

**Report on Consultation – Route Options**  
**Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid**  
**Connection**  
**January 2021**

**REF: LT295**



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Figure 1: Preferred and Secondary Route Options

## GLOSSARY

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Alignment	A centre line of an overhead line OHL, along with location of key angle structures.
Alignment (preferred)	An alignment for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of alignment options.
Alignment (proposed)	An alignment taken forward to consent application. It comprises a defined centre line for the overhead line and includes an indicative support structure (tower or pole) schedule, also specifying access arrangements and any associated construction facilities.
Amenity	The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape and visual quality. Also includes the impact of SHE Transmission plc's works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction activities.
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	A process intended to leave nature in a better state than it started using good practice principles established by the Business and Biodiversity Offset Programme (BBOP) and organisations including CIRIA, CIEEM and IEMA.
Conductor	A metallic wire strung from structure to structure, to carry electric current.
Consultation	The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views and, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
Corridor	A linear area which allows a continuous connection between the defined connection points. The Corridor may vary in width along its length; in unconstrained areas it may be many kilometres wide.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	Environmental Impact Assessment. A formal process codified by EU directive 2011/92/EU, and subsequently amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. The national regulations are set out in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. The EIA process is set out in Regulation 4(1) of the regulations and includes the preparation of an EIA Report by the developer to systematically identify, predict, assess and report on the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.
GWDTE	Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystem
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).
Micrositing	The process of positioning individual structures to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or poles.
Plantation Woodland	Woodland of any age that obviously originated from planting.
RAG Rating	Each topic within the environmental, technical and cost categories should be considered in terms of the potential for the development to be constrained and a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating applied as appropriate.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Route	A linear area of approximately 1 km width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points.
Route (preferred)	A route for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of route options.
Route (proposed)	A route taken forward following stakeholder consultation to the alignment selection stage of the overhead line routeing process.
Routeing	The work undertaken which leads to the selection of a proposed alignment, capable of being taken forward into the consenting process under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Semi-natural Woodland	Woodland that does not obviously originate from planting. The distribution of species will generally reflect the variations in the site and the soil. Planted trees must account for less than 30% of the canopy composition.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Areas of national importance. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.
Span	The section of overhead line between two structures.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated under the EC Habitats Directive to ensure that rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats or species of community interest are either maintained at or restored to a favourable conservation status.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Landscapes designated by the Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SHE Transmission plc works.
Study Area	The area within which the Corridor, route and alignment study takes place.
The National Grid	The electricity transmission network in the Great Britain.
Underground Cable (UGC)	An electric cable installed below ground, protected by insulating layers and marked closer to the surface to prevent accidental damage through later earthworks.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.
Wayleave	A voluntary agreement entered into between a landowner upon whose land an overhead line is to be constructed and SHE Transmission plc.

## PREFACE

This Report on Consultation has been prepared by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (SHE Transmission) with input by ASH Design and Assessment Ltd. to provide a summary of the responses received from key stakeholders (including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents) during consultation between October and December 2020 in response to the Preferred Route identified for the proposed Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection<sup>1</sup>.

Under normal circumstances, consultation on the project would involve public engagement events held in the local area. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic these events could not be held.

To continue engagement on the project SHE Transmission developed an online consultation tool, to enable the local community to experience the full exhibition from home on a computer, tablet or mobile device. The online exhibition was designed to look and feel like a real consultation in a community hall, with exhibition boards, maps, and the opportunity to share views on the proposals.

Visitors were able to engage directly with the project team, via a live chat function, where they could ask any questions they might have about the project and share their feedback on the current proposals.

The virtual consultation events took place via the project website <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/bhlaraidh-extension-windfarm-connection/> at the following times:

- 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020; 13:00 – 15:00 and 17:00 – 19:00; and
- 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020; 14:00 – 16:00.

This Report on Consultation also provides a summary of how SHE Transmission have responded to comments received by key stakeholders on the Preferred Route and details the actions that will be taken as the project progresses through to the alignment stage.

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<sup>1</sup> SHE Transmission (November 2020). Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Consultation Document

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm (18 turbines, total capacity 100.8 MW) in the Highlands requires connection to the electricity transmission network at Fort Augustus substation by October 2024. It is anticipated that this would be achieved via the construction and operation of a new 132 kV single circuit Overhead Line (OHL). It is anticipated that the connection into Fort Augustus substation (approximately 500 m in length) would be by underground cable (UGC).

This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which has been undertaken for the project between October and December 2020. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the rationale for, and approach to, the selection of the Preferred Route.

This report describes the key responses received and provides detail on the actions proposed in response to the issues raised. The consultation process has confirmed that Route Option 1A should be taken forward as the Preferred Route, within which further study will seek to identify alignment options. Following comments received from Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), the principal landowner for the site, additional alignment options will also be considered within Route Option 1 (termed secondary route option within this report) pending further consultation with FLS.

The Preferred Route has been selected on the basis that it is considered to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical and economic factors, and will become the Proposed Route taken forward to the alignment stage of this project, together with the secondary route option.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and Purpose of Document

- 1.1.1 Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc (SHE Transmission) is proposing to construct a new 132 kV overhead line (OHL) between Bhlaraidh Extension wind farm on-site substation and Fort Augustus substation. The project is known as the Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection.
- 1.1.2 The project would comprise a new 132 kV single circuit OHL supported on a trident wood pole. This is the most economical option which minimises access requirements and environmental impacts during construction due to reduced foundation and access requirements. In areas of higher elevation, exposure and wind loading require that more durable support structures be used, and steel lattice towers, or similar, may be required. This is discussed further in Section 2.3.
- 1.1.3 This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process for the project between October and December 2020, during the route option stage of the project. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with key stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the rationale for and approach to, the selection of the Preferred Route<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.1.4 The report describes the key responses received and details the actions taken in response to the issues raised.

## 1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of this report are:
- To document the consultation process between October and December 2020;
  - To summarise feedback received from stakeholders;
  - To document actions undertaken in response to feedback where relevant; and
  - To clearly set out how the Preferred Route has been informed by the consultation process.

## 1.3 Document Structure

- 1.3.1 This Report on Consultation is structured as follows:

Section 1: Introduction - setting out the purpose of the Report on Consultation;

Section 2: Project Overview – outlines the background to the project and provides a description of the key elements;

Section 3: Consideration of Route Options – describes how the preferred route was identified;

Section 4: The Consultation Process – describes the framework for consultation and methods which have been employed;

Section 5: Consultation Responses from Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees - summarises the responses from these bodies;

Section 6: Community Consultation Responses from the Virtual Public Exhibition – summarises the range of responses and key comments and issues arising through the consultation process;

Section 7: Project Responses to Consultation – describes how the comments and issues raised during consultation will be addressed; and

Section 8: Conclusions and Next Steps – provides a summary of the conclusions reached and actions going forward.

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<sup>2</sup> Identified within the Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Consultation Document (November 2020), produced by SHE Transmission plc

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 2.1 The Need for the Project

- 2.1.1 SHE Transmission plc is a wholly owned subsidiary of the SSE plc group of companies. SHE Transmission plc owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a license under the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.
- 2.1.2 The proposed Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm (18 turbines, total capacity 100.8 MW) in the Highlands requires connection to the electricity transmission network at Fort Augustus substation by October 2024. It is anticipated that this would be achieved via the construction and operation of a new 132 kV single circuit overhead line (OHL). It is anticipated that the connection into Fort Augustus substation (approximately 500 m in length) would be by underground cable (UGC). The new connection would be routed between the proposed Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm on-site substation and Fort Augustus substation (see Figure 1).
- 2.1.3 The Bhlaraidh Extension wind farm on-site substation location has recently been altered by the wind farm developer to a location approximately 90 m south of the position indicated on the Consultation Document figures. This new location is indicated on **Figure 1**, and the movement is considered to have negligible effect on the assessments carried out to date.

### 2.2 Preferred Technology Solution

- 2.2.1 Based on the options assessed, the preferred solution is a new 132 kV single circuit OHL supported on a trident wood pole<sup>3</sup>. This is the most economical option which minimises access requirements and environmental impacts during construction due to reduced foundation and access requirements.

### 2.3 Alternative Options Considered

- 2.3.1 While SHE Transmission plc has determined that a trident wood pole is the preferred technological solution for this project, it is recognised that there may be potential environmental and technical considerations that require the use of alternative technology options for lengths of the connection. For this particular development, much of the ground within the Corridor is at an elevation in excess of 300 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with some areas in excess of 500 m AOD, including the site of the Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm on-site substation. While it is possible in some instances to utilise wood pole structures up to 500 m AOD, issues such as exposure and wind loading necessitate deeper planting of poles and shorter spans, and stronger, more resilient structures tend to be favoured instead. These include steel lattice towers, composite or steel versions of the trident support, or SHE Transmission plc's New Suite of Transmission Structures (NeSTS).
- 2.3.2 Use of UGC is also a potential solution for areas of higher ground, but this tends to be the least favoured approach due to increased disruption of habitats and / or areas of peat soils, increased cost and additional maintenance challenges.
- 2.3.3 An overview of these technology options is provided below; however, until a Preferred Alignment for the OHL has been identified and detailed assessments and consultations have been completed, the requirement or extent of any use of other technology options is not known.

### 2.4 Proposals Overview

- 2.4.1 The technology solutions proposed for the grid connection have differing nominal heights and spacings between structures, as summarised in **Table 2.1**. The spacing between support structures would vary depending on topography and altitude, with specific distances determined after a detailed line survey.

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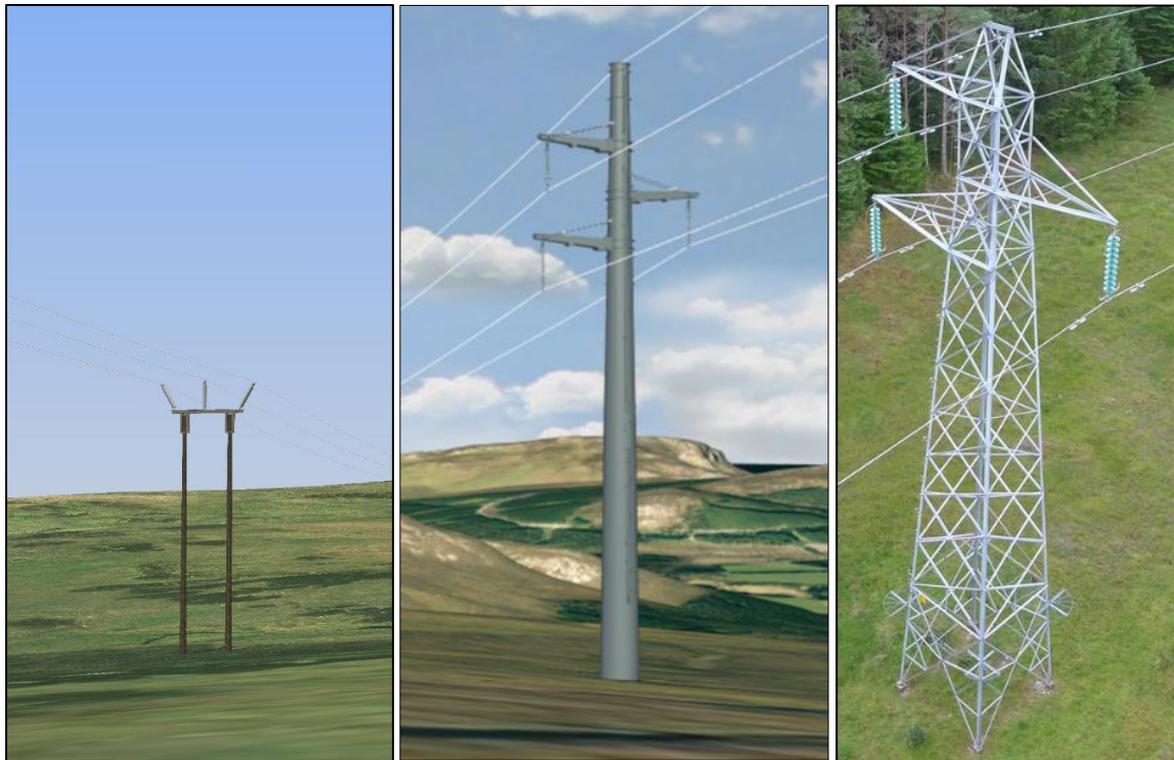
<sup>3</sup> The consideration of other technology options may be required in areas where particular physical or environmental constraints are identified.

**Table 2.1: Comparison of OHL Technologies**

Technology Type	Indicative Height	Indicative Span Length
Trident Wood Pole	16 m	85 m
Trident Composite or Steel Pole	16 m	100 m
Steel Lattice Tower	24 m	250 m
NeSTS Monopoles (Steel)	24 m	300 m

2.4.2 Examples of the typical support structures are shown in **Plate 2.1** below. More detailed information is set out in the Consultation Document<sup>4</sup>.

**Plate 2.1: Example OHL Structures: Trident Wood Pole, NeSTS and Steel Lattice Tower**



## 2.5 Access during Construction

2.5.1 Vehicle access is required to each pole location during construction to allow excavation and creation of foundations and pole installation. Existing tracks would be used where possible. Preference would be given to lower impact access solutions including the use of low pressure tracked personnel vehicles and temporary track solutions in boggy / soft ground areas to reduce any damage to, and compaction of, the ground. These journeys would be kept to a minimum to minimise disruption to habitats along the route. However, stone tracks (both temporary and permanent) may be necessary in some areas depending on existing access conditions, terrain and altitude.

2.5.2 Steel lattice towers and NeSTS would require the establishment of new stone tracks (both temporary and permanent), or other temporary track solutions as necessary, to facilitate construction and maintenance through the operational lifespan of the OHL. The exact specifications of these tracks would be determined once an

<sup>4</sup> SHE Transmission (November 2020). Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Consultation Document

alignment has been chosen and ground conditions are better understood, but it is anticipated that they would be formed of crushed aggregate stone and approximately 5 m wide. Material would be sourced from borrow pits, if any suitable sites are located in proximity to the OHL, or imported from off-site quarries.

## 3. CONSIDERATION OF ROUTE OPTIONS

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Consultation Document<sup>5</sup> sets out the approach to the consideration and appraisal of route options, in line with SHE Transmission's routing guidance<sup>6</sup>. The guidance sets out SHE Transmission plc's approach to selecting a route for an OHL. This document helps SHE Transmission plc to meet its obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989, which requires transmission license holders:

- to have a regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interests; and
- to do what they reasonably can to mitigate any effect that the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.

3.1.2 In line with the principles outlined in the guidance document, the method of identifying a Preferred Route has involved the following 4 key tasks:

- Identification of the baseline situation;
- Identification of alternative route options;
- Environmental, technical and economic analysis of route options; and
- Identification of a preferred route.

### 3.2 Identification of Preferred Route

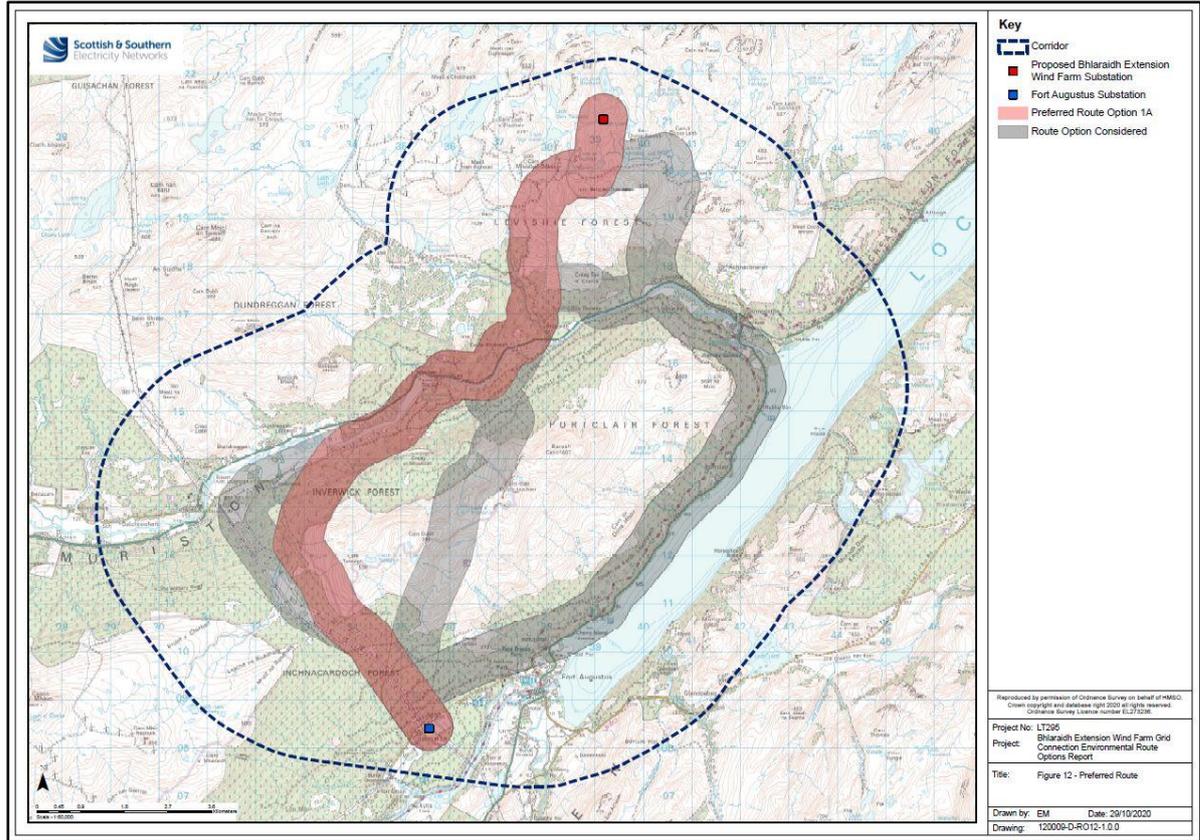
3.2.1 The Preferred Route was selected on the basis that it is considered to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical and economic factors. The Preferred Route presented with the Consultation Report is shown in **Plate 3.1**.

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<sup>5</sup> SHE Transmission (November 2020). Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Consultation Document

<sup>6</sup> SHE Transmission (March 2018), Procedures for Routing Overhead Lines of 132kV and above

**Plate 3.1: Preferred Route**



## 4. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

### 4.1 Overview

4.1.1 In accordance with SHE Transmission's guidance<sup>7</sup>, a process of consultation on the Preferred Route has been undertaken.

### 4.2 Methods for Consultation

4.2.1 The following methods were used to consult on the Preferred Route, as set out below.

#### *Consultation Document*

4.2.2 The Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Consultation Document (November 2020) was produced detailing the selection process for the Preferred Route, taking account of environmental, economic and technical factors. Early feedback on the preliminary findings of the Consultation Document was distributed to statutory consultees for initial comment in early October 2020. The Consultation Document was made available for download on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 from <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/bhlaraidh-extension-windfarm-connection/>.

4.2.3 **Table 4.1** details the stakeholders in receipt of the Consultation Document or otherwise informed of the website details:

**Table 4.1: List of Stakeholders**

Stakeholders	
<b>Statutory Consultees</b>	
Energy Consents Unit (ECU)	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
NatureScot	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
The Highland Council (THC)	
<b>Non-Statutory Consultees</b>	
British Horse Society	British Telecom (BT)
Cairngorms National Park Authority	Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) - Airspace
Crown Estate Scotland	Defence Infrastructure Organisation
Fisheries Management Scotland	Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)
Highland and Islands Airports (HIA)	John Muir Trust
Joint Radio Company (JRC)	Mountaineering Scotland
NATS Safeguarding	Ness Fishery Board
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Scottish Canoe Society
Scottish Executive Environment & Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD)	Scottish Forestry
Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways)	Scottish Water
Scottish Wild Land Group (SWLG)	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Sustrans Scotland	The Coal Authority
Transport Scotland	Visit Scotland

<sup>7</sup> SSEN (March 2018), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines of 132kV and above

## Stakeholders

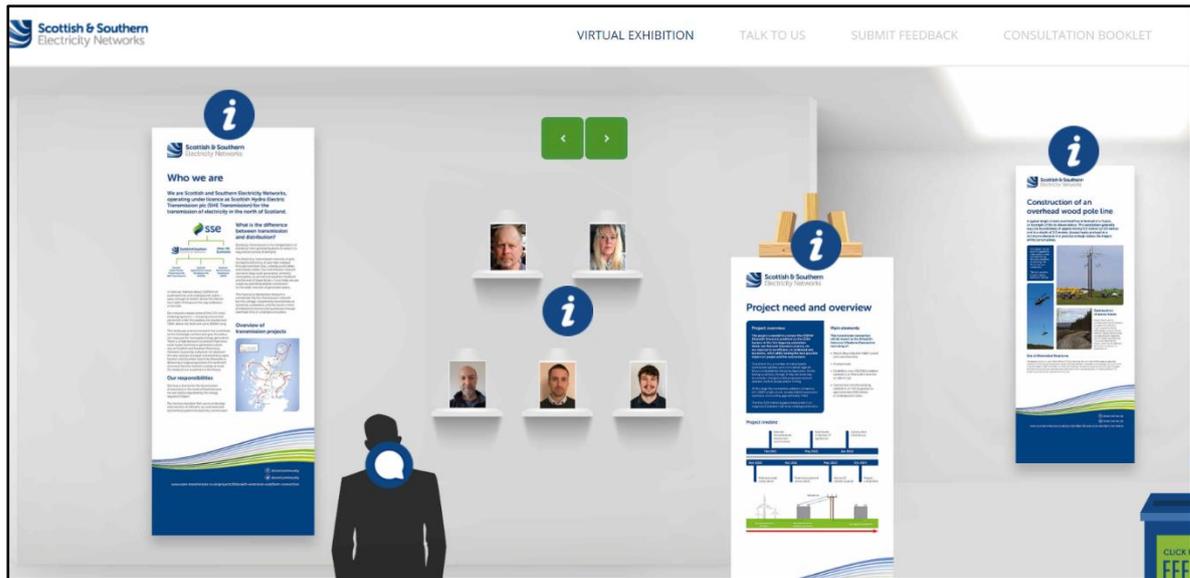
West of Scotland Archaeology Service	
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- 4.2.4 It had been intended to make the Consultation Document available in hard copy at publicly accessible locations near to the Corridor. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible.
- 4.2.5 Instead, landowners, the local Community Council and councillors were made aware of the Consultation Document which was made available via the dedicated project website. Updates were issued via email to project website subscribers, local community councils and ward councillors.
- 4.2.6 Feedback on the Consultation Document was requested by 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- 4.2.7 Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback through the following methods:
- A series of questions were asked within the Consultation Document requesting comments on specific aspects of the project as follows:
    - Have we explained the need for this Project adequately?
    - Have we explained the approach taken to select the Preferred Route adequately?
    - Are there any factors, or environmental features, that you consider may have been overlooked during the preferred route selection process?
    - Do you feel, on balance, that the Preferred Route selected is the most appropriate for further consideration at the alignment selection stage?
  - A feedback form was also provided on the project webpage allowing users to submit comments.

### *Public Consultation Events*

- 4.2.8 Under normal circumstances, consultation on the project would involve public engagement events held in the local area and such events were planned. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic these events could not be held.
- 4.2.9 To continue engagement on the project SHE Transmission developed an online consultation tool, to enable the local community to experience the full exhibition from home on a computer, tablet or mobile device. The online exhibition was designed to look and feel like a real consultation in a community hall, with exhibition boards, maps, and the opportunity to share views on the proposals as illustrated in **Plate 4.1**.
- 4.2.10 Visitors were able to engage directly with the project team, via a live chat function, where they could ask any questions they might have about the project and share their feedback on the current proposals. A feedback form was provided on the portal and all visitors were invited to complete this.
- 4.2.11 The virtual consultation events took place via the project website <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/bhlaraidh-extension-windfarm-connection/> at the following times:
- 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020: 13:00 – 15:00 and 17:00 – 19:00; and
  - 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020: 14:00 – 16:00.

#### Plate 4.1: Virtual Event Portal



- 4.2.12 The virtual consultation events were advertised in the local press, SHE Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project management website. A mail drop of a booklet and letter informing of the event was also carried out to 749 households along the route options ahead of the virtual consultation.
- 4.2.13 Visitor counts during the virtual consultation event recorded 149 unique users (individuals devices accessing the site) and 178 page views (the number of different pages loaded across the site) across the three interactive sessions. There was a single chat initiated with the project team via the live chat function with a total of three questions asked by visitors. A total of 10 feedback forms and five emails were received by SHE Transmission during or following the virtual consultation events.

## 5. CONSULTATION RESPONSES FROM STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 **Table 5.1** sets out a summary of the feedback received by statutory and non-statutory consultees following the consultation period (October to December 2020). A response to the feedback is also provided by SHE Transmission, together with confirmation of the action to be taken, where relevant.

5.1.2 The following consultees did not provide any feedback to the consultation:

- CAA – Airspace;
- Fisheries Management Scotland;
- HIA;
- John Muir Trust;
- Mountaineering Scotland;
- Ness Fishery Board;
- Scottish Canoe Society;
- SEERAD;
- SWLG;
- Scottish Wildlife Trust;
- Sustrans Scotland;
- Visit Scotland; and
- West of Scotland Archaeology Service.

**Table 5.1: Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultee Feedback**

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
<b>Statutory</b>		
Energy Consents Unit (ECU)	<p>We would expect SHE Transmission to follow best practice given by “Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments”. This document also applies to overhead lines, where peat is involved. If it is decided that the guidance is not to be followed, or that a PLHRA is unnecessary, SHE Transmission should provide an evidenced justification why that is the case.</p>	<p>A PLHRA will be carried out for the preferred alignment, in line with the noted guidance.</p>
	<p>SHE Transmission should investigate whether public or private water supplies are in the area and could potentially be impacted by the development. If so, mitigation measures should be described in the application.</p>	<p>An initial desk-based investigation into the presence of private water supplies was undertaken as part of the route options assessment. A number were located at points along the route options, such as at Dundreggan and near Fort Augustus substation, however the results only indicate end-use of private water supplies, rather than sources. The presence of private water supplies will be fully investigated for the preferred alignment, and mitigation measures proposed, where required.</p>
Historic Environment Scotland (HES)	<p>We are content with the selection of Route Option 1A as the preferred route for the overhead line. While we note that this route is located in the vicinity of heritage assets such as the category A listed Torgoyle Bridge (LB14996), we are content that impacts will not be significant.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
	<p>We have identified some issues with the other route options under consideration. In particular, route options 2 and 2A have the potential to affect the Cherry Island, Crannog, Inchnacardoch Bay, Loch Ness Scheduled Monument (Index no. 9762) and its setting. Route Option 2A overlaps with this scheduled monument and there may be some potential for direct impacts. Additionally, route options 2 and 2A may give rise to impacts on the setting of the Category A listed Invermoriston, Home Farm and Former Barn to Rear (LB15021) caused by the appearance of overhead line infrastructure in westward views towards the building across Loch Ness.</p>	<p>The concerns in relation to route options 2 and 2A are noted. These two route options were identified as having numerous environmental and engineering constraints to development early in the options assessment, with Route Option 2A being the least preferred of all options. Alignments within route options 2 and 2A will not be explored for this development.</p>
	<p>A new Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS, 2019) was adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019, which replaces the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (HESPS, 2016). The new Historic Environment Policy for Scotland is a strategic</p>	<p>The updated Historic Environment Policy is noted and will be referenced as part of the cultural heritage assessment for the preferred alignment.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	policy document for the whole of the historic environment and is underpinned by detailed policy and guidance. This includes our Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes.	
NatureScot	SHE Transmission have correctly identified the River Moriston Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Levishie Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as key constraints within our remit. Other key issues for us include the impact on peatland habitat, Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites, and impacts on protected species. These have been identified (where possible at this stage) in the information provided.	Noted.
	We are unclear as to the decision making preferring 1A over 1. There is clearly a benefit to utilising the existing transmission corridor as much as possible, and certainly 1 & 1A seem the more preferable options in relation to our remit (without any protected species survey information at this point).	As set out within the Consultation Document, Route Option 1A is considered to be a marginal preference over Route Option 1. Use of the existing transmission corridor was a consideration in this decision; however, the need to expand the existing wayleave into native woodland and core Caledonian Pine woodland areas was considered less favourable than a potentially shorter length of native woodland felling which would result from Route Option 1A. Route Option 1A was also considered to be slightly more preferable than Route Option 1 from an engineering standpoint, specifically in relation to road crossing and angle tower requirements.  However, as noted in response to FLS' comments and later in this Report, Route Option 1 will form a secondary option for consideration of alignment options.
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	Based on the information submitted to us we consider that, with respect to interests relevant to our remit, the proposed development will be unlikely to have a significant effect (in the context of the Regulations) on the environment. This is on the assumption that modest or plainly and easily achievable environmental mitigation measures will be put in place, including ensuring that impacts on peat, wetlands and the water environment are avoided where possible and mitigated where necessary.	Noted. Assessment of likely impacts of the development on peat, wetlands and the water environment will be carried out and appropriate mitigation measures proposed to ensure no significant environmental impacts are likely to occur.
	<p>General Overview</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five route options have been considered and the preferred option is Route Option 1A. Based on the information provided there is no obvious route</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noted.</li> <li>As suggested, cabling will be directed through previously disturbed ground, where practicable, and measures put in</li> </ol>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	<p>that would have a significantly lower environmental impact and we are therefore content with the preferred route proposed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. We note that the final 500 m (approximately) into Fort Augustus substation would be underground cable. Where feasible, cabling should be laid in areas of previously disturbed ground, and it should be ensured that any trenches do not become preferential flow pathways.</li> <li>3. Full layout details of the construction works should be submitted at a scale which allows the detail to be understood. The working corridor should be shown on a plan, accompanied by all associated construction works including access routes, laydown areas and construction compounds. We would request that existing tracks be utilised as much as possible.</li> <li>4. We presume that no borrow pits are required but if this is not the case then please consult us further and we can provide advice on this aspect.</li> <li>5. A schedule of mitigation supported by site-specific maps and plans must be submitted. These must include reference to best practice pollution prevention and construction techniques (for example, the maximum area to be stripped of soils at any one time) and regulatory requirements. They should set out the daily responsibilities of Ecological Clerks of Works (ECOWs), how site inspections will be recorded and acted upon and proposals for a planning monitoring enforcement officer.</li> </ol>	<p>place to prevent cable trenches from becoming preferential pathways for water.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Figures will be provided at sufficient scale to display the noted details. Use of existing access tracks is preferred to creation of new tracks and would be utilised as far as practicable.</li> <li>4. At this stage, no borrow pits have been identified for use in the development. Consultation will be carried out with SEPA for use of any borrow pits identified as the project progresses.</li> <li>5. A Schedule of Mitigation will be provided.</li> </ol>
	<p>Peatlands and Wetlands</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Figures provided with the Consultation Document indicate that the preferred route passes through some areas of blanket bog / wetlands which could have an impact on sensitive environmental receptors including peat and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). GWDTE are protected under the Water Framework Directive and therefore the layout and design of the development must avoid impact on such areas. A map demonstrating that all GWDTE are outwith a 100 m radius of all excavations shallower than 1 m and outwith 250 m of all excavations deeper than 1 m must be submitted.</li> <li>2. No poles or associated construction works should be located in any wetland areas identified as part of an extended phase 1 habitat survey, which should be carried out for all un-forested areas. If this is not possible</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All GWDTE in the vicinity of the development will be mapped and identified.</li> <li>2. Pole locations will be chosen so as to avoid, as far as practicable, wetland areas identified during extended Phase 1 surveys. A micrositing allowance will also be applied to permit limited movement of poles during construction to help avoid localised constraints.</li> <li>3. Development infrastructure will be shown on habitat maps to assist assessment of likely effects on GWDTE habitats.</li> <li>4. Mitigation measures such as those suggested will be reviewed and, if practicable, implemented for the</li> </ol>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	<p>then our Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems should be followed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. We request that the infrastructure (including the proposed locations of all the wooden poles and access tracks etc.) are overlain on the habitat maps in order that we can accurately assess any potential impacts of the proposed works on GWDTEs.</li> <li>4. In sensitive peat and wetland areas, we would welcome the use of low pressure tracked vehicles over boggy / soft grounds and for bog matting to be utilised rather than stone tracks, as they will have a lower impact on the habitats (e.g. less compaction / damage). We would also request that the trips to and from the pole locations on the sensitive habitats are kept to a minimum to reduce potential damage to the habitats. This must be clearly demonstrated on a site plan and should specifically be addressed within the Schedule of Mitigation.</li> <li>5. Information should be provided on how impacts on deep peat, over 1 m depth, will be avoided, and it should be noted that areas of deep peat can still occur in forested areas.</li> <li>6. The planning submission must a) demonstrate how the layout has been designed to minimise disturbance of peat and consequential release of CO<sub>2</sub> and b) outline the preventative / mitigation measures to avoid significant drying or oxidation of peat through, for example, the construction of access tracks, drainage channels, trenches, or the storage and re-use of excavated peat. There is often less environmental impact from localised temporary storage and reuse rather than movement to large central peat storage areas.</li> <li>7. The submission must include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A detailed map of peat depths (this must be to full depth and follow the survey requirement of the Scottish Government's Guidance on Developments on Peatland - Peatland Survey (2017)) with all the built elements (including peat storage areas) overlain to demonstrate how the development avoids areas of deep peat and other sensitive receptors such as GWDTEs.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>development to limit adverse effects on sensitive peat and wetland areas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Mapping of peat depth will be provided with the overhead line overlain, and measures to avoid impacts outlined within the assessment itself.</li> <li>6. Impacts upon peat will be assessed, and measures proposed to avoid drying or oxidation of excavated peat.</li> <li>7. The requested details in relation to peat depth mapping and peat soil quantities likely to be excavated will be provided.</li> <li>8. The noted guidance documents will be referenced as part of development design and assessment.</li> <li>9. The requirement for a Peat Management Plan or inclusion of measures within the Schedule of Mitigation will be considered as part of the proposal.</li> </ol>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	<p>b. A table which details the quantities of acrotelmic, catotelmic and amorphous peat which will be excavated for each element and where it will be re-used during reinstatement. Details of the proposed widths and depths of peat to be re-used and how it will be kept wet permanently must be included.</p> <p>8. Proposals must be in accordance with Guidance on the Assessment of Peat Volumes, Reuse of Excavated Peat and Minimisation of Waste and our Developments on Peat and Off-Site uses of Waste Peat.</p> <p>9. Development upon the volumes of peat likely to be encountered and the scale of the development, applicants must consider whether a full Peat Management Plan (as detailed in the above guidance) is required or whether the above information would be best submitted as part of the schedule of mitigation.</p>	
	<p>Watercourses and Flood Risk</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No poles or associated construction works should be located within a 50 m buffer of all water bodies. A map should be provided which clearly demonstrates that works, with the exception of where tracks need to cross watercourses, are outside of this buffer.</li> <li>2. Due to their small footprint, development such as the poles / steel lattice towers do not usually create or increase flooding to nearby receptors in their local vicinity. Any risk (potential damage) to these structures could largely be avoided through good design and appropriate buffer zones.</li> <li>3. New temporary access tracks, any workers accommodation bases and construction compounds / lay down areas should comply with Appendix 2 of SEPA's Standing Advice with regards to flood risk.</li> <li>4. We presume there will be no new permanent watercourse crossings. Proposals for temporary crossings should be outlined.</li> <li>5. Watercourse crossings should be designed to accommodate the 1 in 200 year flow, or information provided to justify smaller structures.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appropriate buffers will be applied to watercourses, and all works will be suitably presented on figures to demonstrate this.</li> <li>2. Appropriate buffers and good design practices will be implemented to limit potential flooding impacts.</li> <li>3. The noted guidance will be accorded with.</li> <li>4. At this stage, no new permanent watercourse crossings are anticipated; however, any requirements for such will be outlined as part of the full environmental assessment.</li> <li>5. Watercourse crossings will be designed to accommodate a 1 in 200 year flow.</li> </ol>
	<p>Forested Areas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As part of the preferred route crosses forested areas, we will require reassurance that any felled timber will be removed from site and not left as</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forestry removal will be kept to a minimum, where it cannot be avoided, in order to reduce impacts on forestry interests. The preference will be to remove any felled</li> </ol>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	<p>waste and avoids large scale felling as this can result in a peak in release of nutrients that can affect local water quality. Proposals to make use of any waste wood on the site should comply with our SEPA Guidance: Management of Forestry Waste and there must be a clear beneficial use identified for any material left on site.</p> <p>2. Tree felling proposals should be shown to meet the requirements of Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land – Joint Guidance from SEPA, SNH and FCS.</p>	<p>timber from site; however, any timber left as waste will comply with the noted guidance.</p> <p>2. Tree felling proposals will accord with the noted guidance.</p>
	<p>Existing Groundwater Abstractions</p> <p>1. We note private water supplies have already been identified. The submission must include:</p> <p>a. A map demonstrating that all existing groundwater abstractions are outwith a 100 m radius of all excavations shallower than 1 m and outwith 250 m of all excavations deeper than 1 m and proposed groundwater abstractions. If micro-siting is to be considered as a mitigation measure the distance of survey needs to be extended by the proposed maximum extent of micro-siting. The survey needs to extend beyond the site boundary where the distances require it.</p> <p>b. If the minimum buffers above cannot be achieved, a detailed site specific qualitative and / or quantitative risk assessment will be required. We are likely to seek conditions securing appropriate mitigation for all existing groundwater abstractions affected.</p> <p>2. Refer to Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems for further advice on the minimum information we require to be submitted.</p>	<p>1. Figures will be provided displaying all groundwater abstraction in the vicinity of the development, and a risk assessment will be carried out if the noted buffers cannot be achieved.</p> <p>2. The noted guidance will be referred to as part of development design and assessment.</p>
The Highland Council (THC)	The appraisal contained within the supporting document identifies a number of constraints in terms of environment and infrastructure which appear to require further refinement in relation to the routing and design.	Further assessment of constraints will be carried out at Stage 3 (Alignment Selection) as the development design is refined from broad route options to narrower alignment options.
	The area is particularly sensitive given the large number of tourists and recreational users of the outdoors who move through the area and the location is sensitive to	The visual sensitivity of the area in the vicinity of the development site, including potential impacts on tourists and users of

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	change as a result of the expansive views up and down as well as across the Great Glen. The views from south Loch Ness will be particularly important given the potential use of NeSTs and steel lattice towers. The impact of permanent tracks in elevated positions is of concern.	recreational sites such as the Great Glen Way, is a key consideration which will be explored further at Stage 3 (Alignment Selection) and assessed fully for the preferred alignment. Installation of new permanent tracks would be minimised where practicable as part of development.
	Construction impacts, inclusive of impact on the local road network, will require robust assessment due to the fragile nature of the local road network.	Construction impacts on the local road network will be fully considered and assessed as the project progresses.
<b>Non-Statutory</b>		
British Horse Society	Horses are important and good for people so their safety and capacity to access safe off-road hacking is a key consideration in terms of their welfare and the wellbeing of their riders. We will advise local riders and carriage drivers to be aware of the proposed works and to take precautions to ensure their safety and the safety of others.	Noted. SHE Transmission will keep the British Horse Society apprised of the development's progression through the design stages to allow them to keep local riders informed.
	Horses can be frightened by large machinery so as part of your duty of care towards the general public, take heed of The British Horse Society Guidance for Drivers of Large Vehicles during the construction phase.	The guidance provided with the consultation response is acknowledged and the key points will be communicated to drivers of construction vehicles prior to works commencing.
British Telecom (BT)	The proposal has been studied with respect to EMC and related problems to BT point-to-point microwave radio links. The initial conclusion is that route options will affect our current planned and existing radio links. To further investigate, please supply the coordinates of the route options such that distances can be mitigated accurately and a response confirmed.	Noted. Further consultation with BT will be undertaken at the alignment options stage once indicative pole locations can be provided to understand potential impacts on BT assets and interests.
Cairngorms National Park Authority	We have no comments on the proposed Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection.	Noted.
Crown Estate Scotland	This proposal does not affect the assets of Crown Estate Scotland, and we therefore have no comments to make.	Noted.
Defence Infrastructure Organisation	To assess the proposal we will need the height of the poles and grid references.	Locations and heights of support structures for the overhead line are not known at this stage. Defence Infrastructure Organisation will be consulted further during the alignment options appraisal, when indicative locations and heights can be provided.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)	<p>FLS are keen to support SSE projects and work in partnership, while facing challenges on a range of objectives. The following points are key for achieving this balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current line is underground from the quarry to the dam (part of Route Option 1), and we would prefer the same approach to be adopted for this project.</li> <li>• Route Option 1A would cut through a core Caledonian pine wood remnant.</li> <li>• Route Option 2, it is understood, has been discounted.</li> <li>• Route Option 3 would have a highly significant landscape and environmental impact in a highly visible area where we are working to restore and expand native woodland habitat. This includes a nationally important Caledonian pinewood remnant that currently has wayleaves on two sides.</li> <li>• Route Option 3 would also introduce a new set of operational constraints for our activities and would result in avoidable deforestation.</li> <li>• Route Option 1 - the use of existing wayleaves offers a range of benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Limited additional visual impact with the impact being concentrated in the existing wirescape;</li> <li>○ No further impact on native woodland habitat;</li> <li>○ No additional operational constraints; and</li> <li>○ No further deforestation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>In light of the above points, we do not support route options 1A or 3 as options and see the use of existing wayleaves in Route Option 1 as a pragmatic solution that minimises impact across a wide range of issues.</p>	<p>SHE Transmission are committed to working closely with FLS, and note the key points raised.</p> <p>SSE would clarify that use of Route Option 1 would still require tree felling, as the current wayleaves would require expansion to accommodate the new overhead line. This would result in removal of native woodland and core Caledonian pine wood areas. Consequently, Route Option 1A was determined to be preferable over Route Option 1 in forestry terms, as there appears to be greater opportunity to avoid Caledonian pine wood and reduce the length of native woodland the overhead line would pass through.</p> <p>Further consultation is being undertaken with FLS. In recognition of the points raised by FLS, it is proposed that Route Option 1 is carried forward as a secondary option to ensure that the consideration of alignment options in both routes 1 and 1A be considered further during the alignment selection stage of the project. Both the preferred and secondary options are shown on <b>Figure 1</b>.</p>
Joint Radio Company (JRC)	Requested the individual positions for each pylon to check against the system to ensure it's clear of any links in the vicinity.	A response was issued to JRC to note that positions are not known at this time, and a map of JRC links was requested.
NATS Safeguarding	The proposed development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with our safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company ("NERL") has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.	Noted. NERL will be consulted further as the development design progresses.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	<p>However, please be aware that this response applies specifically to this consultation and only reflects the position of NATS (that is responsible for the management of en route air traffic) based on the information supplied at the time of this application. If any changes are proposed to the information supplied to NATS in regard to this application which become the basis of a revised, amended or further application for approval, then as a statutory consultee NERL requires that it be further consulted on any such changes prior to any planning permission or any consent being granted.</p>	
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	<p>Requested a copy of Confidential Figure 4.</p>	<p>SHE Transmission provided the requested figure on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020.</p>
	<p>RSPB Scotland holds some recent data on the area particularly for black grouse and can provide this via a data request to help inform breeding bird surveys. There are several leks that are likely to be within disturbance distance of the works.</p>	<p>Data on bird species present in the vicinity of the development will be sought from RSPB. Grouse lek locations have been identified from previous studies undertaken as part of the Bhlairaidh Extension Wind Farm, however this data will be supplemented with up to date records and survey work as required.</p>
	<p>Careful timing of works including helicopter use will need to be planned to avoid disturbance to the nesting osprey. Our records show that there is a hen harrier territory in the area, it is probably beyond recognised disturbance distances but may be susceptible to helicopter disturbance. A data request to Highland raptor study group will provide up to date information on breeding raptors and FLS may also hold data.</p>	<p>Potential for use of helicopters to aid construction in challenging areas will be explored as the project progresses, and suitable mitigation measures employed to avoid or minimise disturbance to sensitive bird species in the area. The Highland Raptor Study Group will be contacted for further information.</p>
	<p>NatureScot will be able to provide more specific advice regarding the Special Area of Conservation.</p>	<p>Noted. Advice from NatureScot is being sought throughout all project stages.</p>
	<p>RSPB note that there may be a loss of native woodland. Any losses should be minimised, and connectivity should be maintained wherever possible, particularly for the protected species that depend on this habitat. There may be options for compensatory planning elsewhere within the FLS boundary or on Dundreggan.</p>	<p>Loss of woodland will be minimised as far as practicable. Effects of habitat loss on protected species will be fully assessed for the preferred alignment. Opportunities for compensatory planting will be explored.</p>
Scottish Forestry	<p>The Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP) includes a strong presumption in favour of protecting Scotland's woodland resources. Woodland removal to accommodate development should be allowed only where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits, and</p>	<p>The purpose of the development is to connect a wind farm to the National Grid for production of renewable energy, which is considered to be in the public interest by contributing to current national Climate Change targets. The design of the development</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	<p>compensatory planting proposals designed to mitigate impact of any proposal should form part of the development proposals.</p>	<p>will seek to minimise felling requirements by avoiding standing trees, where practicable. Compensatory planting requirements will be determined following finalisation of the alignment and associated working corridor / wayleave.</p>
	<p>All five routes described in the consultation document have potential to significantly impact on the forest environment, both in terms of woodland loss and impact on future forest management. From Scottish Forestry's perspective, Route Option 3 is the preferred one, as it would involve relatively small areas of woodland removal in comparison with the other routes. It also appears to have lesser potential impact on woodland listed on the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland.</p>	<p>The Environmental Route Options assessment also identified Route Option 3 as likely to have the least potential impact on forestry interests. Route Option 1A was selected as the overall preferred route on balance, and was considered to have the least potential for forestry impact after Route Option 3.</p>
	<p>The CoWRP requires compensatory planting corresponding with the areas of permanent woodland loss associated with the development. The developer needs to be aware that compensatory planting might be subject to the Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
Scottish Water	<p>Scottish Water has no objection to the planning application; however, this does not indicate that the proposed development can be serviced. The development may impact on Scottish Water assets, and the applicant should identify any potential conflicts with these assets through direct contact with the Asset Impact Team. The applicant should be aware that any conflict with assets identified may be subject to restrictions on proximity of construction.</p>	<p>Scottish Water assets in proximity to the development will be identified through consultation with the Asset Impact Team. Any identified assets will be reported on as part of the final application for consent.</p>
	<p>A review of our records indicates that the proposed activity is within a drinking water catchment area where a Scottish Water abstraction is located. It is a relatively large catchment and the activity is sufficient distance from the intake that it is likely to be low risk. Please note that site specific risks and mitigation measures will require to be assessed and implemented.</p>	<p>Noted. Appropriate mitigation measures, including best practice working methods, will be utilised for the development.</p>
	<p>We welcome that reference has been made to the Scottish Water drinking water catchment, and this fact should be noted in future documentation. Anyone working on site should be made aware of this during site inductions.</p>	<p>All personnel involved with construction of the development will be notified of the presence of the drinking water catchment during site inductions.</p>
ScotWays	<p>It is understood that this consultation is an early-stage route selection exercise. A preliminary look at our records shows there are routes of interest affected by the various Route Options. There may now be general access rights over any property under the terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. We suggest consulting</p>	<p>Potential impacts on routes and rights of way will be considered in greater detail through the alignment selection process and environmental assessment, and further consultation will be undertaken with ScotWays as required. Referral to Core Paths</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SHE Transmission
	Core Paths Plans, prepared by local authorities as part of their duties under this Act. In light of these points, SSE may benefit from the provision of a formal consultation response from ScotWays for the proposed development.	plans forms a key element in consideration of potential effects on routes and rights of way.
The Coal Authority	The site location plan has been reviewed against the information held by the Coal Authority and it is confirmed that the project site is located outside of the defined coalfield. Accordingly, the Coal Authority has no specific comments / observations to make.	Noted.
Transport Scotland	<p>Whilst the preferred line has moved away from the A82, it is now very close to the A887 which is also a trunk road. When working above the trunk road, SSE will require to provide to the satisfaction of Transport Scotland that the following measures have been taken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any tree felling operations above the trunk road required to clear a route for the overhead wood pole line will have to be carried out in a failsafe manner in that all measures necessary are taken to ensure felled trees do not break free and travel down the hillside to the trunk road below. The tree felling method statements on the hillside above the trunk road will require to be submitted to Transport Scotland for consideration.</li> <li>2. Any haul roads / permanent tracks for the servicing of the overhead wood pole line that are required should not cause debris / scree to be dislodged from the hillside during its construction and to enter the trunk road.</li> <li>3. The location of the overhead wood pole line in relation to the trunk road will be studied closely by Transport Scotland and in particular the steepness of the hillside and the ground conditions on the hillside. Depending on the gradient and the ground conditions (e.g., loose scree, etc.) then there may be a need for SSE to install a temporary catch fence. In this regard a geotechnical assessment of the hillside above the trunk road may be required.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appropriate good working practices and failsafe measures will be implemented to ensure all tree felling is carried out in a controlled manner and trees are secured at the felling site. Transport Scotland will be consulted on these measures prior to any works taking place.</li> <li>2. All tracks associated with the development will be designed and constructed so as to prevent dislodging of debris which could affect the trunk road.</li> <li>3. The route and alignment selection study process considers the gradient of the ground as part of determining a preferred option, and seeks to avoid steeper areas. Consultation with Transport Scotland will continue through the development design process to determine requirements for geotechnical assessments and / or catch fencing to protect the trunk road.</li> </ol>

## 6. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION RESPONSES FROM THE VIRTUAL PUBLIC EXHIBITION EVENT

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 **Table 6.1** sets out the feedback received by the local community and general public following the consultation period (October to December 2020), including comments received during the live virtual consultation events. Responses by SHE Transmission are also included, setting out the action to be taken where relevant.

**Table 6.1: Public and Local Community Feedback by Topic**

Feedback Comments	Response by SHE Transmission
<b>Email Responses</b>	
It was asked whether the decision-making process on capacity of installed connections could be made more efficient, and whether larger capacities could be installed for connections to accommodate future projects.	The cost of the connection is borne by the developer and as such is designed to meet the capacity requested. SHE Transmission can only provide capacity in line with the developer's request and cannot anticipate potential future connection requirements for other projects.
Concerns were raised in relation to noise generation and visual impacts following previous experience with similar development works nearby.	Potential impacts on the environment and local communities would be minimised. Further work will be undertaken as the project progresses to determine potential impacts so that these can be mitigated.
Comments were received in support of the Preferred Route Option, citing constraints to development of overhead lines near Invermoriston and likely adverse amenity effects from route options 2 and 2A. Route Option 3 was noted to be the shortest with potentially less impact on the environment.	Proximity to dwellings will be considered further during the alignment selection stage of the project and appropriate distances maintained as far as practicable. Due to constraints identified during the route selection process, route options 2 and 2A will not be considered further. While shorter, Route Option 3 was not preferred due to greater potential for engineering and environmental constraints.
Would the existing towers near Glenmoriston be used or new towers built for the project?	A new overhead line would be required as the existing 132 kV line does not have the spare capacity required for the project.
Where would the overhead line transition to underground cable on the approach to Fort Augustus substation?	It is anticipated that the point of transition from overhead line to underground cable for this project will be approximately 500 m from Fort Augustus substation. For context, the Skye T circuit is situated approximately 250 m from the substation.
<b>Virtual Exhibition Responses</b>	
Are the works currently ongoing at Fort Augustus substation connected to this project?	The current ongoing works at Fort Augustus substation are part of a separate project.
Would there be any need to dig up the Auchterawe Road or would existing cable ducts be used?	The existing cable ducts underneath the Auchterawe Road would be utilised if possible; however, initial surveys have indicated that installation of new ducts would be likely, requiring some works to the road.

Feedback Comments	Response by SHE Transmission
Would works to the road necessitate disturbance of the roadside bund?	The final route of connection to the substation is still to be determined. However, at this stage, it is anticipated that the connection would be into the new part of the substation currently under construction which is to the south of the bund.

## 7. PROJECT RESPONSES TO CONSULTATIONS

### 7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 This part of the Report summarises how the project has responded to the consultation responses arising from the preferred route set out within the Bhlaraidh Extension Wind Farm Grid Connection Consultation Document. Responses to each of the points raised by stakeholders through the consultation process are included in Sections 5 and 6 above.
- 7.1.2 The consultation process for the project thus far has raised a number of comments seeking clarification or setting requirements for further assessment. These points include additional detail on the potential alignment, recommendations for continued consultation with stakeholders, and the importance of various surveys and assessments for protection of environmental aspects as the project evolves.
- 7.1.3 To address these points, the following actions are being undertaken:
- Alignment options will be considered within the Preferred Route Option 1A, as well as the secondary Route Option 1. The preferred and secondary route options are shown on **Figure 1**; and
  - Further consultation will be organised with key statutory and non-statutory consultees, local councillors and local communities to provide updates on the project during the alignment stage. Formal consultation will be organised on completion of the alignment studies to enable comments to be sought on the preferred alignment identified.
- 7.1.4 All comments and considerations to date will be taken forward into the alignment stage, through which assessments will be carried out for all relevant environmental aspects. This process will remain inclusive, seeking further consultation where appropriate.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### 8.1 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The proposed Bhlaraidh Extension wind farm requires connection to the electricity transmission network at Fort Augustus substation. It is anticipated that this will be achieved via the construction and operation of a new 132 kV single circuit Overhead Line (OHL) routed between the proposed Bhlaraidh Extension wind farm on-site substation and Fort Augustus substation.
- 8.1.2 This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which has been undertaken for the project between October and December 2020. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the rationale for and approach to, the selection of the preferred route option.
- 8.1.3 This report has described the key responses received and provides detail on the actions proposed in response to the issues raised. The consultation process has largely confirmed that Route Option 1A should be taken forward as the Preferred Route within which to identify alignment options. The Preferred Route was selected on the basis that it is considered to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical and economic factors.
- 8.1.4 Following feedback received as part of the consultation process, it is considered prudent to also consider alignment options within Route Option1.

### 8.2 Next Steps

- 8.2.1 The project will now be taken into Stage 3 (Alignment Selection), commencing with identification of alignment options within the Preferred Route and secondary Route Option 1. These will be informed by this and further consultation exercises, and through detailed surveys, which may identify any additional and / or currently unknown engineering, environmental or land use constraints.