Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report

LT383 Alyth to Tealing Overhead Line (OHL) 400kV Upgrade

November 2024

VOLUME 2: CHAPTER 6 – SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

Figures (Volume 3 of this EIA Report)

There are no Figures associated with this chapter.

Appendices (Volume 4 of this EIA Report)

- Appendix 6.1: Scoping Matrix
- Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion
- Appendix 6.3: Gate Check Report

6. SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The EIA Regulations require that an EIA should describe the likely significant effects of a proposed development on the environment. Scoping of potential likely significant effects having regard to the physical impacts of a proposed development provides a basis for ensuring that the assessment of environmental effects is appropriately limited to issues of genuine potential significance. This ensures a proportionate approach to EIA that is focused on likely significant effects to be considered and assessed. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders early in the process, with advice and input from key consultees being sought at the early stages of a project, helps greatly to inform decisions about the design and EIA work for a proposed development.

6.1.2 This chapter describes the pre-application consultation, the Scoping process and further consultation that was undertaken to determine the scope of the EIA Report. This chapter also includes a brief description of the environmental receptors of potential significance associated with the Proposed Development which are addressed in detail in the EIA Report, and those that are scoped out.

6.1.3 Two stages of consultation were undertaken to inform the local community of the Proposed Development, which are detailed in the PAC Report (submitted as a separate document to support the Section 37 application). A summary is provided within this chapter.

6.2 Consultation with Stakeholders and the Local Community

6.2.1 SSEN Transmission has sought to maintain an open dialogue with local communities spread across the route of the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. This has included engaging with local elected members, Community Councils and landowners, residents and businesses that may be affected by the Proposed Development.

6.2.2 Two stages of consultation were held where local stakeholders could meet with the project team to discuss the proposals in more detail. These were advertised using various platforms: local newspapers, SSEN Transmission's social media channels, and the dedicated project webpage. In addition, a letter was delivered to homes and businesses within the locale advertising the dates, times, and locations of the consultation events.

Stage 1

6.2.3 Engagement with stakeholders was undertaken via statutory consultee update workshops hosted on Microsoft Teams from December 2022, which included representatives of NatureScot, SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Forestry and local authorities. Attendees were invited to ask questions and make comments as well as submit written feedback or attend separate meetings with members of the project team if required.

6.2.4 To support initial stage 1 consultation events, a Consultation Booklet, was prepared and published in February 2024 and uploaded to the project website. The Consultation Booklet provided details on the Proposed Development and sought comments from stakeholders and members of the public.

6.2.5 The stage 1 consultation events were held on the 4th to 7th March 2024. These are detailed in **Error! Reference source not found.**. A total of 263 people attended these. A period allowing for additional feedback was open for six weeks after the first public event.

Table 6-1 Consultation Events

Date	Event
4th March 2024	Errol Village Hall, North Bank Dykes, Errol, PH2 7QH
5th March 2024	Tayside Institute Community Centre, 90-92 High Street, Newburgh, KY14 6DA
6th March 2024	Alyth Town Hall, Victoria Street, Alyth, PH11 8AX
7th March 2024	Tealing Village Hall, Hall Road, Inveraldie, Tealing, DD4 0QW

6.2.6 A total of 4 individual responses and several responses from statutory and non-statutory consultees were received during the first consultation period and, these are set out using a theme-based approach in Table 6-2 below. Both event feedback and statutory stakeholder feedback received through the consultation process are included. Please note that this represents the responses from the first event at the time (May 2024) and therefore does not reflect the work undertaken and reported within this EIA Report.

Table 6-2 Consultation Feedback from the Stage 1 Consultation Events

Theme	Response
Electro Magnetic Field (EMF) Concerns regarding people living close to OHL and the health risk associated with the increase in voltage.	SSEN Transmission develop, build and operate infrastructure to meet all health and safety legislation and guidance set by relevant bodies - including the UK Government, Scottish Government, the Health and Safety Executive and our regulator, Ofgem – including that associated with EMFs. In respect of EMFs, SSEN Transmission follow the guidance as set by the UK Government, which in turn is informed by international guidance. As well as setting exposure limits that protect against known, established effects of EMF, the UK Government's guidance also includes precautionary measures to protect against possible effects below the exposure limits that have not been established by science. In addition to this, the UK Health Security Agency and Department of Health have a remit to review new research in this area and ensure that current guidelines and policies are reflective of that research. Furthermore, the UK Government's latest policy on EMF is set out in National Policy Statement EN-5, (NPS EN-5) which was reissued in November 2023 and came into force on 17 January 2024. This latest policy is reflective of that review process and in line with the NPS EN-5. The current UK Government guidance, informed by relevant international guidance, is therefore still considered appropriate by the UK Government and their public health experts. Whilst electricity consenting decisions are devolved to Scottish Ministers and the NPS EN-5 is therefore not all relevant in Scotland, we can confirm compliance with all EMF guidance as set out in the NPS EN-5. There have been over four decades of research looking into whether EMF can cause health effects and there are no established effects below the exposure limits. When SSEN Transmission design OHLs, substations and cables they are designed to ensure that they will not exceed those exposure limits, even when operating at 100% capacity. SSEN Transmission also ensure that precautionary measures are applied to the design where required, providing information on compliance as part of the consenting process, which will be publicly available through an EMF Report submitted as a separate report as part of the Section 37 application. In summary, the guidance followed, which remains subject to ongoing review as required, ensures that safety measures will be applied to the 400kV OHL

Theme	Response
	infrastructure protecting all against EMF exposure, keeping the network safe for the public.
OHL noise OHL noise concerns regarding noise from operation of OHLs.	A Noise Impact Assessment is currently being prepared and will be submitted as part of the EIA associated with the forthcoming Section 37 consent application.[1] This identifies any adverse noise impacts that may result from construction activities and the operation of the OHL and proposes appropriate mitigation in response that will be finalised in agreement with the relevant Planning Authorities and the ECU.
Benefit to local population Queries regarding how the local population might benefit from the proposals, i.e., cleaner, cheaper energy.	The Proposed Development forms part of the Pathway to 2030, a series of projects to increase the capacity of the transmission network in northern Scotland. It is part of the national effort to upgrade OHLs across Great Britain to connect and transport renewable electricity to communities around Scotland and beyond, especially from offshore wind farms In terms of Community Benefit, SSEN Transmission have consulted on a Community Benefit Fund for projects until 2026, a first for a transmission operator in Scotland. This fund allows SSEN Transmission to work directly with local communities to support initiatives in northern Scotland. Applications for a Regional Fund are now open. This is the first round of funding available, aimed at supporting projects that make a positive impact in communities. SSEN Transmission want to give back to the communities hosting their transmission network and to help fund projects that can leave a lasting, positive legacy in those areas. SSEN Transmission are encouraging the UK Government and Ofgem to recognise the crucial role the north of Scotland plays in energy targets in any upcoming guidance, ensuring that community benefits will reflect this significance. Additionally, the projects will boost the economy, supporting local jobs and businesses. Recent studies show SSEN Transmission's Pathway to 2030 programme could contribute over £6bn to the UK's economy, support 20,000 jobs across the UK, and benefit Scotland by around £2.5bn, supporting 9,000 jobs.
Consultation events It was raised that consultations should occur over a number of weeks to give more people the chance to attend.	In March 2024, a series of consultation events were held at four locations along the routes of the Proposed Development and the proposed Alyth to Tealing 400 kV OHL upgrade. Information was displayed at each of those events and staff were on hand to answer queries. All information is also available to view on the SSEN Transmission project webpage and the consultation period was open for six weeks after the first public event. Additional consultation is due to take place in early June 2024 with an additional six-week consultation period open for people to view material and provide feedback.[2]
Consultation with landowners Concern raised that there has not been direct communication with all those closely affected.	In addition to the series of public consultation events in March and June 2024, SSEN Transmission's team of Land Managers have carried out an extensive engagement process, identifying and contacting all known potentially affected landowners. That process will continue throughout the project as required.
Energy at the point of need Concern raised that the work being carried out will ultimately not be for Scotland's benefit noting that projects should be located where energy is required.	SSEN Transmission is responsible for where and how the high voltage transmission network operates in the north of Scotland. However, they do not determine where energy is generated – nor where it is needed.

[1] A Noise Impact Assessment is now available in Chapter 14 (Volume 2)

[2] See 'Stage 2' below for detail on the second stage of consultation.

Theme	Response
	They have a legal obligation to provide electricity generators access to the network, so that the electricity generated can be transported across Great Britain to meet the energy demand of homes and businesses. The north of Scotland is rich in renewable energy, especially wind, water, and marine sources, meaning this region is vital for the UK and Scotland's climate goals. SSEN Transmission's area covers a quarter of the UK landmass and will be crucial in the move towards a low carbon future.
Undergrounding of OHLs A query raised regarding the potential undergrounding of OHLs to reduce impact.	Whilst SSEN Transmission are committed to exploring the possibility of undergrounding at sensitive locations where there is clear evidence to justify it, this presents significant challenges due to a range of technical, operational, environmental and economic factors and may not always be the best option. In particular, it may not represent the best solution for landowners due to the greater footprint and associated impact on agricultural land, as well as the requirement for additional above ground infrastructure to manage system requirements. Further information on the challenges and costs involved can be found in our undergrounding briefing note: 2030 challenges[3].
Wildlife and biodiversity Concerns that there will be a detrimental impact on wildlife and biodiversity	SSEN Transmission prioritise environmental protection in our infrastructure projects, strictly adhering to environmental policies and regulations. We follow a mitigation hierarchy strategy of "*avoid, minimise, mitigate and restore*" to safeguard local, national and internationally designated environmentally protected areas. SSEN Transmission also acknowledge that minimising impacts is not enough on its own, and therefore have committed to delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on all projects; as well as compensatory planting for any trees felled during the construction phase, where possible with native species. During assessments, comprehensive surveys identify potentially affected wildlife, guiding mitigation efforts. SSEN Transmission also assess habitats and other species along our routes. Our consultation process to date has highlighted sensitive areas, and we continue to work with environmental experts and seek community feedback to refine our approach.[4]
Cultural heritage Concern regarding impact on Scheduled Monuments.	When planning OHL projects, SSEN Transmission consider environmental, cultural, and built heritage impact. SSEN Transmission make use of national archives and data sources as well as gathering data from Local Authorities and detailed site surveys to identify and assess the potential impact on archaeological sites, listed buildings, and other heritage assets. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report detail these findings and recommend ways to lessen any potential adverse effects. We have received feedback about sensitive archaeological and cultural sites from a range of stakeholders all of which our environmental experts have considered. Where there is the potential for direct impact on a Scheduled Monument, we will discuss this with Historic Environment Scotland and seek Scheduled Monument Consent where required.[5]
Construction Concerns about impact on the local area.	Construction working hours will typically be restricted to 0700 hours to 1900 hours Monday to Friday and 0700 hours to 1300 hours on Saturday, with only some continuous activities carried out by exception.[6]

[3] SSEN Transmission. The Challenges with Undergrounding at 400 kV (v8) (online). Available at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/2030-projects/2030-project-documents/the_challenges_with_undergrounding_at_400kv_v8.pdf

[4] Chapter 8: Ecology (Volume 2) provides more detail on this.

[5] Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage (Volume 2) now provides more detail on this.

[6] Please note that these times have since been revised, as per Chapter 3: Project Description.

Theme	Response
	The Contractor will prepare and adopt a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to minimise any potential impacts during construction. These documents will be approved by the Planning Authority and ECU in advance of construction starting and will include contact details for the Construction Site Manager, who will be the main point of contact with the local community during construction. In addition, the Contractor will prepare and adopt a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to ensure that appropriate mitigation and management strategies are identified and implemented. This will include the identification of any road widening, junction improvements or repairs that will be required. Condition surveys of the public highway will be carried out before works start on site, and again upon completion, with any defects repaired to ensure the public highway is left in no worse state once the works are complete.[7]
Additional Feedback From other statutory and non-statutory consultees.	Additional detailed feedback from statutory and non-statutory consultees was also received which will be taken into account as the projects progress. Discussion with consultees and others will continue as required.

Stage 2

6.2.7 Comments received from stakeholders in response to the Consultation Booklet (February 2024) or following the stage 1 consultation events, were set out within the updated Consultation Booklet, published 20th May 2024.

6.2.8 A second series of consultation events were held on the 3rd to 6th June 2024, where local stakeholders could meet with the project team to discuss the proposals and feedback in more detail. These are detailed in Error! Reference source not found.. A total of 106 people attended these events.

Table 6-3 Second Consultation Events

Date	Event
3rd June 2024	Errol Village Hall, North Bank Dykes, Errol, PH2 7QH
4th June 2024	Tayside Institute Community Centre, 90-92 High Street, Newburgh, KY14 6DA
5th June 2024	Tealing Village Hall, Hall Road, Inveraldie, Tealing, DD4 0QW
6th June 2024	Alyth Town Hall, Victoria Street, Alyth, PH11 8AX

6.2.9 No individual responses were received during the consultation period, which ran from 20th May to 18th July 2024, but several responses were received from statutory and non-statutory consultees. Responses from statutory consultees for the stage 2 event were largely the same as for the stage 1 event, with additional feedback received with respect to forestry only.

6.2.10 There was a request to provide further information on forestry (types and areas to be felled, restocking and compensation) within future consultation material. At the time, SSEN Transmission's response was that detailed information with regard to forestry felling, restocking and compensation was not yet available. The expected

[7] Please see Chapter 12: Traffic and Transport (Volume 2) for an updated assessment and proposed mitigation.

forestry impact and approach to addressing such impacts however has been set out within Chapter 10: Forestry (Volume 2).

6.3 Scoping

6.3.1 An EIA Scoping Report was issued to the ECU in June 2024. A Scoping Opinion was provided by Scottish Ministers on 3rd September 2024. A summary of the environmental topics scoped in/ out of the EIA is provided in Table 6-4 below.

6.3.2 The responses, contained within the Scoping Opinion, were considered in detail during the EIA process. Appendix 6.1 (Volume 4) includes a matrix detailing the key issues that were raised in the Scoping Opinion and how and where they are addressed in the EIA Report.

6.3.3 A summary of the key points raised in the Scoping Opinion is provided in Table 6-4.

6.3.4 This summary is not intended to be all-encompassing and contains only the main points which are considered to be of particular relevance to the context of the technical chapters (Chapters 7 to 13 (Volume 2)) of this EIA Report. For example, points of note relating to certain guidance documents have not been included. Complete details are provided in Appendix 6.2 (Volume 4).

Table 6-4 Summary of Environmental Topics Scoped In/Out of the EIA

Topic	Scoped In	Scoped Out
Landscape Character and Visual Impact	None	All aspects – topic scoped out.
Ecology	Construction and operation impacts upon the following: • ecologically designated sites; • legally protected and notable species; and • habitats.	Impacts on the following designated sites: • Firth of Tay and Eden Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and • Loch of Kinnordy Ramsar site. • Impacts on the following species: • Great Crested Newt; and • Wildcat.
Ornithology	Construction impacts upon ornithological features including species and habitats.	None – while it is highly improbable that any SPAs would be affected by the Proposed Development, the SPAs identified in Chapter 8: Ornithology (Volume 2), as European Sites, will be subject to the HRA process.
Forestry	Construction and operation impacts upon the following: • commercial forestry; • wind throw; • ground disturbance; • native ground flora; and • soils.	• Ancient and veteran trees; • a detailed forest hydrological assessment; and • an assessment of timber volumes and harvesting plans.
Cultural Heritage	Construction impacts upon the following: • permanent physical impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets due to construction (such as foundation strengthening);	Permanent setting changes during Operation to designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Topic	Scoped In	Scoped Out
	• permanent physical impacts on non-designated assets due to construction of access tracks or other infrastructure; • permanent physical impacts on non-designated heritage assets due to construction of temporary construction compounds or other works areas; and • temporary impacts on the setting of designated heritage assets due to the introduction of elements such as machinery and lighting during construction.	
Traffic and Transport	Construction and operation impacts upon the following: • severance of communities; • fear and intimidation; • road user and pedestrian safety; • pedestrian and non-motorised amenity; • pedestrian and non-motorised delay; • road vehicle driver and passenger delay; and • large loads.	Hazardous loads.
Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Soils	Construction and operation impacts upon the following: • Class 1 soils (blanket bog/peat); • surface watercourses; • groundwater bodies; • Private Water Supplies; • flood risk; and • groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems.	• geology receptors; and • land contamination.
Noise and Vibration	Noise and vibration during construction, and operational effects of noise from the OHL.	Vibration impacts during Operation.
Land Use and Recreation	None	All aspects – topic scoped out.
Electric and Magnetic Fields	None	All aspects – topic scoped out.
Climate Change	None	Life Cycle emissions embodied in project construction materials and components – topic scoped out.
Socio-Economics	None	All aspects – topic scoped out.
Major Accidents and Disasters	None	All aspects – topic scoped out.

6.3.5 The Scoping Opinion is attached as Appendix 6.2 (Volume 4).

6.4 Key Scoping Issues

6.4.1 In response to the consultation received through both the scoping process and the ongoing stakeholder consultation exercise, issues relating to the following key environmental areas associated with the Proposed Development have been identified as the most relevant to the Proposed Development and are therefore addressed in the EIA and discussed in the EIA Report.

Ecology

6.4.2 The potential effects, some of which may be significant from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on ecological features can be categorised as follows:

- permanent habitat loss (e.g. the loss of important habitats due to construction or other infrastructure);
- temporary habitat loss (e.g. the temporary loss of habitat to accommodate temporary construction compounds or other works areas);
- habitat degradation as a result of pollution incidents (e.g. fuel or oil spills);
- permanent or temporary changes to hydrological conditions which may affect vegetation and habitats (e.g. where tracks intercept flushes or infrastructure impacts upon a groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystem);
- loss of habitat which supports protected and/or important species;
- creation of barriers to animal movements (e.g. the construction of a wider wayleave corridor could impact the movement of bats);
- temporary disturbance and/or displacement of species during construction (e.g. disturbance of protected species whilst occupying places of shelter); and,
- potential for direct mortality of species during construction (e.g. as a result of increased vehicular traffic, or as a result of pollution incident).

6.4.3 The nearest European site to the Proposed Development is the River Tay SAC which is crossed by the Proposed Development site at two points in the far north of the Proposed Development: the River Isla and Dean Water. This site is designated for clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels. It is also designated for otter, Atlantic salmon river lamprey, brook lamprey and sea lamprey. Given the connectivity between the Proposed Development and the SAC, there is the possibility of impacts on the SAC. Thus, it is considered necessary to carry out a separate HRA Screening exercise to these for likely significant effects on European sites from the Proposed Development.

Ornithology

6.4.4 The potential significant effects from the construction of the Proposed Development on ornithological features can be categorised as follows:

- temporary loss of habitat which supports important species of birds;
- temporary disturbance and/or displacement of birds during construction; and
- potential for direct mortality of birds during construction (e.g. as a result of increased vehicular traffic, or as a result of pollution incident).

Forestry

6.4.5 Recognised significant adverse effect on forestry typically include:

- removal of large area of commercial forest resulting in reduction of shelter to area of the site, potential minor loss of habitat;
- removal or coppicing of trees within AWI and NWSS woodlands;
- increased probability of wind throw;
- disturbance of ground by machinery; and
- tree debris/mulch remaining on site may cause area to take longer to recover the native ground flora.

6.4.6 Removal of trees in commercial forestry is not necessary a significant effect if the rotation is at or close to economic felling age but an equivalent area of restocking would be anticipated. Equally, removal or coppicing of trees from AWI or NWSS woodlands may not present a significant effect if soils remain intact and the measures are appropriate to habitat management objectives.

6.4.7 The creation of new or enhanced access to woodland or within woodland may have a significant positive effect on timber harvesting and extraction.

Cultural Heritage

6.4.8 Due to the nature of the construction works proposed, the potential for significant effects from the construction of the Proposed Development on heritage assets are thought to be minimal as the footprint of the towers have been previously disturbed. However, the potential impacts resulting from construction could include:

- permanent physical impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets due to construction (such as foundation strengthening);
- permanent physical impacts on non-designated assets due to construction of access tracks or other infrastructure;
- permanent physical impacts on non-designated heritage assets due to construction of temporary construction compounds or other works areas; and
- temporary impacts on the setting of designated heritage assets due to the introduction of elements such as machinery and lighting during construction.

Traffic and Transport

6.4.9 In accordance with IEMA Guidelines 2023[8] the environmental assessment of road traffic will assess the potential significance of effects for the following categories:

- severance of communities;
- fear and Intimidation;
- road user and pedestrian safety;
- pedestrian and non-motorised amenity;
- pedestrian & non-motorised delay;
- road vehicle driver and passenger delay; and
- large loads.

Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology, and Soils

6.4.10 The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to effects on soils, hydrogeology, and hydrology.

[8] IEMA (2023) Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement

6.4.11 During the construction and operational phases, excavation, temporary storage, backfilling and compaction of soils during construction and maintenance works represents a potential effect for geology and soils.

6.4.12 Disturbance of potentially contaminated soils and perched groundwater and creation of new pathways allowing migration of such contaminants to reach sensitive receptors (including construction workers, site users and the water environment) during construction.

6.4.13 During the construction and operational phases there are potential adverse effects on the water environment (including PWS, GWDTEs and other uses of water). There include:

- contamination of groundwater and surface water bodies from fuels, solvents, oil and other construction chemicals from chemical spillages through runoff to surface water bodies and unnamed watercourses or infiltration to groundwater aquifers;
- contamination from high levels of fine sediment in runoff (including the potential wash out of fine sediment from temporary spoil heaps, embankments, and access tracks);
- the effects of diffuse urban pollutants in surface water runoff (that may contain metals, hydrocarbons, and inert solids etc.) entering the ground and moving towards a receptor; and
- flood risk to construction site and potential impact elsewhere.

6.4.14 The potential secondary receptors are GWDTEs and PWS (if close by to the works, including access roads). Biodiversity specialists will identify sensitive water habitats along the route. At this stage, neither of these can be scoped out until further data collection has taken place.

6.4.15 Operational impacts on the water environment are expected to be minimal.

Noise and Vibration

6.4.16 At this preliminary stage, it is anticipated that possible effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development include:

- noise and vibration during the construction phase; and
- operational effects of noise from the overhead line.
  - the operational noise has the potential to increase following installation of the new conductors and in the increased operational voltage of the OHL; and
  - operational effects of noise from the 'corona discharge' during damp weather along the OHL.

Construction Noise

6.4.17 There is the potential for construction noise and vibration impacts depending on the proximity of receptors from static, quasi static and mobile plant items including:

- installation of and stringing of electricity towers, potentially including the use of cranes.

Operational Noise

6.4.18 OHL noise is generally associated with a phenomenon known as "corona discharge". This is essentially a limited electrical breakdown of the air which, in the main, occurs during damp weather. Corona discharge can potentially create a source of audible noise at receptors (a crackling sound occasionally accompanied by a low frequency hum in certain wet conditions). Power transmission line conductors are designed to minimise corona discharge, but this may be affected by minor surface irregularities caused by damage, insects, raindrops, or pollution. The highest noise levels generated by an OHL usually occur during light rain when water droplets, collecting on the

surface of the conductor, can initiate corona discharge. The number of droplets that collect, and hence the amount of noise, depends on the rate of rainfall.

6.5 Gate Check

6.5.1 In accordance with the good practice guidance for gate checking procedures for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the 1989 Act[9], a Gate Check Report was issued to the ECU on the 1st October 2024 The purpose of the Gate Check Report is to outline consultations with statutory and non-statutory consultees, engagement with the local community and how matters raised during the scoping process have been dealt with in the EIA Report. Key stakeholders are invited to comment on the Gate Check Report to ensure they are satisfied with the approach taken within the EIA Report prior to submission of the Section 37 application. A copy of the Gate Check Report is provided in Appendix 6.3 (Volume 4).

6.6 Issues Scoped Out of Assessment

6.6.1 It is considered that the following topics do not require to be the subject of detailed EIA work as it is considered that they are not likely to give rise to significant effects. They were referred to in the Scoping Report as topics to be scoped out from further consideration within the EIA Report. There was general agreement amongst consultees, as detailed within the Scoping Opinion (see Appendix 6.2 (Volume 4)), as to the proposed scope of the EIA Report.

Landscape and Visual

6.6.2 The majority of potential impacts on landscape character and visual amenity would relate to construction operations. Construction compounds, access tracks, scaffolds and construction activities would introduce new features and increased movement into parts of the landscape and views. However, these elements would be temporary in nature and potential impacts limited and localised. It is anticipated that construction compounds would be carefully sited to help minimise potential effects, particularly in relation to residential properties. All areas disturbed by construction would be reinstated and as such there would be very little or no discernible change upon completion of the works. Targeted assessment would be considered if any important trees or features are proposed to be removed within Drumkilbo Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL). However, as the works proposed in the area of the GDL are limited to reducing the crowns of some deciduous trees to maintain a suitable clearance between the trees and the OHL between Towers 646 and 647, further assessment in relation to Drumkilbo GDL has been scoped out.

6.6.3 At operation the reconductored towers would appear visually the same as the existing OHL and as such would not result in any discernible change. There is a potential requirement for removal of trees to create a wider wayleave corridor along the OHL, with the potential to result in longer term or permanent change. However, it is anticipated that any tree loss would be limited and very localised and as such would have little or no influence on the character of the landscape or nature of views.

6.6.4 Overall, although there is potential for localised landscape and visual effects during construction, the limited and temporary nature and short duration of these elements are unlikely to result in any significant effects on the identified landscape designation, LCTs and visual receptors. At operation, following completion of construction and reinstatement, little or no discernible change and therefore no significant effects are anticipated on any of the identified receptors.

[9] Energy Consents Unit (2022) Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989. (online) Available at: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2022/02/good-practice-guidance-applications-under-sections-36-37-electricity-act-1989/documents/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022/govscot%3Adocument/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022.pdf [Accessed: June 2024]

Ecology

6.6.5 The Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary SAC is scoped out because, although there is a hydrological link between the Proposed Development site and this SAC, there is no pathway for a pollution impact given the distance from the Proposed Development and the dilution and dispersal effect (e.g. by wave action of the marine environment) of potential pollutants upon entering Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary.

6.6.6 The Loch of Kinnordy Ramsar site is 9.3 km north-east of the Proposed Development. It also lies in the catchment area of the River Isla but is far upstream of the Proposed Development. Consequently, and in view of the nature of the Proposed Development, potential effects on this Ramsar site as a result of the Proposed Development are not predicted, therefore the Loch of Kinnordy Ramsar site will be scoped out of assessment.

6.6.7 The Proposed Development lies outside of the known core range of great crested newt. Consequently, it is not necessary to consider this species within an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA).

6.6.8 Suitable habitat for wildcat within the Proposed Development site is isolated from habitats in the wider area by large expanses of intensively farmed agricultural land which is generally avoided by wildcat. Consequently, it is not deemed necessary to consider this species within the EcIA.

Ornithology

6.6.9 It is highly improbable that SPAs in proximity to the Proposed Development, would be affected in any way by the Proposed Development. However, these SPAs, as European Sites, will also be subject to the HRA process as it has been concluded that a HRA Screening is required given the proximity to River Tay SAC.

Forestry

6.6.10 The forestry assessment will not include a full BS5837: 2012 assessment of all arboricultural features. Ancient and veteran trees, unless identified in a resilience survey of the existing OHL, have been scoped out.

6.6.11 Reference will be made if relevant to existing wet woodland and possibilities for incorporation within forest design plans will not extend to detailed forest hydrological assessment within the forestry chapter.

6.6.12 The hectarage of impact to woodland will be identified but assessment of timber volumes and harvesting plans for those areas is scoped out of the EIA

Cultural Heritage

6.6.13 The following has been scoped out of the assessment:

- permanent setting changes during Operation to designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Traffic and Transport

6.6.14 Of the categories included in the IEMA Guidelines[10], it is proposed only Hazardous Loads are scoped out. It is considered unlikely there will be material construction traffic generated whose loads would fall within the current classifications for carriage of dangerous goods (Class 1-9). Include a high-level summary of any aspects of your topic that have been scoped out from further assessment, and why.

Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology, and Soils

[10] IEMA (2023) Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement

6.6.15 From the baseline summary the following receptors can be scoped out:

Geology

6.6.16 Geology receptors are proposed to be scoped out of the study, due to the absence of viable receptors and shallow nature of the proposed ground disturbance works.

Land Contamination

6.6.17 The Proposed Development site is located in a predominantly rural setting. Limited potential contamination sources were locally identified, and these are unlikely to be present in the footprints of the existing towers. Excavation works associated with the foundation improvement will be small scale and in ground previously disturbed during the construction of the existing towers. As a consequence, risk to human health (visitors to the site and construction workers) from contamination has been scoped out of the assessment.

6.6.18 There is a minor potential that contaminated material is encountered during construction of the proposed access routes, however only temporary and limited disturbance to land is expected, and these works will be managed through the CEMD. Unexpected contaminated land will follow the GEMP 5.

6.6.19 It is unlikely that the Proposed Development would give rise to impacts through its operational phase.

6.6.20 Based on the above it is unlikely that contaminated land will be a significant constraint to the Proposed Development, or that the nature of the proposed works would result in significant environmental effects to contamination. As a result, this topic has been scoped out of the EIA Report.

Noise and Vibration

6.6.21 There are no known vibrational noise issues associated with the operation of the Proposed Development at nearby sensitive receptors. Therefore, it is proposed that vibration is scoped out of the EIA assessment.

Land Use and Recreation

6.6.22 No likely significant effects are predicted as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore assessment of land use and recreation has been scoped out of the EIA Report.

Electric and Magnetic Fields

6.6.23 Any resulting EMFs from the Proposed Development are compliant with National Policy and Industry Standards as specified with the Energy Network Association Code of Practice and Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002. Design clearances are also higher than minimum requirements. SSEN Transmission are confident that there is no potential for significant effect, therefore EMF has been scoped out of the EIA Report. However, while scoped out, an EMF Report will be provided as part of the Section 37 application.

Climate Change

6.6.24 A Climate Change Assessment is not required for the Proposed Development as it has been concluded that there will be a net positive effect on lifecycle Greenhouse Gas Emissions. It has been noted that there may be some negative impacts relating to emissions associated with land use change, however, these impacts are not predicted to be significant, therefore the topic has been scoped out of the EIA.

Socio-economics

6.6.25 The Proposed Development is expected to provide substantive support to the Scottish economy in terms of direct and indirect employment and business investment[11], with wider economic benefits that the project provides to facilitate large scale deployment of renewable generation in the North of Scotland. Therefore, this topic has been scoped out of the EIA as the Proposed Development falls within the ambit of development supported by established national policy.

6.6.26 A stand-alone Socio-economic Assessment will be provided to accompany the Planning Statement as part of the application to provide information on this topic to be considered in relation to wider policy.

Major Accidents and Disasters

No likely significant effects are predicted as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore assessment of major accidents and disasters has been scoped out of the EIA.

11 Scottish Futures Trust (2022) NPF4 Delivery Research Report. (online) Available at: https://www.scottishfuturestrust.org.uk/publications/documents/npf4-delivery-research-report [Accessed: June 2024]