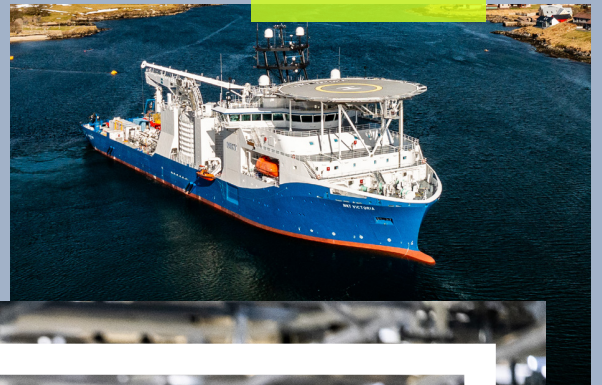
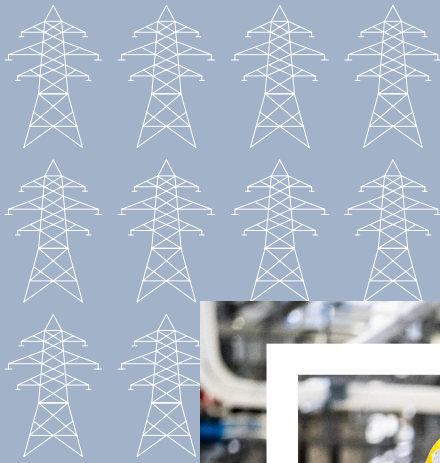




# How stakeholder feedback influences our proposals

September 2024



## How stakeholder feedback influences our decisions

As a licensed electricity Transmission Operator, we have a legal duty to operate, maintain, and improve the high voltage electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland.

As a stakeholder-led business, we aim to be as accessible as possible to all our stakeholders and keep them informed and consulted throughout a project's lifecycle. We recognise the clear benefits of engaging early with our stakeholders and carry out extensive voluntary consultation activities on our projects which exceeds what is required by the planning process. This engagement allows us to collate relevant and insightful feedback, ensuring local communities and wider stakeholders can help inform the development and design of our project proposals.

Throughout the consultation process we listen closely to identify any areas of concern, additional local information relevant to the project's design and issues arising, allowing us to then consider next steps required prior to refining proposals. This may involve amending our initial proposals, considering, or investigating alternative routes or sites or looking to adopt a different technology in some areas.

We begin to develop projects following the outcome of the Electricity System Operator's (ESO's) recommendations, confirmation of project need and approval of OFGEM funding. This means, when we consult on projects, we are consulting on the development of the project between

its start and end points or at a specific site. We are not consulting on whether the project is needed or whether it should be sited elsewhere as these requirements have already been identified at a national level to ensure the security of the transmission network and electricity supply to consumers. We welcome feedback on the development proposals described at our consultation events and are committed to considering this feedback in the design of our projects.

Over and above our extensive voluntary engagement, we are also required to hold statutory and formal pre-application consultation events for many of our infrastructure projects. These events are often very similar to our earlier voluntary consultation; however they must meet the requirements set out by the relevant planning authorities or Scottish Ministers. We will always inform stakeholders when consultation events are carried out in line with pre-application planning requirements.

Throughout the last two years we have carried out the first stages of these required consultations, as outlined on page 3. We are now approaching the final stages of engagement, which include the pre application events.

A list of some of the core stakeholder groups we engage with, alongside the typical methods of engagement can be found below:

Stakeholder group	Examples	Type of engagement undertaken
Statutory consultees	Local Authorities, Community Councils, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (HES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project overviews, regional briefings, progress updates</li> <li>Meetings to identify opportunities to create community legacy through projects</li> <li>Discuss constraints and how we can avoid them (e.g. through consideration of design options or different technology choices).</li> <li>Request consultation feedback when undertaking voluntary and statutory consultation.</li> <li>Undertake meetings to agree mitigation and approaches to construction and operation such that we can develop projects that avoid and reduce impacts to the environment.</li> </ul>
Non-statutory consultees	Scottish Water, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Scottish Rights of Way and Access (Scotways), Scottish Wild Land Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings to provide relevant project updates, discuss concerns, ideas and feedback</li> </ul>
Community members, local organisations, and elected members'	Homeowners, local residents and businesses, resident's associations, elected members, recreational organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public consultation events where we discuss our proposed infrastructure and invite feedback verbally, through formal forms, letters or emails to help inform our decision making</li> <li>Statutory consultation events as part of our pre-application process</li> <li>Webinars to provide project updates and overall programme</li> <li>Community Liaison Group meetings to provide updates and discuss development of proposals</li> <li>Attendance at local Community Council meetings to share updates and receive feedback</li> <li>Phone calls, emails and visits with community members and residents associations</li> <li>Meetings with elected members to provide project updates, discuss community concerns and feedback</li> </ul>

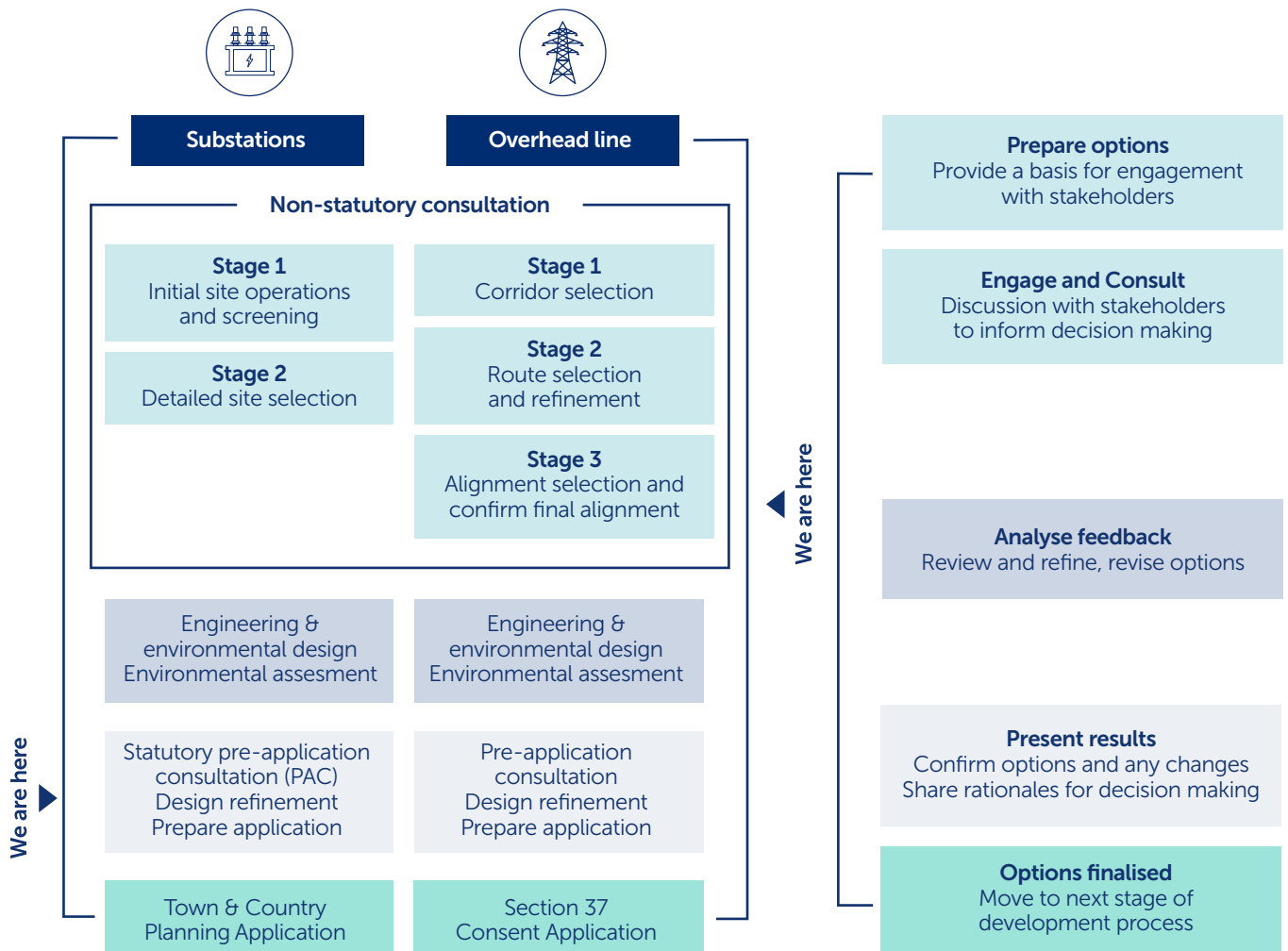
Landowners & occupiers	Crofters, tenant farmers, occupiers of properties, land managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with landowners and occupiers to gain their feedback and discuss project progress with regards to substation locations, overhead line routes, alignment options and access requirements.</li> <li>• Webinars with land management organisations to provide project information and updates</li> <li>• Arranging survey access with landowners for contractors to undertake specialist surveys to further project design and development of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).</li> <li>• Work with landowners and managers to develop access protocols covering biosecurity.</li> </ul>
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## Pathway to 2030 case studies

In direct response to stakeholder feedback received during engagement undertaken as part of our overhead line routing and substation site selection process, we announced the following changes in December 2023:

- On the **Beauly to Peterhead, via New Deer and Blackhillock overhead line**, at Blackhillock, south-east of Keith, the proposed new substation site changed from that consulted on earlier in 2023 to the east of Keith, to one of the other shortlisted sites to the south-east of the existing Blackhillock substation.
- On the **Fiddes 400kV Substation** project, in response to significant community concerns raised regarding the previously proposed new substation at Fiddes in the Howe of the Mearns, a new proposed site in Fetteresso Forest was identified and has now been progressed as our proposed site (Hurlie Substation).
- On the **Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly overhead line**, additional options suggested during feedback from landowners and local communities are being assessed and will be consulted on where these are considered viable options from an engineering and environmental perspective.
- On the **Kintore to Tealing 400kV project**, additional alignment options are being considered following consultation feedback. These alignments—which will be assessed in parallel with other alignment options—are around Careston, Drumoak and Echt.

## How you can influence the current stage of our projects



Across all of the projects we welcome your thoughts and opinions on the detail of our plans, where you think we can make improvements, concerns about the impact of our work and what you think of the refinements or changes we have made.

The independent Electricity System Operator, National Grid ESO, has identified the upgrades and proposed technology choices that are necessary to help meet UK and Scottish Government climate change and energy security targets. Ofgem's approval of the need for these upgrades was based on these recommendations from National Grid ESO. We don't decide on the overall need for the Pathway to 2030 projects: that's National Grid ESO's and Ofgem's role. Therefore, we can't consult on the core necessity of these 2030 plans.

In our consultations, we focus on SSEN Transmission projects, and any feedback related to other local developments should be directed to the relevant consultations for those projects. We know that stakeholders are keen to understand the full extent of any energy developments in their area. Applications to connect to the transmission network are made to National Grid ESO and undergo a lengthy process of assessment before we begin to develop a network connection for them. We aim to be transparent about projects looking to connect to our network but are not permitted to disclose any details until they are in the public domain. A list of projects that hold contracts for Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) with National Grid ESO is available from their website: [nationalgrideso.com](https://nationalgrideso.com).

We seek feedback on the following:

## Overhead lines

We are seeking feedback on:

- Corridor, route and alignment options (depending on the stage of development) and whether there are any specific concerns on the options.
- Final alignment proposals ahead of planning submissions.
- Suggestions to minimise impacts and feedback on local constraints in areas such as land use, cultural heritage, natural heritage, properties, local residents, local landscape and visual considerations.
- Identification of existing access tracks which may be utilised or access issues which may affect residents.
- Any other information consultees wish us to consider.

## Substations

We are seeking feedback on:

- Our site selection and preferred site.
- Changes to suggested temporary compounds or laydown areas at substation sites.
- Feedback on screening and landscape mitigation - suggestions around tree and shrub species to be planted can be taken on board in the landscape design plan (please note that land being developed can remain in private ownership and this may limit the influence on landscaping. We are seeking to balance landowner requirements for the sites against landscape mitigation requirements.
- Identification of existing access tracks which may be utilised or access issues which may affect residents.
- For some of our substations a number of colour options are available, and we can look to agree recommendations (based on community feedback) subject to advice from our landscape advisors and approval from the planning authority.
- Any other information consultees wish us to consider.

## General feedback

- If you live close to a proposed substation or adjacent to a potential overhead line alignment, we particularly want to work with you to discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
- Ideas for opportunities to deliver local improvements and legacy benefits through our Pathway to 2030 Projects. For example, delivering biodiversity net gain, enhancing recreation opportunities, making road improvements, etc.
- Suggested improvements to the accessibility of consultation materials, project information or website to support your feedback.



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