based on: proximity to designated areas and local settlements, visual impact, ecological constraints, and connectivity constraints to existing and future infrastructure. The final selected application site, reference Site 9a then emerged as an alternative adjacent to Site 9.



- 7.18 Following further consultation with local residents and assessment of access constraints for three short-listed sites, two additional sites closer to main road access were added for review, and from a total of five sites a final shortlist of four sites (4, 9, 10 and 15) were taken forward to Stage 2 – Detailed Site Selection. At this stage, Site 9 was micro-sited to create and Site 9a, which had less impact on Class 1 peat than Site 9.
- 7.19 At the conclusion of Stage 2, Option 9a was identified as the preferred site as it was identified as having the best on balance between environmental and engineering factors, was the least constrained by watercourses, recreational aspects, proximity to cultural heritage assets and native woodland. It was also deemed to have the least gradient crossfall and was more centrally located for connections. Option 9a is therefore the site taken forward to the planning application stage. The table below shows a RAG summary of the Stage 2 process, with Site 9a emerging as the favoured site.

Table 4-2 Summary RAG

Option 15	Option 10	Option 9a	Option 9	Option 4	
Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Designated areas
Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Protected Species
Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Habitats
Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Ornithology
Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Geology, Hydrology, Hydrogeology
Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Heritage Designations
Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Heritage Assets
Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Landscape Designations
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Landscape Character
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Visual
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Agriculture
Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Woodland/ forestry
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Recreation
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Planning Policy
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Planning Proposals
Red	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Connectivity – Existing circuit Networks
Green	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Connectivity – Future development possibilities
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Connectivity – Interface with SSE Distribution and Generation
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Connectivity – DNO Connection
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Footprint Requirements - Technology
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Footprint Requirements Adjacent Land use
Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Footprint Requirements – Space availability
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Hazards
Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Ground conditions
Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Environmental Conditions
Green	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Construction Access
Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Operation and maintenance
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Cost – Capital
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Cost – Operational

- 7.20 The basic layout requirements for the proposed development dictate the amount of space required. An optimal orientation of the main development components was determined based on limiting permanent effects on any receptors, notably minimising landscape and visual effects by utilising surrounding screening afforded by forestry and landform, as well as maintain good separation from roads, settlements and residential properties, with the nearest residential Noise Sensitive receptors (NSRs) being Glass House (400m from the access track), Birchwood House (770m from the access track), and Challenger Lodge (1.1km from the access track, and 1.6km from the substation).
- 7.21 Other key design elements include cut and fill operations to create a stable platform for the electrical infrastructure, landscape planting around the platform to screen the electrical infrastructure, and upgrades and extensions to the existing forestry roads to provide access. The decision to progress an Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) design, rather than a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS), is reflective of the relatively unconstrained nature of the site, as well as to avoid the need for the introduction of a large, enclosed building. The maximum height of any building on site would be limited to 6m, being the metal clad control building with an intended olive-green finish, albeit its colour and finish can be conditioned. Comparably, a GIS design would have necessitated an additional large building on site, typically in the order of 16m in height, albeit potentially accommodated within a reduced substation platform footprint. The AIS design is an appropriate design solution for this location, with the exposed above ground infrastructure elements typically mirroring the 6m height of the control building, with occasional taller elements of up to 13.2m in height (refer to AI site wide substation elevations Drawing BING-LT521-SEBAM-MCD-ZZ-LAY-E-0002, Rev P06, received 1 November 2025).

### **Landscape and Visual Impact**

- 7.22 Volume 1, Chapter 4 of the EA comprises the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA), and which assesses both landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development, with photomontages provided from 9 representative viewpoints (VPs). The LVA also considered the cumulative effects of the proposed development in addition to other similar proposed or consented developments in the vicinity. While 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.
- 7.23 The LVA Study Area covers a 5km radius from the substation and 1km from the access track, defined through mapping, aerial imagery, site appraisal, and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) analysis. Effects beyond 5km were excluded as they were considered unlikely to be significant, though occasional reference is made to features outside this study area. Significance of effects is assessed using criteria such as sensitivity, magnitude, extent, reversibility, and duration.

### **Designations and Wild Land**

- 7.24 A small part of the western edge of the LVA study area encompasses the Glen Affric NSA and is described as one of the most beautiful glens in Scotland; a landscape with a high sensitivity to change. The Strathconnon, Monar and Mullardoch Special Landscape Area (SLA) is also with the edge of the 5km study area, lying to the north

and west and due to its outstanding scenic quality and sense of remoteness, is also sensitive to change. In addition, the study area includes a small part of the Central Highlands Wild Land Area at its southern edge, albeit that Officers agreed that a Wild Land Assessment was not required due to the relative distance and relationship with site.

### **Landscape Character Types (LCTs)**

- 7.25 The site lies on the transition between two Landscape Character types; LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau - Inverness to the east, and LCT 227 Farmed Straths - Inverness to the west. The 5km study area also includes two other LCTs; LCT 220 – Rugged Massif – Inverness, and LCT 226 Wooded Glen – Inverness.
- 7.26 LCT 222 - Rocky Moorland Plateau consists of two areas of high rocky plateau which covers much of the central part of the district, gradually merging to the Rugged Massif - Inverness in the west and bordering the Great Glen to the east. This LCT occupies the eastern and southeastern half of the 5km study area. It does not contain any landscape designations and contains large areas of plantation forestry and in higher areas a network of upland lochs and open hill land.
- 7.27 LCT 227 – Farmed Straths covers the low-lying strath and the central part of the study area. Strathglass is characterised by open farmed valley floors and the meandering river contained within steep, mainly forested and wooded slopes. This LCT is also not subject to any landscape designations, however, its combination of woodland belts and natural scenic qualities contained by the more upland LCTs to the west and east contribute to a strong sense of place and enclosure.
- 7.28 LCT 220 - Rugged Massif – Inverness covers much of the uplands on the opposite side of Strathglass from the site. Much of it comprises Caledonian forest and it has a strong network of Core Paths and recreational routes. As such it has a high landscape value.
- 7.29 LCT 226 - Wooded Glen – Inverness covers land west of the site within Glen Affric. Its quality of woodland and network of paths and sense of enclosure also give it a high sensitivity value.

### **Visual Receptors**

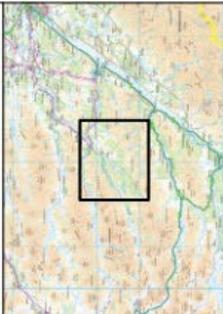
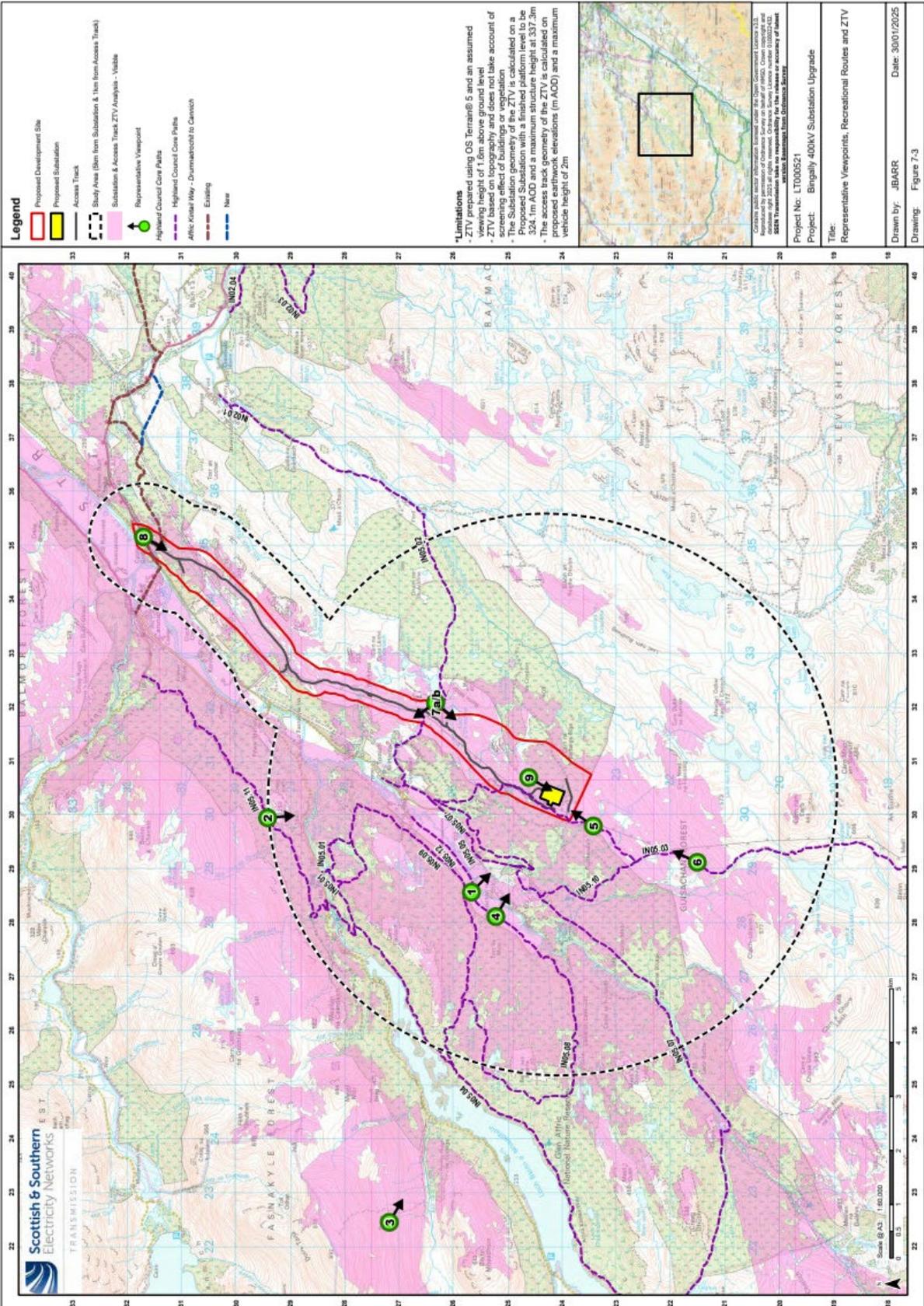
- 7.30 The tabled LVA's viewpoints were selected in consultation with NatureScot and Officers to represent the visual receptors at locations most likely to be affected by the construction and operation of the substation. These are confined to recreational receptors.

**Table 7-6: List of representative viewpoints**

ID	Viewpoint	Receptor Group	Easting	Northing
1	Core Path IN05.08, Beinn na Sparra circuit, North	Recreational	228564	825662
2	Core Path IN 05.11 Dog Falls to Comar	Recreational	229940	829410
3	Allt Na Doire Mhoire, Doire Mhor Mountain	Recreational	222680	827199
4	Core Path IN05.08, Beinn na Sparra circuit, South	Recreational	228109	825212
5	Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South	Recreational	229789	823418
6	Core Path IN05.03, towards Lough na Beinne Baine	Recreational	229117	821506
7a / b*	Core Path IN05.02, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick	Recreational	232074	826321
8	Affric Kintail Way	Recreational	235152	831694
9	Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, North	Recreational	230688	824607

\*Note: Viewpoint 7a and 7b (or 7a / b) are taken from the same point but face a different direction in order to encompass a wider extent of the proposed access track. 7a is facing southwest and 7b is facing northwest.

7.31 The corresponding Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) drawing is provided at EA Figure 7-3 (extract provided below) with updated visualisations having been submitted for the amended scheme. The ZTV shows theoretical bare earth visibility of the development based on applying a unified maximum structure height across the substation platform area and a 2m height for the proposed upgraded track access. As much of the surrounding area is afforested, the modelled worst case ZTV visibility must be verified through a combination of assessing baseline photography and undertaking site visits. The ZTV identifies that visibility is much more limited across ground to the southeast, east and northeast with more expansive theoretical visibility along the northwestern side of the strath floor and wester hillsides of Strathglass correlating where there is predominantly woodland cover. These areas encompass the A831 from Cannich heading northwards in the direction of Beauly, as well as other recreational routes.



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## Assessment of Effects

7.32 The LVA considered effects on all the landscape designations, LCTs and representative viewpoints.

For the Landscape Designations:

- during the short-term construction phase two Minor Adverse effects were identified;
- by operation year one this reduces to one Minor Adverse effect; and
- **by operation year 15 no adverse effects have been identified.**

For the LCTs:

- during the short-term construction phase three Minor Adverse effects were identified;
- by operation year one this reduces to two Minor Adverse effects; and
- **by operation year 15 this reduces to one Minor Adverse effect.**

For the nine visual amenity recreational receptor viewpoints:

- during the short-term construction phase: one Major, two Moderate and three Minor Adverse effects were identified;
- by operation year one this reduces to one Moderate Adverse effect, and four Minor Adverse effects; and
- **by operation year 15 this reduces to four Minor Adverse effects with no Moderate or Major Adverse effects.**

7.33 In summary, no longer term significant landscape or visual impacts would occur with all long-term impacts being at worst of a minor nature. This is reflected in the tabled breakdown below.

### Landscape Designations and Wild Land

Designation	Sensitivity	Significance of effect - Construction	Significance of effect – Operation Year 1	Significance of effect – Operation Year 15
<b>Glen Affric NSA</b>	High	Minor	Minor	Neutral
<b>Strahtconnon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA</b>	High	Neutral	No Change	Neutral
<b>Central Highlands WLA</b>	High	Minor	Negligible	Negligible

## Landscape Character Types

LCT	Landscape Sensitivity	Significance of effect - Construction	Significance of effect – Operation Year 1	Significance of effect – Operation Year 15
<b>LCT 220 Rugged Massif -Inverness</b>	High	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
<b>LCT 222 Rocky Moorland Plateau -Inverness</b>	Medium	Minor	Minor	Minor
<b>LCT 226 Wooded Glen - Inverness</b>	Medium	Negligible	Neutral	Neutral
<b>LCT 227 Farmed Strath - Inverness</b>	Medium	Minor	Minor	Negligible

## Visual Receptors

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Significance of effect - Construction	Significance of effect – Operation Year 1	Significance of effect – Operation Year 15
VP1 Core Path IN05.08, Beinn na Sparra circuit, North	Medium	Minor	Negligible	Negligible
VP2 Affric Kintail Way and Core Path IN05.04	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
VP3 Allt Na Doire Mhoire, Doire Mhor Mountain	High	Minor	Minor	Minor
VP4 Core Path IN05.08, Beinn na Sparra circuit, South	Medium	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
VP5 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South	Medium	Moderate	Minor	Minor
VP6 Core Path IN05.03, towards Lough na Beinne Baine	Medium	Minor	Minor	Minor
VP7a/b Core Path IN05.03, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick	High	<b>Major</b>	Moderate	Neutral
VP8 Affric Kintail Way	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
VP9 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, North	Medium	Moderate	Minor	Minor

- 7.34 The LVIA also considered cumulative impacts along with nine other developments under consideration. These included the proposed OHL tie-in towers for the substation and three wind farms at different stages of the planning process. No cumulative effects above Minor Adverse were identified for any assessed landscape designation or landscape character type. Minor Adverse cumulative effects were identified for four recreational visual receptors, with one Moderate Adverse (Significant) effect expected from VP5 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South, with this viewpoint being located within 1km of the substation site. This is owing to the potential combined visibility of: the proposed development with its associated proposed OHL tie-ins; the adjacent previously proposed Fiodhag Wind Farm (19/05046/SCOP which has not progressed beyond EIA Scoping stage); and an anticipated future wind farm OHL connections, albeit that no application or design details are available at present. Overall, such cumulative visual effects would be very localised with the impacts arising owing to a combination of developments which have not received any consents to date.
- 7.35 The Landscape and Habitat Management Plan accompanying the application includes details of landscape mitigation measures. The site is already partly enclosed by existing plantation, offering some visual integration. Restoration proposals also aim to enhance the natural character of the area by transitioning from plantation forest to native woodland and peatland. Proposed measures seek to screen views from any residential properties and Core Paths to the southwest and west, through the introduction of compensatory planting within the site, including Scots pine woodland (8.8ha), wet woodland (31.8ha), heathland (172ha) and wet meadow seeding (25.4ha).
- 7.36 As noted in the consultation section of the report, the Council's Landscape Officer (LO) has noted that the proposal is relatively contained and has limited visibility from the surrounding landscape, however, in the applicant's LVA there is an under-estimation of adverse effects for certain landscape and visual receptors.
- 7.37 In terms of Landscape effects, the LO however concurs with the LVA findings, confirming that for the Monar and Mullardoch SLA none of its Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) would be notably affected. In respect of the 'host' Rocky Moorland Plateau and Farmed Strath LCTs, the LO assess the effect to be Moderate Adverse during construction and operational year 1, as opposed to Minor Adverse reported in the LVA. The difference is that during the construction phase and pre-site landscaping establishment, the LO finds that the proposed development would have a noticeable, rather than limited, effect in this particular part of the landscape, reducing its sense of remoteness of this part of the moorland plateau and upper parts of the farmed strath. The longer-term landscape effects, being at worst of a minor nature, are not disputed.
- 7.38 In terms of visual effects, the LO considers effects at three LVA viewpoints are underestimated:
- VP5 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, South - a Moderate Adverse effect is expected at construction years 1 and 15, rather than Minor Adverse. The proposed development would appear noticeable above localised landform and despite the presence of pylons, it would add to the presence of electrical infrastructure in the view;

- VP7 Core Path IN05.03, Corrimony to Tomich by River Enrick - Major and Major-Moderate effects are expected in operation year 1, rather than Moderate Adverse effects. While much of the development itself will not be visible, there will be a noticeable change where half the view will have been planted with the proposed mitigation woodland, resulting in a change in the foreground of the view. By year 15, this will reduce to Moderate-Minor but a neutral effect, as reported in the LVA; and
- VP9 Core Path IN05.03, Eve's Road, North – Major-Moderate effects are predicted during construction and at year 1, rather than Moderate Adverse and Minor Adverse. This is owing to the access track being realigned resulting in a loss of vegetation, further construction activity and the extent of the development's prominence in the view, despite the extent of visibility of the existing pylons. By year 15 this will reduce to a Moderate Adverse effect, rather than Minor Adverse as vegetation establishes.

7.39 Notwithstanding the LO's views on the underestimation of some of the landscape and visual effects, their conclusion remains that the proposed development has been designed sympathetically in a landscape which has already changed due to other existing electrical infrastructure and clear felling of coniferous forestry, and that this is a relatively contained proposal which has limited visibility from the surrounding landscape. This aligns with planning Officers findings, with the proposal found to be well sited, respectful of surrounding landscape designations and giving rise to limited residual landscape and visual effects which are not significant and have been suitably mitigated. The proposed landscape mitigation would further enhance and strengthen the existing character of the landscape.

### **Construction Impact**

- 7.40 The construction phase is anticipated to be 3 years, although more detailed programming is expected to be carried out once a principal contractor has been appointed. The applicant anticipates that the construction programme would overlap with construction of the necessary tie-in connections to the existing OHL.
- 7.41 There are a limited number of dispersed rural properties in proximity to this site, reflective of the stateside topography and most built development being within the strath floor. Eight noise sensitive receptors (all houses) were selected for baseline monitoring, due to their proximity to the substation and access track. The nearest noise sensitive receptor (NSR) to the proposed substation is located 1.6km away. The nearest NSR to the new access track being located 400m away. All representative NSRs are located either to the west of the access track or to the west of the proposed substation site at a lower elevation. The assessment concludes that during the construction phase the residual effects of most activities are predicted to not be significant in relation to noise and vibration. The Council's Environmental Health Team concur that given the separation distance between the site and the nearest receptor, construction noise at the substation site is unlikely to be significant.
- 7.42 The assessment also considered the impact of construction traffic noise on the five link sections of the proposed construction access route between Drumnadrochit and the start of the construction access track. These link section are:

Link	Link Name
1	A831 Drumnadrochit to Site Access
2	A831 – Site Access to Cannich
3	A831 Cannich Village
4	A831 North of Cannich
5	Main Street Cannich to Fasnakyle Power Station

- 7.43 During construction months 15 to 41, eight noise sensitive receptors have been identified as having potentially Moderate or Major residual adverse effects which are Significant as these properties are less than 15m from Link 1 (A831 Drumnadrochit to Site Access) the primary planned route to reach the site from outside the immediate area. The applicant considered alternative routes through Cannich, however, these would likely result in a greater number of adverse effects, and this route is not supported for HGVs or AILs by the Council's Transport Planning Team. Other types of additional and effective mitigation could not be identified, and proposed embedded mitigation includes early liaison with those potentially affected.
- 7.44 Construction hours are reported in the EA to be Monday to Friday - 07:00 to 19:00 March to September, and 07:30 to 17:30 (or within daylight hours) October to February. Weekend working would be limited to Saturdays only between 07:00 and 13:00. The Noise chapter of the EA, paragraph 13.5.6, also commits to construction related activities likely to generate noise or vibration to be limited to the hours of 08:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday, and 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays. This later start generally accords with advice from the Environmental Health Team and it is proposed that this would be agreed through the submission of a construction noise management plan which can be conditioned.
- 7.45 Planning conditions are not usually used to control the impact of construction noise as similar powers are available to the Local Authority under Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The exception to this is noise from construction traffic on the public road which falls outwith the scope of the above legislation. The Environmental Health Team have however, in this case, advised that planning Officers may wish to give some consideration regarding appropriate hours for arrival and departure of construction vehicles, particularly as the EA has identified potential noise impacts at properties located near the intending construction traffic routing to site, being Link 1, along the A831 via Drumnadrochit. As such, Officers recommend imposing a 08:00 start time with this to be secured via condition.
- 7.46 It is also expected that the contractor/developer will also ensure that the best practicable means to reduce the impact of construction noise will be employed. A scheme of mitigation will also be required for dust, particularly for the access track. The applicant will be required to submit details of how these measures are to be implemented as part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- 7.47 The EA has identified one private water supply (PWS) within 0.45km down gradient of the site. The assessment has stated that any effects on the levels and flow of ground water could adversely impact on the quality of this PWS. The assessment has stated that details of the mitigation measures to reduce the impact on ground water will be included in the CEMP. It also says that there will be regular monthly monitoring of the PWS for a minimum of 6 months preconstruction, during construction and after construction to check for any changes in the quality of levels of the PWS. Therefore,

the assessments concludes that any impact on the PWS will be low and not significant. The applicant will be required to submit details of the mitigation measures to be implemented to protect the PWS from contamination or disruption, and details of the monitoring scheme as part of the CEMP.

- 7.48 Should the development be granted consent, a condition would require the setting up of a Community Liaison Group (CLG). Given the size and duration of the proposed development there may be disturbance over a prolonged period, not only noise and dust but other matters such as constrained parking and access in proximity to recreational routes. The 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.
- 7.49 In summary, construction impacts of this development are capable of being well managed with the remote nature of the site limiting any potential impacts in relation to neighbouring residential amenity.

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

- 7.50 There has been concern raised about the impact of construction traffic on the local road network and communities served off it, including Tomich, the nearest village to the site, 3km to the northwest, and around 1km from the construction access track.
- 7.51 The proposed construction access route would use the A831 from the A82 at Drumnadrochit. The route would leave the A831 north of Cannich. This location is already a formed existing access into Kerrow Wood and forms part of the Affric-Kintail Way, long distance footpath. From here, the access to the site would be entirely “off-road”, running approximately 9.5km from this point to the substation site. This route is entirely contained in the planning application site boundary and would utilise existing access track installed during the construction of the Beauly-Denny OHL, with the addition of sections of new track where the original Beauly-Denny OHL track was previously reinstated. The existing access track would also require upgrading to allow for the transport of abnormal loads and construction vehicle access. Once fully constructed, the applicant is seeking to retain the track permanently, both to allow continued access to the substation itself, but also for future construction works associated with the upgrade of the Beauly-Denny OHL. Temporary access tracks would also be established around the proposed substation to allow for the movement of construction workers, plant, equipment and materials between the proposed substation site and the temporary construction compounds.
- 7.52 The proposed access route means that no construction traffic would require to use the minor single-track roads south of the proposed vehicle access location off the A831. These minor roads are narrow, mainly single-track and serve the village of Tomich and other houses.
- 7.53 As part of preparing the Transport Statement, traffic survey data was gathered from five locations:
- A831 Site Drumnadrochit to Site Access;
  - A831 Site Access to Cannich;

A831 Cannich Village;  
A831 North of Cannich; and  
Main Street Cannich to Fasnakyle Substation.

- 7.54 The Transport Statement identifies significant short-term impacts during the construction phase, primarily due to increased vehicle movements on rural roads. Peak construction traffic is forecast to be up to 226 daily HGV movements and 378 car/LGV trips. This will lead to substantial percentage increases in traffic on the A831 and Main Street in Cannich, triggering concerns over severance of communities, non-motorised user amenity, and delays for both pedestrians and drivers, while effects on fear, intimidation, and safety are negligible. While operational traffic is expected to be negligible, the construction phase represents the worst-case scenario for environmental effects.
- 7.55 Mitigation measures include a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with route planning, delivery scheduling, monitoring compliance, and staff travel strategies to reduce car trips. Coordination between contractors for cumulative developments is also recommended to avoid overlapping peak traffic periods, which could otherwise exacerbate impacts. Even with mitigation, residual effects remain moderate for some categories, particularly where cumulative developments coincide, though these are temporary and short-term. The report stresses that high percentage increases in traffic are partly due to very low baseline flows, meaning actual physical impacts may be less severe than figures suggest. Nonetheless, the cumulative scenario highlights the need for strict traffic management and inter-project coordination to minimise disruption to local communities and safeguard road safety and amenity.
- 7.56 In respect of cumulative impacts, the construction traffic impacts for the Bingally Substation and OHL tie-in are significant during the peak construction phase. As a worst-case scenario for traffic, the project is expected to generate up to 1,128 daily two-way trips in September 2027\* (\*it should be noted that this is based on the originally stated start date of September 2025, which is clearly out of date, however, represents a month two years into construction). The reported two-way trip figures include 604 car/LGV movements and 226 HGV movements for the substation alone. Abnormal loads for transformer delivery will also occur, though these will be limited and managed under strict protocols.
- 7.57 During the peak period of construction, traffic increases on local roads will be substantial. On the A831 between Drumnadrochit and the site access, total traffic is forecast to rise by 92%, with HGV traffic increasing by 10,000%. These percentages are however entirely reflective of the very low baseline flows found in the baseline survey. Other links, such as Cannich Village and Main Street, will see total traffic increases of 53–56%, primarily from staff car trips. Although these percentage increases appear extreme, they reflect how low existing traffic volumes are, rather than absolute congestion levels. The operational phase will generate negligible traffic and is not considered material.
- 7.58 The Transport Statement has included a cumulative assessment, with the following developments having been scoped in:

Development	Status
Fasnakyle Energy Storage (23/04100/FUL)	Planning Permission Refused – 08/10/2025 (At appeal)
Kerrow Farm BESS (23/01025/SCRE)	Screening Opinion -EIA not required – 16/03/2023
Chrathaidh Wind Farm (23/03311/S36)	Approved by Scottish Ministers - 09/05/2025
Erection of OHL (25/02301/S37 - Install and keep installed two new 400kV steel lattice towers and approximately 1.6km of overhead line (including a temporary diversion requiring two temporary towers)	Pending Consideration
Cnoc Farasd Wind Farm (24/04447/SCOP)	EIA Scoping Opinion issued by Scottish Ministers - 17/01/2025

- 7.59 Mitigation will rely on a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), including controlled site access, scheduled deliveries outside peak hours, strict routing via the A831 and A82 and enforcement of speed limits. Despite these measures, cumulative impacts from other nearby scoped in energy projects could push traffic increases above 180% on some links, highlighting the need for coordination between contractors to avoid overlapping peak periods. Overall, the impacts are temporary but significant, requiring robust management to protect road safety and community amenity.
- 7.60 The Council's Transport Planning Service have welcomed the proposed location of the construction access, as it ensures no traffic will use the C1110 Kerrow Wood Road, U1423 Tomich Road or the U1391 Balcladaich Road which are unsuitable for the type and level of traffic anticipated. Conditions are advised to prevent the use of these roads for construction or operational access. The access off the A831 will require upgrading, and a Construction Traffic Management Plan is also requested. In addition, Transport Planning request that no HGVs or AIL (Abnormal Indivisible Loads) access the site via the Beauly to Cannich section of the A831 and measures are taken to limit other construction traffic using that route, due to its generally substandard nature. These matters can be addressed by planning conditions.
- 7.61 In addition, a formal Wear and Tear Agreement with Highland Council, in accordance with Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. This will include both the abnormal loads and also the sections of the local public road network also impact by standard construction vehicles.

### **Wider Access (Recreational) Impacts**

- 7.62 In terms of wider public access, the proposed development impacts two Core Paths (IN05.02 and IN05.03) and one long-distance path (Affric Kintail Way). During construction, temporary diversions will be put in place with a section of existing path to be upgraded (hatched black in the extract below), with a diversion being put in

place for the Affric Kintail Way running parallel with the proposed site track access. This will maintain public access on these affected routes. During the construction period, public access within the application site boundary to the north of the substation site will be restricted, access paths in this area to be reinstated thereafter. All temporary diversions will be of a suitable standard to allow the continued use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Upon completion of the works, all diverted paths will revert back to the original routes. Post construction, there will be no diminished public access, with long term path improvements to be secured through this application. Further detail is provided in the outline Outdoor Access Management Plan (AMP), included as part of the planning application submission, as well as on the application access drawing, received 11 December 2025.

- 7.63 The Council's Access Officer initially had concerns as the development appeared to propose unacceptable restrictions to public access during the construction phase. Further engagement has taken place with Officers, with measures having been introduced to ensure suitable public access will be maintained. The Access Officer has therefore withdrawn their initial objection subject to a condition securing a finalised AMP. This will include the design, specifications, wording and location of access management signs, public access gates and further details regarding the facilitation of public access during both the construction and operation periods. The applicant has indicated that they are committed to further engagement with the Council as Access Authority to progress this necessary detail, building upon the outline AMP submitted with the application.

#### **Operational Impact (including Noise)**

- 7.64 Volume 1, Chapter 13 of the EA assesses the potential noise and vibration effects during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. The effects from operational vibration and the decommissioning phase were scoped out due to the nature and intended life span of the proposed substation.
- 7.65 The potential noise effects arising from the 24/7 operation of the substation equipment have been found to be minimal, despite the introduction of two super grid transformers (SGTs) at the substation. Based on the predicted sound levels at the closest residential receptors, it is expected that there would be a Very Low Magnitude of Impact, resulting in a Negligible and not significant effect. Environmental Health generally concur with the assessment of noise and cumulative noise impacts from operation of the substation, that it would be likely to have a very low impact and effects are not considered significant, and also that cumulative effects are not anticipated.

#### **Natural Heritage (including Ornithology)**

- 7.66 There are no natural heritage designations covering the site itself. The proposal is also unlikely to affect any natural heritage designation in the surrounding area, including: the Strathglass Complex SAC, located 1.2km west and designated for Otter and upland habitats; and the Glen Affric SSSI also located 1.2km west, designated notably for its native pine woodlands breeding bird assemblage, which the citation states includes crested tit, Scottish crossbill, black grouse and (reportedly in the citation) capercaillie. Capercaillie is however now presumed by NatureScot to be absent. Watercourses on the application site flow into the Abhainn Deabhag (river)

which runs adjacent to these designated sites. The distance between the proposed development and these designated sites precludes any direct impacts, and given that embedded measures of pollution control are strictly adhered to, there are no possible indirect impacts to either designated site (as a result of waterborne or airborne pollution).

- 7.67 The Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA is also located 1.5km to the northwest, designated for Golden Eagle. Although this species may occasionally fly over the application site, they are very unlikely to be located at the periphery of the extensive SPA, with there being no suitable nesting habitat within the application site with this species favouring remote mountains. As such, there is no likelihood of a significant adverse effect on Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA or its qualifying golden eagles.
- 7.68 NatureScot concur and have confirmed that it is unlikely that the proposed development would result in any adverse impacts to the qualifying features of the nearest designated sites.
- 7.69 The Glen Affric NNR also lies closer into the site, 0.2km southwest, with its nature conservation interest being a mosaic of native pinewoods, lochs, and moorland hosting a variety of species including woodland birds, osprey, otter, red-throated diver and black-throated diver. Indirect impacts on these important interests have been assessed individually, with no significant adverse effects having been identified.
- 7.70 The Corrimony RSPB Nature Reserve, a non-statutory designated site for nature conservation, is also potentially affected by the proposed development. Around 2.5km of the proposed access track falls within the northwestern area of the reserve, with the proposed substation platform being located 3.5km southwest (refer to EA Figure 9-2). This reserve is a mosaic of moorland, woodland, wetland, and montane habitats, managed by the RSPB to maintain and enhance the black grouse population. In considering the proposed access track's alignment RSPB raised concern with SSEN directly regarding the proposed access track's impact on sensitive habitats (wet flushes) within the reserve. In response, the alignment and design access track has been amended with the updated design having significantly less intersection with this habitat, whilst respecting other constraints, including nearby land within the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) (refer to EA Figure 8-2s and Additional Information Figure 9-2c with the track alignment having shifted to the northwest). RSPB did not make any public representation to the application.
- 7.71 The applicant's ecological and ornithological assessments and site surveys have also identified limited evidence of protected species activity. Surveys undertaken in May and June 2024 identified habitats suitable for and/or positive signs of protected species including bats, badger, otter, water vole, red squirrel, pine marten, reptiles and amphibians. The Ecology Officer confirms that the surveys appear to have been undertaken in accordance with recommended survey guidance, including survey buffers. With the exception of bats, the Ecology Officer has confirmed that the direct impacts upon the identified species are considered limited and pre-construction surveys prior to works commencing can be conditioned. In relation to bats, the two trees initially earmarked for felling had been noted as having potential for roosting bats, however, the amendments to the access track's proposed alignment now avoids the loss of these trees and any associated direct losses.

7.72 In relation to ornithology, the potential for any significant effects was restricted to black grouse, in or outside the Corrimony RSPB reserve. To minimise impact through habitat losses, the proposed track access makes use of the existing track access, except where it passes through the outer northwestern part of the reserve, however, the extent of habitat affected by the proposed access track would be extremely small in comparison to the great size of the reserve which is over 15 square km, with the extent of loss reported to be Negligible. No black grouse were seen in this area during the field survey; however, this does not preclude possible future occurrence. To limit the potential for disturbance during the lekking season, conditions can be imposed to secure a Black Grouse Species Protection Plan (SPP), which includes the appointment of a suitably experienced Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW); additional pre-construction surveys; where possible construction works such as upgrading of parts of the existing track to be undertaken outside the breeding season (March to August, inclusive); and where construction works within 1 km of leks cannot avoid the breeding season, construction works and passing vehicles will be restricted at least two hours after dawn in the lekking season, taken as March to mid-May inclusive.

### **Habitat Loss and Biodiversity**

7.73 Recorded habitats and their constituent National Vegetation Classification (NVC) communities across the application site have been well presented within the application. The proposed substation site is covered by commercial plantation, formerly dominated by Sitka spruce and currently clear-felled. The vast majority of habitats within forestry plantation areas are subject to on-going impacts from drainage, nutrient-enrichment and disturbance. Habitats within this area are largely a form of degraded bog that resembles wet heath and has a dearth of bog-building species. The area of the proposed access track is largely a near-natural mosaic of woodlands, heaths and bogs in good condition. Much of the open ground and woodlands in the first 4km of the track (from north to south) were burnt in a fire in May/June 2023, however it is anticipated that all (or nearly all) of these areas will make a full recovery in the long term. Wet heath represents the greatest loss of any habitat within the application site, accounting for 53% of the total area of the proposed development. These heathlands comprise forms that are common and/or widespread in Highland. The application includes a large swathe of on-site peatland restoration that will seek to restore the hydrological condition of degraded bog habitat. This would more than offset blanket bog impacted by the development, resulting in an overall minor positive effect.

7.74 The habitats present across the site have been subject to a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report. This quantifies the biodiversity impact of the development, predicts the resultant change of biodiversity value, and provides recommendations for biodiversity enhancement (net gain). The assessment followed DEFRA guidance utilising the biodiversity metric with the biodiversity of the site summarised using SSEN Transmission's biodiversity toolkit which uses habitat as a proxy to determine biodiversity impacts. In summary, based on the amended layout the losses to habitats resulting from the proposed development would be 1,155.33 biodiversity units (BU). This is proposed to be compensated for through a combination of on and off-site compensation and enhancement measures. Proposed onsite measures include peatland restoration and woodland planting, providing 1,152.42 BU, resulting in a

shortfall of 2.91 BU, with this expected to be delivered offsite, in addition to a 10% uplift to deliver biodiversity enhancement.

- 7.75 Whilst the Ecology Team accept that biodiversity enhancement can be secured by condition, it still requests that offsite proposals are submitted prior to determination of this application. The applicant however contends that this matter can be dealt with post consent. Given the significant number of current and upcoming applications relating to electricity transmission and associated infrastructure in the Highland area, SSEN are in the process of preparing an overarching strategy for the delivery of offsite biodiversity enhancement across the region. To enable this, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the applicant and the Council has been concluded, which establishes a forum to discuss and seek technical endorsement for proposed compensatory planting and biodiversity enhancement schemes. Such an approach is consistent with the advice received by Scottish Ministers in their Chief Planner and Minister Letter (April 2025) which states that ....

“The use of suspensive conditions to secure the submission and implementation of schemes such as compensatory planting and other biodiversity measures can be appropriate. Careful thought should be given to the wording of such conditions to ensure that they are proportionate and do not unduly delay development, whilst still meeting the tests for conditions set out in Circular 4/1998”.

For example, it is worth considering whether it would be reasonable for a condition to require a scheme to be agreed before the development can come into operation, rather than before any development can commence.

The tests governing the use of planning obligations are contained in Circular 3/2012; the Circular underlines that planning obligations should not be used to address issues that can be resolved in another way, such as through a planning condition or the use of an alternative legal agreement”.

- 7.76 Based on the advice from the Chief Planner and a MoU being in place with the Council, it is considered that a formal legal agreement securing the off-site compensatory measure is not required but instead can be dealt with by condition.

### **Forestry**

- 7.77 The application site includes areas of productive commercial conifer forestry, both mature standing crop and clearfell, and some areas of native broadleaf woodland. There are a number of areas within the site which are listed in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, and these are mainly upland birchwood ranging from establishing regeneration to mature. The applicant has identified these in Ancient and Native Woodland, and Peatlands drawings. There are also a number of areas of woodland recorded in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as Ancient Semi-natural Origin (ASNO1860) to the northwest of the site and within the site at the northern end. Some of the woodland recorded in AWI is Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS), but there are areas of native woodland which are also recorded in the AWI and so are potentially of greater significance.
- 7.78 Additional information has been provided confirming that a total of 41.81ha of woodland (including around 85% which has already been clearfelled) would need to

be removed to accommodate the substation. The vast majority of woodland loss is clearfelled productive conifers, but there is 1.96ha of broadleaf woodland to be removed. The applicant has used the National Forest Inventory (NFI) data to determine the woodland type, but this does not subdivide broadleaf woodland types into native and non-native and it does not determine what species was clearfelled. It is therefore assumed that clearfell was productive conifer and given the location, it is most likely that broadleaf woodland is native. The Council's Forestry Officer has therefore confirmed that 41.81ha of compensatory planting would be required, of which no less than 1.96ha requires to be native broadleaf. The total amount of compensatory planting is noted in the applicant's proposed Compensatory Planting Strategy, but no breakdown has been provided. The proposed Landscape Restoration Plans show areas of new Scots pine (8.8ha) and wet woodland (31.8ha) planting. Conditions are therefore required to secure a total of 41.81ha of woodland, either on or offsite reflecting the mix of productive woodland removed to facilitate the development. Conditions are also required to secure construction tree protection measures for existing areas of woodland to be retained.

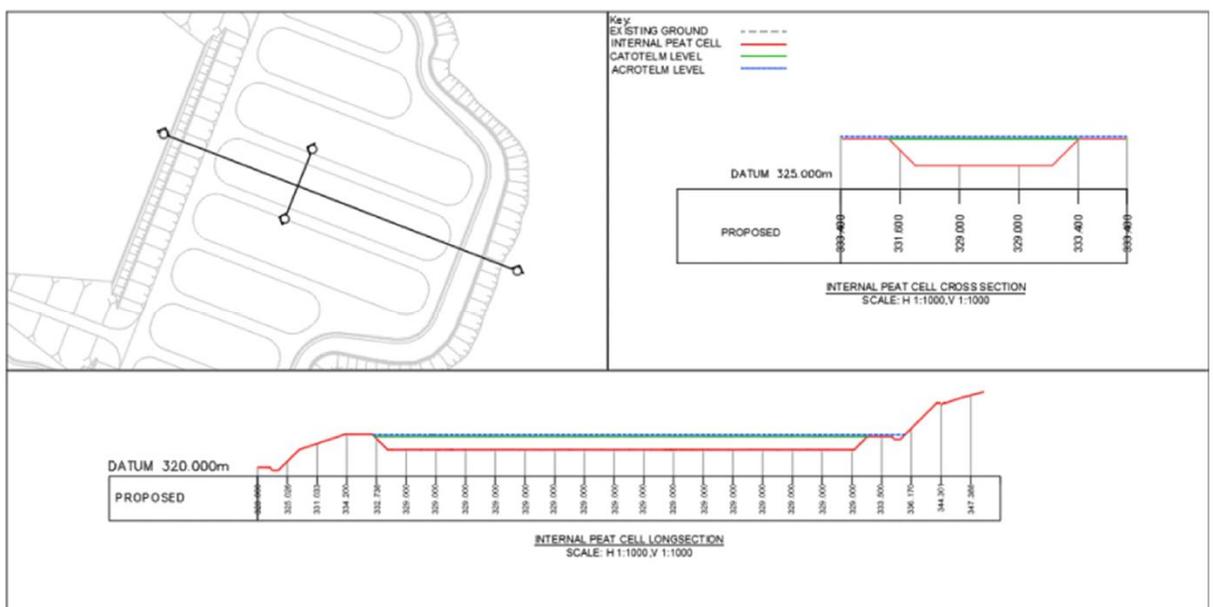
- 7.79 Representations have raised concerns in relation to the loss of ancient woodland. The onsite habitat surveys recorded many of the areas listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as now being commercial plantation woodland. No indicators of ancient woodland remain in the majority of locations listed on the AWI and ground disturbance is present due to long-term commercial forestry operations. Felling has occurred in some areas along the existing access track between June 2016 and May 2020. A small area (0.25 ha) present at the northernmost area of the site is native woodland (identified as likely being Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and listed on the AWI as 2a, (due to floristic character and woodland structure).
- 7.80 The applicant contends that the upgrade of the existing access track, notwithstanding this impact on ancient woodland, presents as the best design option for the proposed development, removing the need for construction of a new additional access. A long linear area of ancient woodland adjacent to the A831, as well as very steep topography further restricts any alternative access alignment options. The application provides details on individual parcels of habitats within the site listed on the AWI, demonstrating the extent of areas within the site and providing a detailed review of each area, in terms of the habitats currently present, historical land use and information regarding the current status and ecological value of woodland. The details provided in this assessment demonstrate that the majority of areas listed on the AWI within the site are categorised as Ancient Woodland 2a and considered to be Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) rather than ASNW. Mitigation would be in line with the felling and restocking plans outlined in the Glen Affric Management Plan and as detailed within the BNG report, with appropriate compensation being proposed to account for the loss of this habitat.
- 7.81 In summary, Officers find that the woodland losses associated with this development are acceptable, all losses are capable of being fully compensated for, with the development of a substation in this location delivering wider public benefit, making optimal use of existing transmission infrastructure. As such, the proposal is in overall accordance with NPF4 Policy 6 forestry, woodland and trees.

## **Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Soils**

- 7.82 EA Chapter 12 sets out that mitigation by design has been used as far as practical to reduce potential adverse effects on the water environment. An extensive list of best practice standard mitigation for the control of risks has been provided which will be incorporated within the CEMP, with construction impacts on the water environment also to be regulated by SEPA through a secondary consenting / permit under the Environmental Authorisation (Scotland) Regulations 2018 (EASR). The mitigation measures include the control of sediment runoff, to be covered within a Water Management Plan (WMP), which will also cover the control of accidental spillages, storage regimes, with the introduction of a Water Quality and Flow Monitoring Plan, ensuring that mitigation measures are operating as planned. This can be conditioned.
- 7.83 Flood Risk Assessments have been provided for the access track and substation platform, with flood risk to the site being low. The access track crosses a number of watercourses, and the FRA considers the sizing of the crossings. These will be designed to convey a 1 in 200 year plus climate change flow with freeboard. The one exception to this will result in some ponding upstream of the track but this will not increase flood risk to others. SEPA had initially raised concern with the track access design and following amendments made to the application, including the introduction of eight bridge crossings as opposed to culverts, their objection was withdrawn, subject to the imposition of conditions, including: a bottomless arch culvert is proposed for Culvert C043; and all watercourse crossings are designed to take the 1 in 200 plus climate change flood flows unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA. These matters have been incorporated within the recommended conditions.
- 7.84 Drainage Impact Assessments have also been provided for the access track and substation platform. Surface water will be managed through SUDS and discharge will be limited to the 1 in 2 year pre-development rate for all storms up to and including a 1 in 200 year plus climate change event. Conditions have again been recommended to enable the finalisation of the drainage design.
- 7.85 In relation to peat, this resource across the site varies from Class 1 and 2 Nationally Important Peatland habitats ('high' sensitivity) and Class 5 peatland habitats and peat ('medium' sensitivity), with the substation site being located within a Class 5 area. Peat probing within the site at proposed infrastructure locations identified the majority of the peat deposits to be less than 1.0 m in depth (53%), although localised deep deposits above 1.0 m in thickness were also identified (19%). The design of the proposed development typically looked to avoid the areas of Nationally Important peat, although where the proposed development does go through this resource, the proposal is to utilise and upgrade the existing access track wherever possible. Due to the alignment of the existing access track and its topographical constraints, diversions to straighten the track are also required. Peat instability has been assessed as part of the EA and is included within the Peat Landslide Hazardous Risk Assessment. The peat instability is generally negligible to unlikely, although localised areas of likely and probable were also recorded, with this plan to be finalised by condition. All the peat excavated as part of the proposed development is to be reused

within the site, which includes peatland restoration areas, with an updated Peat Management Plan having been provided with the application.

7.86 SEPA welcome the amendments made during the course of the application with the design to reduce the total excavation of peat by approximately 30%, and importantly the reduction in excavated catotelmic peat by approximately 50%. Estimated total excavated peat volumes for the amended scheme are 306,838m<sup>3</sup>, of which 91,970m<sup>3</sup> are peaty soils to be used in site restoration, with these volumes incorporating a 25% bulking factor. SEPA note that all catotelmic peat is being placed in “cells”, which appear to be within a borrow pit. They also welcome that an added 25% bulking factor has been applied to account for uncertainties in excavation volumes. A series of "internal peat cells" (refer to the illustration below) are proposed to be made from removing bedrock to create depressions that will be filled with peat. An 'External Cell' is also proposed to be a reinstated borrow pit.



7.87 SEPA advise that given the proposed borrow pit restoration depths of up to 5m, where it is not apparent that ecological benefit from using peat to the proposed depths can be established, SEPA is likely to regard this as disposal rather than a recovery option and therefore an environmental authorisation will be required. As such, borrow pit restoration plans are required, along with a finalised Peat Management Plan (PMP), with these to be secured by condition. SEPA require the PMP to detail:

- site and ground investigations to minimise the loss of peat and other carbon rich soil and minimise carbon loss;
- actions, including micro-siting, to minimise excavated peat and other carbon rich soils volumes, encourage use of excavated peat and other carbon rich soils in an appropriate manner; and
- follows good practice for handling, storing and reinstating peat and other carbon rich soils.

7.88 Potential Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) have been recorded within the site as identified by EA Figure 8-4 with these being sensitive to changes to hydrological conditions. Typically, the GWDTE identified are recorded to be potentially moderately sensitive, with potentially highly sensitive GWDTEs being

identified within a small area in the southwest of the proposed substation site, at the northern proposed temporary settlement lagoon and locally along the proposed access track. Notwithstanding, the GWDTE within the site are often associated with ombrotrophic deeper peat, and in these situations, it is likely that the hydrology of the GWDTE are largely, or perhaps entirely, maintained by surface water associated with rainfed systems. A further assessment was carried out by specialist environmental consultants AECOM and found that most are not actual GWDTE. Further mitigation is also proposed, with permeable tracks to be constructed, via use of suitably sized material to maintain flows of surface / ground water, or via the use of culverts on tracks that directly or indirectly impact GWDTE, with this to be conditioned within the CEMP. Consequently, construction losses to potentially sensitive GWDTE are reported in the EA to be negligible. These finds are not disputed with their being no outstanding consultee objections regarding this matter, including SEPA.

### **Built and Cultural Heritage**

- 7.89 The site is not situated within any built heritage designation, however there are undesignated heritage assets within the application site, as well as six designated assets within a wider 1km study area. All designated assets, as well as the Tomich Village Conservation Area, are located at a lower elevation within the Strath. One Scheduled Monument - Comar Wood, dun 830 m southwest of Comar Lodge (SM13578), a monumental Iron Age roundhouse, is also located approximately 1.35km west of the application site. The non-designated assets within the application site have all be recorded through a recent review of LiDAR data with the majority being possible hut circles and clearance cairns dating to the prehistoric period.
- 7.90 The EA confirms that there is no potential for significant impacts on the setting of designated and non-designated assets during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. This is largely a result of the topography, as well as existing woodland, which both provide screening. Furthermore, the distance between the designated assets, for which there is the greatest potential for significant impacts on setting due to their value, and the Site means that any views of the proposed substation, as well as associated works such as access tracks, would be extremely limited.
- 7.91 In terms of potential for archaeology, a review of previously recorded heritage assets, as well as historical mapping and documentary sources, suggests that while this area has been exploited since the prehistoric period, with evidence of settlement and land improvements from the Iron Age onwards, activity in the upland landscape where the application site is located has been largely limited to seasonal agricultural use from the medieval period onwards. Furthermore, since the mid-20th century the landscape of the site has been largely used for commercial forestry operations which, along with the construction of the existing OHL, have resulted in extensive disturbance.
- 7.92 While the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low, it is recommended that the final route of the proposed access track is examined as this area has not been subject to previous disturbance from commercial forestry. It is also recommended that archaeological monitoring is undertaken during stripping of the access track in this area, as well as on land adjacent to the former township of Coille an Tuathanaich (MHG36650). It is also recommended that temporary fencing is used to protect any assets that are recorded near to works to avoid accidental damage.

Significant impacts on the setting of heritage assets are not predicted due to aspects such as topography, existing screening, and the distance between the site and designated assets.

- 7.93 Historic Environment Scotland have no objection in relation to the nearby Scheduled Monument, and all listed buildings falling within their remit. Their latest response of 2 December 2025 provides site specific advice for the Comar Wood dun SM, confirming that the substation site is 6km to the south and would not interrupt or distract from views from the dun to and over the river. While the proposed access track would be visible from the monument running down the eastern flank of the River Affric, it would sit next to the existing 400kV overhead line and would not lead to an additional impact upon the setting of the monument. They also confirm that for the Glen Affric Hydro Electric Scheme, Fasnakyle Power Station (LB7118) the proposed substation would sit around 3.5kms southeast of the listed building and would not distract from views from the building. Furthermore, they also do not have any concerns regarding the access track.
- 7.94 Similarly, the Council's Historic Environment Team find that the EA has provided an appropriate level of information and assessment, concluding that with mitigation, it will be possible to limit the direct impacts to cultural heritage assets to within an acceptable range. Officers concur with these findings with the development being well sited from a built and cultural heritage perspective, and conditions can be imposed to secure an archaeological program of works.

### **Other Material Considerations**

- 7.95 The proposed substation is part of a larger electricity grid project that requires planning permission. Other elements require planning permission or consent through the Electricity Act 1989. The Council has no control over the consenting regimes required for the various elements of the Beauly to Denny OHL upgrade but must treat each application on its own individual merits. This application has been subject to a voluntary EA, and as such, the cumulative impacts of the proposed development have been considered along with the effects of other parts of the wider project, and other nearby major developments, such as wind farms. The Council as Planning Authority is able to determine this application based on the assessment set out in this report, and in doing so would be in compliance with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- 7.96 The applicant is seeking planning permission in perpetuity for the development, however, in the event of decommissioning, this would be carried out in line with the best practice processes and methods at that time and managed through a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan. Given that grid infrastructure decommissioning and restoration is an established requirement under the network operator's licence, this is not required to be secured by condition.
- 7.97 Owing to 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.

### **Non-Material Considerations**

- 7.98 Non-material considerations raised in representations relate to the speculative, profiteering and lack of need for the development, in addition, matters regarding 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. Similarly, in relation to community benefit, 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. Impacts upon property prices is also not a material planning consideration as this is deemed a private rather than public interest. Matters relating to fire risk are covered by other legislation which should not be replicated through planning. Decisions on planning applications are also not to be made on emotive adverse cultural identity arguments which are not material, and any distrust of the government or developers in energy sector is also not material, with the named applicant, or their track record, not being a material planning consideration.

## **8. MATTERS TO BE SECURED BY LEGAL AGREEMENT**

- 8.1 On other applications, legal agreements have previously been used to secure off-site compensatory / enhancement measures. However, based on the latest advice from the Chief Planner and Minister (April 2025), there is a clear indication that the use of suspensive conditions to secure such matters can be appropriate. Given this advice, and the applicant's Memorandum of Understanding with the Council, Officers are content that additional off-site compensatory planting / biodiversity enhance can be delivered through a planning condition, rather than through legal agreement.
- 8.2 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. This can be secured concurrently with the finalisation of the CTMP.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The application is required to operate the existing Beauly to Denny Overhead Line to its designed capacity, increasing the transmission voltage from 275kV to 400kV which enables future connections and export to areas of demand. The Scottish Government and the 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.

- 9.2 The application is one of many in our region pending consideration, and form part of the suite of transmission projects which are collectively integral to the UK's transition to net zero. The principle of this national development is established in NPF4 and its strategic importance must be attributed significant weight when undertaking the Council's duty of making a balanced planning decision.
- 9.3 There are clear impacts that might be expected from this development, particularly during its construction. The site selection has however been well informed through collaborative engagement between SSEN and all consultees and affected communities. Although the development's infrastructure requirements are of a notable scale, there is a strong rationale to co-locate this development in a rural area which has been proven to have the capacity to accommodate renewable and other grid related infrastructure, with the substation also limiting the extent of additional grid infrastructure. The site's selection strikes an appropriate balance between respecting natural heritage designations and cultural heritage interests in the region, avoiding Highland's best landscapes, and maintaining an appropriate setback from nearby roads and settlements. From a constructability and network operation perspective, citing this infrastructure in this location is a logical point between planned and consented renewable development projects, which will bring continued business investment and socio-economic benefits to Highland. This decision also has the benefit of avoiding the more settled and attractive areas within Strathglass, thereby limiting the potential for in combination effects within the more sensitive settled Strath floor landscape. The air insulated low profile design of the substation which makes use of existing track also helps to ensure the character of this wider area is respected.
- 9.4 Having assessed the development proposed, its environmental effects can be managed through best practice construction management techniques to ensure surrounding interests, particularly road access and the amenity of local communities are safeguarded. The site is well served by the A831. While traffic impacts will be notable, the proposal is well located in this regard with the routing to avoid construction traffic westbound towards Cannich and Tomich, with all traffic impacts capable of being well managed with a later start time of 0800 hours to be imposed. Construction and operational noise will be controlled through a suite of conditions proposed by Environmental Health. The suite of attached planning conditions will strengthen and clarify the plans and supporting environmental information provided by the applicant. The proposal will also be overseen by an appointed Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) with any permission requiring regular compliance monitoring and ongoing engagement by means of the Community Liaison Group.
- 9.5 Highland has been successful in overseeing inward investment in renewables for several years. This is as a consequence of its geography, water and wind resource, which has led to significant investment in the electricity transmission network. This has led to the Highlands having a good understanding of this type of project and the Council having appropriate policies and guidance to assist in its assessment, and to effectively manage their implementation on the ground.
- 9.6 Statutory consultees responding to this application have not raised any fundamental concerns. There are however unresolved objections raised by the Council's Ecology Teams, with the network operator continuing to work constructively to fulfil their compensatory woodland and biodiversity enhancement obligations. Several

consultees have requested planning conditions to be attached to any grant of planning permission. These are to be attached to effectively ensure that their specific interests are secured. The development has also attracted significant public interest with representations objecting to the proposal. All concerns raised have assisted with the assessment of the application, and in considering the adequacy of the mitigation measures proposed, there are no issues that merit the proposal be refused.

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

## **10. IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Resource: Not applicable

10.2 Legal: If the Committee determine that the application should be refused, the application maybe subject to an appeal and determined by a Reporter appointed by the Scottish Government.

10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable.

10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: The proposal has the ability to make a meaningful contribution toward the production of renewable energy.

10.5 Risk: Not applicable.

10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

10.6 **Action required before decision issued: N**

It is recommended to **GRANT** the application subject to:

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

- (1) The development shall be constructed and operated in accordance with the provisions of the Application and the Environmental Assessment (EA) received February 2025 as amended by the Additional Information (AI) received November 2025, and in accordance with the terms of the conditions of this consent.
- (2) The operational land associated with this substation shall be as per the red line boundary, as identified on Drawing Number BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0101REV P05.02, received 24 March 2025, 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. External Materials and Lighting**

No development shall commence until elevation plans and specifications 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, for the avoidance of doubt this shall detail the upgraded site access onto the A831;
- c) no element of the development shall have any text, sign or logo displayed on any external surface of the facility, save those required by the applicant's safety systems and law under other legislation; and
- d) details of any external lighting to be used within the site and/or along its boundaries and/or access. Such details shall include the location, type, angle of direction and wattage of each light which shall be so positioned and angled to prevent any direct illumination, glare or light spillage outwith the site boundary.

Thereafter, the development shall be built out in accordance with these approved details and maintained thereafter. 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 and to minimise light pollution.

#### 4. **Construction, Reinstatement and Landscaping Phasing Plan**

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

- a) phasing drawings for each aspect of the site enabling works, platform construction, building and above ground infrastructure, progressive site reinstatement, borrow pit restoration and landscaping works, with associated timescales;
- b) existing, temporary and finished ground levels in relation to an identified fixed datum point;
- c) cut and fill calculations which demonstrate the anticipated material extraction and placement from each element of the required groundworks; and
- d) location and design, including materials, of any proposed means of enclosure, fences and gates.

Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan, with all planting, seeding or turfing as may be comprised to be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the commencement of development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

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:** To ensure the development is carried out in appropriate phases with temporary working areas being restored and landscaping works delivered in the interest of habitat creation and visual amenity.

#### 5. **Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)**

(1) No later than three months prior to the Commencement of the Development, 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, shall have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA, NatureScot, Environmental Health and other consultees as appropriate. The CEMP shall be informed by the site and ground investigation works and best practice guidance. The CEMP shall include, but is not limited to, details of:

- a) An updated Schedule of Mitigation (SM) as it relates to construction highlighting mitigation set out within each chapter of the Environmental Appraisal, received February 2025 as amended by the Additional Information received November 2025, and all relevant mitigation secured by conditions attached to this permission with defined timescales for implementation of each mitigation measure;
- b) Processes to control / action changes from the agreed SM;
- c) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction-type activities on the environment;
- d) Species Protection Plans, (refer to Condition 16);

- e) Mitigation to protect the ecological resources on site, including biodiversity protection zones, location and timing of works;
- f) Cultural heritage protocol, detailing reporting procedures should any unforeseen archaeological discoveries be made;
- g) Soil management, with details of soil placement and measures to utilise the soils' existing seed base in site landscaping;
- h) The maximum height and location of all stockpiles of aggregate;
- i) Dust management, covering demolition and construction activity, including vehicle movements;
- j) Details of temporary site lighting;
- k) Site waste management;
- l) Emergency Response Plans;
- m) Details of the formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing;
- n) Compliance with the phasing plan (refer to Condition 4);
- o) Compliance with the construction noise management plan and blasting method statement (refer to Conditions 6 and 7);
- p) Pollution prevention, including compliance with the Water Management Plan (Condition 12);
- (2) A statement of responsibility to 'stop the job/activity' if a breach or potential breach of mitigation or legislation occurs; and
- (3) Methods for monitoring, auditing, reporting, and the communication of environmental management on site and with client, Planning Authority and other relevant parties.

The approved CEMP shall be implemented in full throughout the construction and post construction site reinstatement phases, 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 impact on the environment, road safety, and amenity.

## **6. Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP)**

Operations, including vehicle movements, associated with this development, for which noise is audible at the curtilage of any noise-sensitive properties\*, shall only be permitted between:

- a) 0800 hours and 1900 hours Monday to Friday; and
- b) 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturdays.

No such operations are permitted 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).

Prior to the project commencing, the applicant shall submit, for the written approval of the Council's Environmental Health Service, details of a Noise Management Plan. The Plan shall demonstrate how the applicant/contractor will ensure the best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction noise.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved Construction Noise Management Plan and all approved mitigation measures shall be in place prior to the commencement of operations or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

\*Note: For the purposes of this condition, "noise-sensitive premises" includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any building, structure or other existing or consented development the lawful use of which a) falls within Classes 7 (Hotels and Hostels), 8 (Residential Institutions) or 9 (Houses) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997 (as amended), or b) is as a flat, static residential caravan.

**Reason:** In the interest of residential amenity.

## **7. Blasting**

No blasting works shall commence until a blasting method statement, prepared by a suitably qualified and competent person in accordance with industry best practice, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. 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) The approximate number of blasts on a weekly or annual basis and the periods of the day when blasting will be carried out; and
- c) The methods for providing the public with advance warning of blasting.

Ground vibrations as a result of the blasting operations shall not exceed a peak particle velocity of 6mms<sup>-1</sup> in 95% of all blasts within any 6-month period. No individual blast shall exceed a peak particle velocity of 12mms<sup>-1</sup> 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.

Thereafter to the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** In the interest of residential amenity.

## **8. Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)**

No later than three months prior to commencement of the development, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to manage all construction traffic with the exception of abnormal indivisible loads, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with Transport Scotland, affected Community Councils and the Local Roads Authority. The CTMP shall include, but is not limited to:

- a) Confirmation of borrow pit and aggregate supplies to serve the development;
- b) Updated construction traffic forecast with details of the number and type of construction vehicles including staff, HGVs and components and abnormal loads;
- c) Identification of all structures on construction traffic routes and an assessment of the structures' load-bearing capacity considering the projected volume of HGVs. The assessment shall include a detailed protocol outlining preventative

and corrective works throughout the construction period to prevent damage and ensure the safety of the public;

- d) A risk assessment for transportation during daylight hours and hours of darkness;
- e) Proposed construction traffic routes for all vehicle movements, including site staff, contractor, sub-contractors and deliveries. No construction traffic shall utilise the A831 from the site access westbound in the direction of Cannich or Beauly, with no construction traffic on the C1110 Kerrow Wood Road, U1423 Tomich Road or the U1391 Balcladaich Road;
- f) Avoidance of construction traffic routing past schools during their opening and closing times, whilst also promoting appropriate traffic speeds through communities located along construction traffic routes;
- g) Steps to be taken for deterring/preventing construction traffic using non-designated construction traffic routes to and from the site;
- h) Scheduling and timing of movements, respecting any large public event taking place in the local area which would be unduly affected or disrupted by construction vehicles using the public road network;
- i) Proposed traffic management and mitigation measures within settlements along the access routes as required. Measures such as temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings and the use of speed activated signs should be considered, especially within local communities;
- j) During the delivery period of construction materials, measures to control the use of any direct access onto the local road and trunk road network, with any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of any load being delivered or removed shall be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant;
- k) Non convoying of HGV or site staff vehicles;
- l) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period;
- m) Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development;
- n) Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred and measures for keeping the Community Council informed and dealing with queries and any complaints regarding construction traffic;
- o) Providers of products and materials to this development (such as aggregate, concrete, staff minibuses) shall mark their vehicles with a unique number identifier on the front, sides and rear of vehicles and a Bingally Substation identifier. This is to enable easy identification in the event of problems arising, such as speeding or discourteous driving;
- p) Provisions for emergency vehicle access;
- q) Monthly traffic count reports submitted to Transport Planning and Local Area Roads Team detailing the number of HGVs using construction traffic routes on Highland Council roads. The locations for traffic counts shall be agreed before any work commences on site;
- r) The provision of a wear and tear agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 under which the developer will be responsible for the repair of any damage to the local road network attributable to construction related traffic. As part of the agreement, pre-start and post construction road condition surveys must be carried out by the developer to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority. It will also require the submission of an appropriate

financial bond acceptable to the Council in respect of the risk of any road reconstruction works; and

- s) A timetable for the implementation of the measures detailed in the CTMP.

Thereafter, the CTMP shall be carried out as approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

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

## 9. Abnormal Loads

No delivery of abnormal indivisible load (AIL) shall be made to site until an Abnormal Indivisible Load Construction Traffic Management Plan (AIL-CTMP) shall have 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 and thereafter implemented in full to the satisfaction of Transport Scotland and the Local Roads Authority. Such measures may, but not be limited to 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 shall 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 load haulier. The plan shall be adopted only after consultation and agreement with the Police and the respective Roads Authorities and 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.

## 10. Site Access

Prior to construction of any part of the development, details of the improved site access and visibility splays for the A831 junction shall be submitted for the prior approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with the Roads Authority. The junction's design shall detail a suitable bound surface finish for the first 20m from the carriageway and proposals for managing surface water runoff which prevents flows onto the A831.

Thereafter, the junction shall be constructed as approved prior to the commencement of any further work on the site access track or substation, with the visibility splays to be maintained for the lifetime of the development.

**Reason:** In the interest of road safety.

## 11. Outdoor Access Plan

No development or enabling works shall commence until a finalised 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, all-abilities users, and any other relevant outdoor access enhancement (including construction specifications, signage, information leaflets, proposals for on-going maintenance);
- 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).

Thereafter, the approved Outdoor Access Plan, and any associated works, shall be implemented in full.

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

## 12. Water Management Plan

No later than three months prior to the commencement of the development, a Water Management Plan (WMP) shall be submitted for the prior written approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with Environmental Health. The Plan shall include mitigation measures to protect the water environment and water supplies from construction impacts including:

- a) public and private water supply protection measures, inclusive of measures to prevent contamination or physical disruption of any private water supply;
- b) a completed PWS Planning Questionnaire (Form PWS 1) and written report from a competent person (qualified engineer, hydrogeologist, or other similarly qualified suitable person), that confirms the development will be served by a sufficient piped supply of wholesome water;
- c) details of foul and any contaminated site drainage arrangements;
- d) demonstrating how all surface water run-off and wastewater arising during and after development is to be managed and prevented from polluting any watercourses or sources, including the provision of settlement lagoons for silt laden water, and drainage by SUDS to accommodate the 1 in 200 plus an allowance for climate change;
- e) mitigation measures, which shall maintain hydrological connectivity of Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems;
- f) mechanisms to ensure that construction shall not take place during periods of high flow or high rainfall; and
- g) a programme of pre, during and post construction qualitative and quantitative groundwater and water supply monitoring and reporting, inclusive of contingency measures in the event of an incident.

Thereafter to the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** To safeguard the water environment and in the interests of protecting private water supplies that may be affected by the construction and operation of the development.

## 13. Watercourse Crossings

All watercourse crossings shall be designed to take the 1 in 200 plus climate change flood flows, with a bottomless arch culvert design to be implemented for Culvert C043, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA.

**Reason:** In order to reduce the risk of flooding occurring both within and outwith the application site.

## 14. Drainage

No development shall commence until a finalised Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This shall include finalised drainage information, including all calculations and simulations, and maintenance.

Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** In order to ensure the proper management of surface water run-off in the interests of environmental protection and reducing flood risk.

#### **15. Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW)**

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

- a) Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the environmental commitments provided in the EIA Report as well as the following (the EnvCoW works):
  - i. the Pre-Construction Ecological Survey under Condition 17;
  - ii. Species Protection Plans under Condition 16;
  - iii. the Phasing Plan, inclusive of site landscaping under Condition 4;
  - iv. the Construction Environmental Management Plan under Condition 5;
  - v. the Water Management Plan under Condition 12;
  - vi. the Peat Management Plan under Condition 18;
  - vii. the Habitat Management Plan under Condition 19;
  - viii. Biodiversity Enhancement, Compensatory Planting and Tree protection under Conditions 20, 21 and 22;
- b) providing training to the developer and contractors on their responsibilities to ensure that work is carried out in strict accordance with environmental protection requirements;
- c) Require the EnvCoW to report to the nominated construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority any incidences of noncompliance with the EnvCoW works at the earliest practical opportunity;
- d) Undertake further surveys as required throughout the duration of the project to protect the ecological resources within the site;
- e) maintain a Register of all inspections and audits, to include an inventory of all measures on the site, their effectiveness, as well as any advice provided; and
- f) Require the EnvCoW to submit a monthly report to the construction project manager, developer and Planning Authority summarising works undertaken on site.

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

#### **16. Species Protection Plans (SPPs)**

No development shall commence until Species Protection Plans (SPPs) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The SPPs shall be informed by pre-commencement bird surveys and proposed mitigation and shall include the following:

- a) Black Grouse Species Protection Plan (inclusive of, wherever possible, construction works such as upgrading of parts of the existing track to be undertaken outside the breeding season (March to August, inclusive); and where construction works within 1km of leks cannot avoid the breeding season, construction works and passing vehicles will be restricted at least two hours after dawn in the lekking season, taken as March to mid-May inclusive, unless otherwise agreed the EnvCoW).
- b) Bats (including pre-construction tree checks prior to any tree felling, and proposed mitigation, should any roosts be identified);
- c) Water vole (with inclusion of pre-construction works in suitable habitat 50m up and downstream from proposed works, and standard mitigation);
- d) Pine marten (with inclusion of pre-construction works in suitable habitat within a 250m buffer from proposed works); and
- e) Badger, Otter, Red squirrel, reptiles, amphibians and other bird species (with inclusion of pre-construction works and mitigation).

Thereafter, the approved Species Protection Plans shall be implemented in full within the timescales set out in the approved SPPs.

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

## 17. Pre-Construction Ecological Survey

A pre-construction survey is required to be undertaken no more than 3 months prior to works commencing for each phase of development and a report of the survey shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The survey shall cover both the application site and species appropriate buffers from the boundary of each phase of development. The preconstruction surveys shall be undertaken with the optimal survey season, e.g. spring for water vole. The report of surveys 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.

## 18. Peat Management

At least one month prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a finalised Peat Management Plan (PMP) and a finalised Peat Landslide Hazardous Risk Assessment for the prior written approval of the Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA. The PMP shall draw upon the findings of the latest Peat Management Plan, received November 2025, and any additional ground investigations carried out prior to development commencing. The Plan shall:

- a) include a management / reinstatement scheme for all peat areas within the application site;
- b) provide details and plans for all peat and soil stripping and excavation and the

- c) storage and proposed use and replacement of peat, topsoil and subsoil;
- c) take account of site and ground investigations to minimise the loss of peat and other carbon rich soil and minimise carbon loss;
- d) includes actions, including micro-siting, to minimise excavated peat and other carbon rich soils volumes, encourage use of excavated peat and other carbon rich soils in an appropriate manner; and
- e) include a method statement which follows good practice measures for protecting, handling, storing and reinstating peat and other carbon rich soils.

Thereafter, the plans shall be implemented as approved.

**Reason:** In the interests of the protection of the peat resource and habitats identified in the application.

## 19. Habitat Management Plan (HMP)

There shall be no commencement of development until an updated Outline Habitat Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with NatureScot and SEPA. This shall:

- a) establish the baseline habitat assessment (condition, extent, distinctiveness);
- b) identifying existing habitat features and vegetation to be retained;
- c) quantify direct and indirect areas of habitat losses and disturbance; and
- d) set out the proposed enhancement strategy and broad locations for on site and/or off site measures.

Unless and until otherwise agreed in advance in writing with the Planning Authority, the approved outline HMP shall be implemented in full.

**Reason:** In the interests of protecting ecological features and to ensure that the development secures positive effects for biodiversity.

## 20. Biodiversity Enhancement

Within 18 months of the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a finalised Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the approval in writing of the Planning Authority. The finalised HMP shall set out:

- a) finalised habitat creation, enhancement and management prescriptions including drawings and specifications;
- b) a confirmed BNG metric calculation, evidencing delivery of the minimum 10% net gain;
- c) a delivery plan, showing when each habitat measure will be implemented (prior to the date of first commissioning of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority);
- d) a minimum 30 year aftercare and monitoring plan, including monitoring frequency, performance indicators, responsibilities, and adaptive management procedures, including measures for securing amendments or additions in the event that the HMP objectives are not being met in full; and
- e) GIS Shapefiles of the biodiversity loss, compensation and enhancement areas.

Thereafter, the finalised HMP shall be implemented as approved.

**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.

## 21. Compensatory Planting

- (1) Within 18 months of the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a detailed Compensatory Planting Plan (including future maintenance) for the approval in writing of the Planning Authority, following consultation with Scottish Forestry and any other relevant stakeholders. The area of planting shall be no less than 41.81ha hectares in size, consisting primarily of 39.85 ha of productive and 1.96 ha of native broadleaf species to be located within the Highlands. The Plan shall:
  - a) detail the area identified for compensatory planting, which may also need to be considered under The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, where this exceeds the current thresholds;
  - b) follow the same process as required for preparing a woodland creation proposal, as set out in the Scottish Forestry publication: Woodland Creation Application Guidance;
  - c) be prepared by and then implemented under the supervision of a suitably qualified forestry consultant, approved by the Planning Authority. The appointed forestry consultant shall provide a detailed schedule of planting, supervision, with compliance monitoring reports to be issued at agreed stages.
- (2) The applicant shall provide the Planning Authority with a GIS shapefile identifying the approved area(s) of woodland removal and the associated area(s) of compensatory planting.
- (3) Thereafter, the approved Plan must be implemented in full, with the woodland maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved scheme. To comply with the Felling Permission exemptions, woodland removal shall not begin until the applicant can demonstrate that construction work is imminent.
- (4) 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 shall be replanted within 12 months, to a specification approved by the Planning Authority.

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

## 22. Tree Protection

There shall be no commencement of development or groundworks until full details of protective tree barriers, located at the extent of crowns of trees/ woodlands to be retained, shall have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority.

Thereafter, the approved barriers shall be erected prior to the commencement or any site excavation or groundworks within each phase of development and shall remain in place throughout the construction period. Barriers shall not be moved or removed during the construction period without the prior written approval of the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In order to secure the long-term management of the trees and/or woodland.

### **23. Programme of Archaeological Works**

There shall be no commencement of development or groundworks unless an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, and a programme of archaeological works shall have 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 shall have 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.

### **24. Local Employment Scheme**

Prior to the Commencement of Development, a Local Employment Scheme for the construction and operation of the development shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by The Highland Council. The submitted Scheme shall make reference to the Environmental Appraisal, received February 2025. The Scheme shall include the following:

- a) details of how the staff/employment opportunities at the development will be advertised and how liaison with the Council and other local bodies will take place in relation to maximising the access of the local workforce to information about employment opportunities;
- b) details of how sustainable training opportunities will be provided for those recruited to fulfil staff/employment requirements including the provision of apprenticeships or an agreed alternative;
- c) a procedure setting out criteria for employment, and for matching of candidates to the vacancies;
- d) measures to be taken to offer and provide college and/or work placement opportunities at the development to students within the locality;
- e) details of the promotion of the Local Employment Scheme and liaison with contractors engaged in the construction of the development to ensure that they also apply the Local Employment Scheme so far as practicable having due regard to the need and availability for specialist skills and trades and the programme for constructing the development;
- f) a procedure for monitoring the Local Employment Scheme and reporting the results of such monitoring to The Highland Council; and
- g) a timetable for the implementation of the Local Employment Scheme.

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

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

## 25. **Planning Monitoring Officer**

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

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

## 26. **Community Liaison Group**

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

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

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

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

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

## **27. Operational Noise Specifications and Monitoring**

- (1) Noise arising from the development, and operational area of the substation site, when measured and/or calculated as an LZeq, 5min, in the 100Hz one third octave frequency band shall not exceed 30 dB, at the curtilage of any noise sensitive premises.
- (2) The Rating Level of noise arising from the use of plant, machinery or equipment installed or operated within the operational land of the development, as determined by BS4142:2014+A1:2019: Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound, shall not exceed the background noise level as any noise sensitive receptor.
- (3) Within 21 days from receipt of a written request from the Planning Authority, following a complaint to it alleging noise disturbance at a noise sensitive location, the site operator shall, at its expense, employ an independent consultant to assess the level of noise in terms of compliance with consented noise limits. The site operator shall submit the report of the independent consultant's assessment for the approval of the Planning Authority within 2 months of receiving the written request; and
- (4) If the 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. Details of the proposed compliance monitoring shall be agreed in writing beforehand with the Council's Environmental Health Service.

**Reason:** In the interest of safeguarding residential amenity.

## **28. Operational Management Plan**

Prior to the energisation of the development, a site Operational Management Plan (OMP) 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;
- b) Processes to control / action changes from the agreed SM;
- c) The substation's continued use of Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF6) free technology or an equally suitable environmentally friendly alternative subject to the prior written approval of the Planning Authority;
- d) A scheme outlining the notification and approval process of the Planning Authority in consultation with the respective Roads Authorities and community representatives as required, for any abnormal load movement required during the operation of the approved development, or prior to any decommissioning of the development.

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 the environment, amenity and road safety.

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

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

## **INFORMATIVES**

### **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).

## **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:

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads\\_and\\_pavements/101/permits\\_for\\_working\\_on\\_public\\_roads/2](http://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 is 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](mailto:env.health@highland.gov.uk) for more information.

## **Protected Species – Halting of Work**

You are advised that work on site must stop immediately, and NatureScot must be contacted, if evidence of any protected species or nesting/breeding sites, not previously

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

Signature: Bob Robertson

Designation: Acting Planning Manager – South

Author: Peter Wheelan

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

Relevant Plans:

Plan 1	Location Plan	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0101 P05.02
Plan 2	Location Plan – Access Track 1 of 3	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0105 P07
Plan 3	Location Plan – Access Track 2 of 3	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0106 P07
Plan 4	Location Plan – Access Track 3 of 3	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0107 P08
Plan 5	Site Layout Plan – Temporary	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0103 P07
Plan 6	Site Layout Plan – Permanent	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0109 P07
Plan 7	Scheme Layout Plan (Aerial Photography Base) 1 of 3	Figure 2a
Plan 8	Scheme Layout Plan (Aerial Photography Base) 2 of 3	Figure 2b
Plan 9	Scheme Layout Plan (Aerial Photography Base) 3 of 3	Figure 2c
Plan 10	Elevation Plan – Substation	ING-LT521-SEBAM-MCD-ZZ-LAY-E-0002 P06
Plan 11	Substation Platform Sections	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0132 REV P03
Plan 12	Access Track Section	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-C-0141 REV P02.02
Plan 13	Control Building Elevations	XXXX4-LTXXX-SEBAM-BLDG-XX- ELE-A-0001 REV PXX
Plan 14	Temporary Platform Plan	BING-LT521-FAI-ZZ-EXT-D-H-0201 P01
Plan 15	Outline Access Management Plan	BING4-LT521-SEBAM-ZZ-ZZ-D-H-0908 P01
Plan 16	Outline Landscape Restoration Plan	60701792-ACM-ELS-S1-Z Z Z DR-LA-001 P06
Plan 17	Comparative Layout of the Scheme as Submitted and Revised Scheme	Figure 1-1a through to 1-1e

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Development Plan and Other Material Policy Considerations
- Appendix 2 - Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy
- Appendix 3 - Letters of Representation

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

### **National Planning Framework 4**

- A1.1 National Development 3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
- Policy 1 - Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises
  - Policy 2 - Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
  - Policy 3 - Biodiversity
  - Policy 4 - Natural Places
  - Policy 5 - Soils
  - Policy 6 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees
  - Policy 7 - Historic Assets and Places
  - Policy 11 - Energy
  - Policy 18 - Infrastructure First
  - Policy 20 - Blue and Green Infrastructure
  - Policy 22 - Flood Risk and Water Management
  - Policy 23 - Health and Safety
  - Policy 25 - Community Wealth Building
  - Policy 29 - Rural Development
  - Policy 33 - Minerals

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

- A1.2
- 28 - Sustainable Design
  - 29 - Design Quality and Place-making
  - 30 - Physical Constraints
  - 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside
  - 51 - Trees and Development
  - 53 - Minerals
  - 55 - Peat and Soils
  - 56 - Travel
  - 57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
  - 58 - Protected Species
  - 59 - Other important Species
  - 60 - Other Importance Habitats
  - 61 - Landscape
  - 62 - Geodiversity
  - 63 - Water Environment
  - 64 - Flood Risk
  - 65 - Waste Water Treatment
  - 66 - Surface Water Drainage
  - 68 - Community Renewable Energy Developments
  - 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
  - 73 - Air Quality
  - 74 - Green Networks
  - 77 - Public Access

### **The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 2024 (IMFLDP2)**

- A1.3 No specific policies apply. The plan does however confirm the boundaries of the regionally significant Special Landscape Areas.

## **Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance**

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

## **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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

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

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

### National Policy

- 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 b) New and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more, and/or c) New and/or upgraded Infrastructure directly supporting on and offshore high voltage electricity lines, cables and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations. This proposal aligns with parts of both b) and c) and therefore, is classed as a national development, and as such received in principle support.
- 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 NPF4 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 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, aviation and defence interests, telecommunications and broadcasting installations, traffic and roads, historic environment, hydrology, water environment and flood risk, trees, biodiversity, decommissioning and site restoration are all addressed. 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 Councils Social Charter.

### **Highland wide Local Development Plan**

- A.2.11 The principal Highland-wide Local Development Plan policy against which the application requires to be determined is the Policy 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure. This policy offers support for electricity transmission infrastructure, having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Such support is subject to the proposals not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment.
- 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 any positive development allocation and is outwith a defined Settlement Development Area (SDA). As such HwLDP Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside applies and sets out that all development in the countryside will be determined on the basis of a number of criteria. Pertinent matters to this proposal include siting and design, being compatible with the existing pattern of development, landscape character and capacity, as well as drainage and servicing implications. The main aspect of the development is the formation of the new level substation platform of just over 10Ha in area, the construction of the control building and apparatus within the site, including transformers and double busbar, boundary security fencing and formation of new and upgraded access track, resulting mainly in the loss of commercial forestry land and upland grazing as well as peat soil resource. The site also does not form part of any natural or built heritage designation, but is located close to the Glen Affric National Nature Reserve.

### **Area Local Development Plan**

- A.2.14 The application site lies outwith any allocated site, delineated settlement boundary and safeguarding notation. The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) was adopted on 27 June 2024 and now postdates NPF4. Although the IMFLDP2 does not contain any site-specific policies relevant to this proposal its general policies provide more detail than the equivalent ones in NPF4. In particular, Policy 2 Nature Protection, Restoration and Enhancement which provides the hook for the Council's Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance.

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

- A.2.15 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 9.4 GW (June 2023). Therefore, a further 10.6 GW 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 25-30 GW of installed capacity across the UK identified by the Climate Change Committee.

- A.2.16 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.2.17 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.2.18 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 build out.