Appendix 6: Strathy Switching Station: Comparative Site Appraisal

Category		Sub-Topic	Site A	B	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F	G
Environmental	Natural Heritage	Designations	This site is located approximately 1.4 km to the west of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, along with the West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Although the site does not overlap any statutory sites, breeding bird populations associated with them could make use of the surrounding habitat for breeding and/or foraging and mitigation would be required to avoid potential effects. Site Option A lies in close proximity (~100m west) to the Allt an Reidhe Ruaidh and mitigation would be required during construction to avoid potential indirect effects on relevant qualifying features of the SAC and SSSI which could affect freshwater and upland habitats used by otters and some SPA bird species.		At the closest point Site Option C is located approximately 1.9 km north-west of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar, along with the West Halladale SSSI. Strathy Point SAC (3.1 km), Strathy Coast SSSI (1.8 km) and North Caithness Cliffs SPA (4.9 km) also lie to the north of Site Option C. Although Site Option C does not overlap any statutory sites, breeding bird populations associated with them could make use of surrounding habitat for breeding and/or foraging. Mitigation measures would therefore be required to avoid potential effects, particularly disturbance, to SPA bird species. Site Option C lies in close proximity (approximately 60 m) to the Allt an Reidhe Ruaidh watercourse and mitigation would be required during construction to avoid potential indirect effects on relevant qualifying features of the SAC and SSSI which could affect freshwater and upland habitats used by otters and some SPA bird species.	At the closest point Site Option D is located approximately 2.1 km west of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar, along with the West Halladale SSSI. Strathy Point SAC (4.5 km), Strathy Coast SSSI (3.4 km) and North Caithness Cliffs SPA (5.8 km) also lie to the north of Site Option D. Although Site Option D does not overlap any statutory sites, breeding bird populations associated with them could make use of surrounding habitat for breeding and/or foraging. Mitigation measures would therefore be required to avoid potential effects, particularly disturbance, to SPA bird species. Site Option D lies in between the Alltan nam Muc and the River Strathy. Mitigation would be required to avoid potential indirect effects on relevant qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands designations and West Halladale SSSI (i.e., otter and potentially some breeding bird species) due to potential runoff from construction works, which could affect freshwater and upland habitats used by otter and some SPA bird species for foraging and/or breeding.	Site Option E is located approximately 25 m to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar site, along with the West Halladale SSSI which is a component of the SPA and SAC. Strathy Point SAC (5.5 km), Strathy Coast SSSI (4.4 km) and North Caithness Cliffs SPA (6.5 km) also lie to the north of Site Option E. Although Site Option E does not overlap any statutory sites, breeding bird populations associated with them could make use of surrounding habitat for breeding and/or foraging. Mitigation measures would therefore be required to avoid potential effects, particularly disturbance, to SPA bird species. Site Option E lies in close proximity to Bowside Burn, which borders the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands designations and West Halladale SSSI. Mitigation would be required to avoid potential indirect effects on relevant qualifying features of these statutory designated sites due to potential runoff from construction works on freshwater and upland habitats, which could in turn affect foraging and/or breeding habitat used by otter and some SPA bird species.	Site Option F lies in close proximity to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar, along with the West Halladale SSSI, at approximately 1.2 km west. Strathy Point SAC (4.7 km), Strathy Coast SSSI (3.4 km) and North Caithness Cliffs SPA (5.5 km) also lie to the north of Site Option F. Although Site Option F does not overlap any statutory sites, breeding bird populations associated with them could make use of surrounding habitat for breeding and/or foraging. Mitigation measures would therefore be required to avoid potential effects, particularly disturbance, to SPA bird species. Site Option F lies in close proximity to the Allt an Reidhe Ruaidh (approximately 140 m away). Mitigation would be required to avoid potential indirect effects on relevant qualifying features of these statutory designated sites due to potential runoff from construction works on freshwater and upland habitats, which could in turn affect foraging and/or breeding habitat used by otter and some SPA bird species.	
		Protected Species	Signs of otter (a qualifying feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC) were recorded along the River Strathy but not in the immediate area surrounding Site Option A. Suitable water vole habitat was identified during site work beside the Alltan nam Muic watercourse, approximately 500 m south-west of Site		Signs of otter (a qualifying feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SAC) were recorded along the River Strathy but not in the immediate area surrounding Site Option C. Suitable water vole habitat was also identified in the wider area, (c. 1 km south), and bat species, common	Signs of otter (a qualifying feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SAC) were recorded along the River Strathy but not in the immediate area surrounding Site Option D. Suitable water vole habitat was also identified in proximity to the access track located approximately 150 m to	Signs of otter (a qualifying feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SAC) were recorded along the River Strathy but not in the immediate area surrounding Site Option E. Suitable water vole habitat was also identified in the wider area, approximately 1 km to the north and	Signs of otter (a qualifying feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SAC) were recorded along the River Strathy but not in the immediate area surrounding Site Option F. Suitable water vole habitat was identified beside the Alltan nam Muc watercourse and access	

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			Option A and three confirmed and one potential bat roost noted over 1.5 km southwest of Site Option A. Fish species including Atlantic salmon and brown / sea trout are known to be present within the catchment and associated watercourses surrounding the site. Standard good practice mitigation would be required to avoid effects of runoff from construction works on the surrounding watercourses. No signs of badger, wildcat or pine marten were observed in the immediate area.		lizard, pine marten signs and possible badger signs have also been recorded in proximity but these have generally been transient signs such as scats and spraints.Three confirmed and one potential bat roosts were noted over 2.5 km south-west of Site Option C. Fish species including Atlantic salmon and brown / sea trout are known to be present within the catchment and the associated watercourses surrounding the site. Standard good practice mitigation would be required to avoid the effects of runoff from construction works on the surrounding watercourses which may affect the species associated with them. No signs of wildcat or pine marten were observed in proximity to Site Option C.	the north and bat species, common lizard, pine marten signs and possible badger signs have also been recorded in proximity but these have generally been transient signs such as scats and spraints. Three confirmed and one potential bat roosts were noted over 1 km south-west of Site Option D. Fish species including Atlantic salmon and brown / sea trout are known to be present within the catchment and the associated watercourses surrounding the site. Standard good practice mitigation would be required to avoid the effects of runoff from construction works on the surrounding watercourses which may affect the species associated with them. No signs of wildcat or pine marten were observed in proximity to Site Option D.	bat species, common lizard, pine marten signs and possible badger signs have also been recorded in proximity, but these have generally been transient signs such as scats and spraints. Three confirmed and one potential bat roosts were noted less than 150 m west of Site Option E. Fish species including Atlantic salmon and brown / sea trout are known to be present within the catchment and the associated watercourses surrounding the site. Standard good practice mitigation would be required to avoid the effects of runoff from construction works on the surrounding watercourses which may affect the species associated with them. No signs of wildcat or pine marten were observed in proximity to Site Option E.	track approximately 500 m west of Site Option F. Bat species, common lizard, pine marten signs and possible badger signs have also been recorded in proximity to Site Option F, but these have generally been transient signs such as scats and spraints. Three confirmed and one potential bat roosts were noted over 1.5 km south-west of Site Option F. Fish species including Atlantic salmon and brown / sea trout are known to be present within the catchment and the associated watercourses surrounding the site. Standard good practice mitigation would be required to avoid the effects of runoff from construction works on the surrounding watercourses which may affect the species associated with them. No signs of wildcat or pine marten were observed in proximity to Site Option F.	
		Habitats	Habitats are typical of the wider landscape and predominately comprise bog and dwarf shrub heath with a small area of fen, marsh and swamp in the northeast, and a linear area along the access track in the east classified as a built-up area. These habitats (apart from built-up area) are UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and also have the potential to be Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey data indicated a wetland that is moderately groundwater dependant (depending on the hydrogeological setting) is present within the footprint of this site option.		Habitats are typical of the wider landscape and predominately comprise bog and dwarf shrub heath with a small area of acid grassland. Bog and dwarf shrub heath are UK BAP habitats, and all habitat types identified also have the potential to be Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. NVC survey data indicated a wetland that is moderately groundwater dependant (depending on the hydrogeological setting) is present within the footprint of this site option.	Habitats are typical of the wider landscape and predominately comprise dwarf shrub heath, with two areas of bog and an access track in the west, classified as a built-up area. Bog and dwarf shrub heath are UK BAP habitats, and also have the potential to be Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. NVC survey data indicated a wetland that is moderately groundwater dependant (depending on the hydrogeological setting) is present within the footprint of this site option.	Habitats are typical of the wider landscape and predominately comprise dwarf shrub heath, with a small area of bog in the northwest corner. Bog and dwarf shrub heath are UK BAP habitats, and also have the potential to be Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. NVC survey data indicated a wetland that is moderately groundwater dependant (depending on the hydrogeological setting) is present within the footprint of this site option.	Habitats are typical of the wider landscape, and predominantly comprise bog habitat, with a small area of dwarf shrub heath in the northeast corner. Both bog and dwarf shrub heath are UK BAP habitats, and also have the potential to be Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. NVC survey data indicated a wetland that is moderately groundwater dependant (depending on the hydrogeological setting) is present within the footprint of this site option.	
		Ornithology	Species assemblages are typical of the upland habitats in the area and include a number of species associated with the nearby Caithness and Sutherland		Species assemblages are typical of the upland habitats in the area and include a number of species associated with the nearby Caithness	Species assemblages are typical of the upland habitats in the area and include a number of species associated with the nearby Caithness	Species assemblages are typical of the upland habitats in the area and include a number of species associated with the nearby Caithness	Species assemblages are typical of the upland habitats in the area and include a number of species associated with the nearby	

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			SPA, such as golden plover, hen harrier, merlin and red-throated diver. Occasional hen harrier and osprey flights have been observed in the vicinity of Site Option A during site surveys, but there was no evidence of nesting within 750 m. A golden plover territory was also noted in close proximity (less than c. 150 m away, which is within disturbance distance) in 2022. A number of other wader species, including greenshank and common sandpiper also held breeding territories in the wider area, but no territories were recorded within 500 m of this site option. Both red-throated and black-throated divers are known to have bred in the wider area, but there is no suitable breeding habitat (i.e., waterbodies) within 750 m of this site option. Standard good practice mitigation measures will be required during construction to ensure compliance with legislation protecting breeding birds.		and Sutherland SPA, such as golden plover, hen harrier, merlin and red-throated diver. Occasional hen harrier and osprey flights have been observed in the vicinity of Site Option C during site surveys, but there was no evidence of nesting within 750 m. A number of wader species, including golden plover, greenshank and common sandpiper also held breeding territories in the wider area, but no territories were recorded within 500 m of Site Option C. Both red-throated and black-throated divers are known to have bred in the wider area, but there is no suitable breeding habitat (i.e., waterbodies) within 750 m of this site option. Standard good practice mitigation measures will be required during construction to ensure compliance with legislation protecting breeding birds.	and Sutherland SPA, such as golden plover, hen harrier, merlin and red-throated diver. Occasional hen harrier and osprey flights were observed in the vicinity of Site Option D during site surveys, but there was no evidence of nesting within 750 m. In 2022, a golden plover territory was also noted in close proximity to Site Option D (less than c. 500 m, which is within, but at the outer edge of, potential disturbance distance). A number of other wader species, including greenshank and common sandpiper also held breeding territories in the wider area, but no territories were recorded within 500m of Site Option D. Both red-throated and black-throated divers are known to have bred in the wider area, but there is no suitable breeding habitat (i.e., waterbodies) within 750m of Site Option D. Standard good practice mitigation measures will be required during construction to ensure compliance with legislation protecting breeding birds.	and Sutherland SPA, such as golden plover, hen harrier, merlin and red-throated diver. Occasional hen harrier and osprey flights were observed in the vicinity of Site Option E during site surveys. A number of wader species, including golden plover, greenshank and common sandpiper also held breeding territories in the wider area, but there is no suitable breeding habitat (i.e., waterbodies) within 750 m of Site Option E. Standard good practice mitigation measures will be required during construction to ensure compliance with legislation protecting breeding birds.	Caithness and Sutherland SPA, such as golden plover, hen harrier, merlin and red-throated diver. Occasional hen harrier and osprey flights were observed in the vicinity of Site Option F during site surveys. A golden plover territory was also noted in close proximity to Site Option F (less than c. 200 m, which is within disturbance distance) in 2022. A number of other wader species, including greenshank and common sandpiper also held breeding territories in the wider area, but no territories were recorded within 500m of Site Option F. Both red-throated and black-throated divers are known to have bred in the wider area, but there is no suitable breeding habitat (i.e., waterbodies) within 750 m of Site Option F. Standard good practice mitigation measures will be required during construction to ensure compliance with legislation protecting breeding birds.	
		Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology	Site Option A lies entirely within the River Strathy surface water catchment and is situated approximately 50 m west of the Allt an Reidhe Rudidh, a tributary of the River Strathy. The River Strathy is an important fishery but is not a designated site. Site Option A is not considered to be at flood risk, however, it is likely that flood risk associated within the Allt an Reidhe Rudidh has not been modelled by SEPA (and this would need to be established if the option was to be taken forward). The majority of Site Option A overlies the Bighouse Formation which		Site Option C lies entirely within the River Strathy surface water catchment and is situated approximately 60 m south west of the Allt an Reidhe Rudidh, a tributary of the River Strathy, at its closest extent. The River Strathy is an important fishery but is not a designated site. Site Option C is not considered to be at flood risk, however, it is likely that flood risk associated with the Allt an Reidhe Rudidh has not been modelled by SEPA (and this would need to be established if the option was to be taken forward).	Site Option D lies entirely within the River Strathy surface water catchment and is situated approximately 40 m west of the Alltan nam Muc, a tributary of the River Strathy. The River Strathy is an important fishery but is not a designated site. Site Option D is not considered to be at flood risk, however, it is likely that flood risk associated with the Alltan nam Muc has not been modelled by SEPA. Site Option D overlies the Kirtomy Gneisses bedrock, comprising gneissose semipelites. BGS mapping	The majority of Site Option E lies within the River Strathy surface water catchment whilst part of the southern boundary of the site option is located within the Bowside Burn surface water catchment. The Bowside Burn is a tributary of the River Strathy and is located approximately 20 m south of Site Option E at its closest extent. Site Option E is not considered to be at flood risk, however, it is likely the flooding associated with the Bowside Burn has not been modelled by SEPA (and this would need to be established if the option was to be taken forward).	Site Option F lies entirely within the River Strathy surface water catchment and is situated approximately 60 m west of Allt an Reidhe Ruaidh, a tributary of the River Strathy. The River Strathy is an important fishery but is not a designated site. Site Option F is not considered to be at flood risk, however, it is likely that flood risk associated within the Allt an Reidhe Rudidh has not been modelled by SEPA. Site Option F overlies the Kirtomy Gneisses bedrock comprising of gneissose semipelite. The	

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			comprises sandstones, conglomerates, and argillaceous rocks. The southwestern extent overlies the Kirtomy Gneisses Bedrock (gneissose semipelite). BGS mapping confirms that superficial deposits are largely absent across this site option, with a small area of peat noted within the north western corner. Review of the Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping highlights that the entirety of Site Option A is potentially underlain by Class 1 priority peatland. Site specific peat probing has been undertaken and peat depths between 0 m and 2 m were recorded, with the deepest peat depths noted within the centre of the Site Option. The SEPA environmental database indicates there are no CAR authorisations within 500 m and a review of The Highland Council (THC) private water supply (PWS) database indicates that there are no PWS within 500 m of this site option.		The majority of Site Option C overlies the Kirtomy Gneisses Bedrock which comprises gneissose semipelite whilst the eastern boundary of this site option overlies the Bighouse Formation (sandstone, conglomerate and argillaceous rocks). The bedrock is shown to be overlain by hummocky glacial deposits (sand, gravel and boulders) with a small area of peat noted within the south-eastern corner of the site option. Review of the Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping highlights that the entirety of Site Option C is potentially underlain by Class 1 priority peatland. Site specific peat probing has been undertaken and peat depths of between 0 m and 2.3 m were recorded with the deepest areas of peat noted within the north-western corner of this site option. The SEPA environmental database indicates there are no CAR authorisations within 500 m of Site Option C. Review of THC PWS database indicates that there are no PWS within 500 m of this site option.	shows that the majority of the site option is absent from any superficial deposits but with glaciofluvial deposits (gravel, sand and silt) noted along the western boundary of Site Option D. Review of the Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping highlights that Site Option D is potentially underlain by Class 1 priority peatland. A very small extent of Class 2 priority peatland is noted along the eastern boundary. Site specific peat probing has been undertaken across the site option which recorded peat depths between 0.1 m and 0.4 m. The presence of peat, therefore, is not considered a development constraint. The SEPA environmental database indicates there are no CAR authorisations within 500 m of Site Option D. Review of THC PWS database indicates that there are no PWS within 500 m of this site option.	Site Option E overlies the Kirtomy Gneisses bedrock comprising gneissose semipelites. The bedrock within the western extent of the site option is shown to be overlain by glaciofluvial deposits (gravel, sand, and silt) whilst the eastern extent is shown to be absent of any superficial deposits. Review of the Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping highlights that western extent of Site Option E is potentially underlain by Class 1 priority peatland whilst the eastern extent is potentially underlain by Class 2 priority peatland. Site specific peat probing has been undertaken and peat depths of between 0.1 m and 0.8 m were recorded. The SEPA environmental database indicates that there are no CAR authorisations within 500 m of Site Option E. Review of THC PWS database indicates that there is a PWS located approximately 90 m south of Site Option E associated with Bowside Burn.	bedrock is shown to be overlain by peat deposits along the western extend of the site option, whilst the eastern extent is shown to be absent of any superficial deposits. Review of the Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping highlights that Site Option F is potentially underlain by Class 1 priority peatland. Site specific peat probing has been undertaken across the site option and peat depths between 0.1 m and 2 m were recorded with the deepest area of peat noted within the southern extent of the site option. The SEPA environmental database indicates there are no CAR authorisations within 500 m of Site Option F. Review of THC PWS database indicates that there are no PWS within 500 m of the site option.	
	Cultural Heritage	Designations	There may be a small degree of visibility from designated heritage assets located within the settlement of Strathy to the north, including Strathy Former Church of Scotland (LB 7143), Strathy Free Church (LB 7144), Former Free Church School (LB 7146) and Former Free Church Manse (LB 7145). None of these buildings are particularly sensitive to impacts on setting and therefore this is not considered a constraint to development.		As per Site Option A.	This site option would not be visible from any designated heritage assets.	As per Site Option D.	There may be a small degree of visibility from designated heritage assets located within the settlement of Strathy, including. Strathy Former Church of Scotland (LB 7143), Strathy Free Church (LB 7144), Former Free Church School (LB 7146) and Former Free Church Manse (LB 7145). None of these buildings are particularly sensitive to impacts on setting and therefore this is not considered a constraint to development.	
		Cultural Heritage Assets	This site option is located within an area of extensive former peat cutting, of some historical interest but adequately preserved by record and therefore of		As per Site Option A.	This site option is located within an area where the only evidence for human activity is some attempt at drainage in the form of linear ditches.	There are no features of the small settlement of Bowside east of the access track and north of the stream,	No cultural heritage assets have been noted within the footprint of this site option, other than an abandoned peat track and faint	

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			local significance and low to negligible sensitivity to direct impact.			These features are of local significance and negligible sensitivity to direct impact.	nor is there any visible evidence for prehistoric activity.	traces of former peat cuttings. These features are of local significance only and negligible sensitivity to direct impact.	
	Landscape and Visual	Designations	This site option would not be located within any designated landscapes. The nearest designation is the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra Special Landscape Area (SLA), located approximately 2.5 km to the north. As it would be located in a relatively elevated area it is likely to be visible in distant views inland from coastal areas within the SLA, potentially resulting in localised indirect impacts on the SLA. These distant views would also be seen in the context of wind turbines and other electrical infrastructure. However the special qualities of this SLA are more focused on the coastline rather than views inland, which would reduce sensitivity.		This site option would not be located within any designated landscapes. The nearest designation is the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA, located approximately 1.5 km to the north. This site option would be potentially prominent within the setting to the coastal landscape of the SLA, particularly around Strathy Bay, potentially resulting in impacts on the SLA. However, any effects would be indirect, and sensitivity of the SLA is somewhat reduced by the fact that the special qualities are more focused on the coastline rather than views inland.	This site option would not be located within any designated landscapes. The nearest designation is the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA, located approximately 2.8 km to the north. However, its location in a low position within the River Strathy valley as well as the presence of Strathy Forest would reduce visibility from coastal areas within the SLA. The special qualities of this SLA are also more focused on the coastline rather than views inland.	This site option would not be located within any designated landscapes. The nearest designation is the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA, located approximately 3.8 km to the north. However, it would be unlikely to be visible from coastal areas within the SLA due to topography and the presence of Strathy Forest.	This site option would not be located within any designated landscapes. The nearest designation is the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA, located approximately 2.9 km to the north. It would be located in a relatively elevated area and is likely to be visible on the hillside in distant views inland from coastal areas within the SLA, potentially resulting in impacts on the SLA, albeit seen in the context of wind turbines and other electrical infrastructure. However any impacts would be indirect, and the special qualities of this SLA are more focused on the coastline rather than views inland, reducing its sensitivity.	
		Character	This site option would be located within LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity. Its main sensitivities are its sense of openness and exposure. Site Option A would be located in a slightly elevated part of the landscape and would therefore have the potential to impact on the sense of openness and exposure, by introducing vertical structures within the landscape, albeit in the context of wind turbines and other electrical infrastructure. There would be limited opportunities for mitigation due to the exposed and open situation.		This site option would be located within LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity. Its main sensitivities are its sense of openness and exposure. Site Option C would be located at the mouth of a shallow moorland valley, close to the existing wind farm track, which may slightly reduce the sense of openness and exposure locally. However, as it is located at the northern end of this valley, it would form a potentially prominent feature in the context to the coastal landscapes to the north and within the setting of the outlying croft lands of Strathy village with little opportunity for mitigation due to the open and exposed location.	This site option would be located within LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity. Its main sensitivities are its sense of openness and exposure. Site Option D would be located within a moorland valley, close to the existing wind farm track along the edge of Strathy Forest, which would help to contain it, and maintain the sense of openness across the wider landscape. It is therefore unlikely to compromise the key characteristics of this LCT.	This site option would be located within LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity. Its main sensitivities are its sense of openness and exposure. Site Option E would be located within a relatively low position within the River Strathy valley, adjacent to the existing track, near the edge of Strathy Forest. The location is relatively contained by surrounding landform, which would help to maintain the sense of openness across the wider landscape. It is therefore unlikely to compromise the key characteristics of this LCT.	This site option would be located within LCT 134: Sweeping Moorland and Flows, which is considered to be of Medium sensitivity. Its main sensitivities are its sense of openness and exposure. Site Option F would be located in a slightly elevated part of the landscape and would therefore have the potential to impact on the sense of openness and exposure, by introducing vertical structures within the landscape, albeit in the context of wind turbines and other electrical infrastructure and would have limited opportunities for mitigation due to the exposed and open situation.	
		Visual	This site option may be visible in views inland from Strathy, with the nearest receptors approximately 1.6 km away,		This site option would be potentially prominent in views inland from Strathy, potentially resulting in visual	The main visual receptors would be located in and around Strathy, with the closest receptor being located 2.2	This site option would be within close proximity of receptors at Bowside Lodge and Bowside Cottage, located	This site option may be visible in views inland from Strathy, with the nearest receptors being located	

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		potentially resulting in visual effects for receptors in and around this settlement, and from the A836 public road which runs to the north, passing through Strathy. Inland views would also be seen in the context of wind turbines and other electrical infrastructure. However, views from these receptors are generally likely to be more focused towards the coast, reducing their sensitivity. This site option would be located to the east of Scottish Hill Track 344: Strath Halladale (Trantlebeg) to Strathy, and is likely to be visible from this route on the hillside above. However, the presence of the Strathy North wind farm turbines to the west, and the use of the track by wind farm traffic, reduces its sensitivity.		effects for receptors in and around this settlement, with the closest residential receptors being located 0.7 km away, and from the A836 public road which runs to the north, passing through Strathy. However, views from these receptors are generally likely to be more focused towards the coast. It would also be located adjacent to Scottish Hill Track 344 and it may compromise the visual amenity of this stretch of the track given the proximity, however, the use of the track by wind farm traffic and the presence of the Strathy North wind farm turbines to the west would reduce its sensitivity but may increase potential for cumulative effects.	km away. However, it is likely that views of this site option from these receptors would be limited due to the prevailing topography as well as screening by forestry from receptors to the north-west. There are also a limited number of receptors located within the valley, including Bowside Lodge, which is located approximately 1 km away, although this site option is likely to be at least partially screened by landform and vegetation from these receptors. It would also be located adjacent to Scottish Hill Track 344 and may compromise the visual amenity of this stretch of the track given the proximity. However the use of the track by wind farm traffic, the presence of the Strathy North wind farm turbines to the south, and existing OHL infrastructure to the west, already reduces the visual sensitivity for recreational users to some degree, but may increase potential for cumulative effects.	approximately 0.1 km to the south and south-west. While views from Bowside Lodge are mostly filtered or screened by garden vegetation / trees surrounding the property, these receptors would be likely to experience visual effects particularly during construction. However, the site may offer some opportunity to mitigate these visual effects. This site option would also be located adjacent to Scottish Hill Track 344, however this route is already used by wind farm traffic, which reduces its sensitivity. Apart from these receptors within the valley, the closest visual receptors are located within and around Strathy, with the closest residential receptor being located 3.2 km away. However visibility would be limited to the north by the prevailing topography, and it is unlikely that these receptors would be affected.	2.1 km away, potentially resulting in visual effects for receptors in and around this settlement, and from the A836 public road which runs to the north, passing through Strathy. Inland views would also be seen in the context of wind turbines and other electrical infrastructure. However, views from these receptors are generally likely to be more focused towards the coast, reducing their sensitivity. This site option would be located east of Scottish Hill Track 344 and likely be visible in views from this route. However, as the track is already being used by wind farm traffic, this reduces its sensitivity.	
Land Use	Agriculture	The land is considered to be of limited agricultural value and is not considered to present any constraint to development.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
	Forestry	This site option would have no interaction with commercial forestry.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	

Category		Sub-Topic	Site A	B	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F	G
		Recreation	This site option is approximately 2.2 km to the south of the A836 public road which forms part of the North Coast 500 tourist route and National Cycle Route 1. It may be briefly seen in views from these tourist routes, as it is located on slightly elevated ground, however it would not interrupt views towards the coast, which are likely to be the key vistas for tourists. The main access track which passes approximately 535 m to the west of this site option forms part of Scottish Hill Track 344, which travels between Trantlebeg and Strathy. There may be some impact on the recreational amenity of users of this route. The River Strathy is located approximately 700 m to the west and is popular with anglers due to the presence of salmon.		This site option is approximately 1.3 km to the south of the A836 public road (and North Coast 500 tourist route and National Cycle Route 1), the closest of any site option to these tourist routes. It may be briefly seen in views although it would not interrupt the key vista for tourists which are likely to be towards the coast. The River Strathy is located approximately 260 m to the west and is popular with anglers due to the presence of salmon. The main access track which passes adjacent to this site option forms part of Scottish Hill Track 344 and there may be some disruption to recreational users of this route during construction and potential to compromise the visual amenity of this stretch of track in the longer term.	This site option is approximately 2.7 km to the south of the A836 public road (and the North Coast 500 tourist route and National Cycle Route 1) and is unlikely to be seen in views from these tourist routes. The River Strathy is located approximately 160 m to the west of this site option and is popular with anglers due to the presence of salmon. This site option would overlap with the main access track which forms part of Scottish Hill Track 344 and a short section of this route would require diversion to accommodate this site option, for which there should be opportunity.	This site option is the furthest from the A836 public road (and North Coast 500 tourist route and National Cycle Route 1), at approximately 3.7 km to the south. The site would not be visible in views from these tourist routes. The River Strathy is located approximately 325 m to the west and is popular with anglers due to the presence of salmon. The river is fished as part of the Bowside Fisheries based at Bowside Lodge, adjacent to this site option. The main access track which passes adjacent to this site option forms part of Scottish Hill Track 344 and there may be some disruption to recreational users of this route during construction and potential to compromise the visual amenity of this stretch of track in the longer term.	This site option is approximately 2.7 km to the south of the A836 public road (and North Coast 500 tourist route and National Cycle Route 1). This site option would sit on more elevated ground and be visible to users of these routes, however it would not interrupt views towards the coast, which are likely to be the key vistas for tourists. The main access track which passes approximately 520 m to the west from this site option forms part of Scottish Hill Track 344. This site option is likely to be visible from higher ground above the track and may impact the amenity of recreational users of this route. However, it would be seen in the context of other electrical and renewable infrastructure, and the track would also be used by wind farm vehicles. The River Strathy is located approximately 700 m to the west and is popular with anglers due to the presence of salmon.	
	Planning	Policy	Compatibility to National, Regional and Local planning policy will in large depend on avoiding or minimising potential constraints noted, particularly in relation to potential impacts on the natural environment.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
		Proposals	There are no known proposals which may present a constraint to development.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
Engineering	**Connectivity**	Existing circuits / networks	This option is within the vicinity of the optimal alignment of the Armadale wind farm 132 kV wood pole OHL and adjacent to farmlands which may present challenges to future cables.		This site option is located directly on the route of the Armadale wind farm 132 kV OHL optimal alignment. It would also require an additional 3 – 4 spans of towers to connect the double circuit 132 kV steel lattice tower OHL.	Some of the site is directly on the optimal alignment of the double circuit 132kV OHL and very close to the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident OHL. Further investigation would be required if this option was to be progressed further.	This option is directly on the optimal alignment of the double circuit 132kV OHL and existing Strathy North 132 kV trident OHL. Further investigation would be required if this option was to be progressed further.	This option is within a reasonable distance to the optimal alignment of the double circuit 132 kV OHL and adjacent to the optimal alignment of the Armadale wind farm 132 kV wood pole OHL.	

Category		Sub-Topic	Site A	B	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F	G
		Future Development Possibilities	This site option is constrained by the existing track to the east of the site, but there is space/land that can be used for possible future extension. There is also a high possibility that the existing track could be diverted.		There is space for the site to be extended in one direction however, it is constrained by the existing access track (also to be used by wind farm traffic)	There is space/ land availability for future development at this site option location, but it is constrained by the existing access track that would need to be diverted. Further studies would be required should this option be progressed further.	Constrained by the existing access track to the west of this site option, but there is space for the site to be extended in three directions.	This site option is constrained by the existing track to the east of the site, but there is space/land that can be used for possible future extension. There is also a high possibility that the existing track could be diverted.	
		Interface with SSE Distribution and Generation	There is limited interface with either Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD) or SSE Generation assets for this site option.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
		DNO Connection	This site option is within very close proximity to Low Voltage Alternating Current supplies.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
	Footprint Requirements	Technology	The available space of this site option can accommodate any technology type.		The available space of this site option can accommodate any technology type.	The available space for this site option is of an irregular shape, and it is unlikely to be able to accommodate all technology types.	The available space can accommodate any technology type.	The available space can accommodate any technology type.	
		Adjacent Land Use	Farmland adjacent to site, it may be difficult to obtain the permission for the cable routing and extension.		There are no constraints on the adjacent land to allow all ancillary infrastructure.	As per Site Option C.	As per Site Option C.	As per Site Option C.	
		Space Availability	The optimal site design can be accommodated at this site option.		The optimal site design can be accommodated at this site option.	The site can be accommodated with modification to the shape.	The optimal site design can be accommodated at this site option.	The optimal site design can be accommodated at this site option.	
	Hazards	Unique Hazards	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
		Existing Utilities	There are no utilities located within the vicinity of this site option.		As per Site Option A.	There are no utilities located within the vicinity of this site option, but the existing Strathy North 132 kV OHL is within close proximity.	There are no utilities located within the area of this site option, but an underground BT cable is within close proximity and may need to be diverted.	There are no utilities located within the vicinity of this site option.	
	Ground Conditions	Topography	OS contour lines illustrate relatively flat site area. Infraworks model confirms minimal earthworks		OS contour lines illustrate gentle sloping gradient. However, a small valley within the site option would likely lead to substantial earthworks	Undulating terrain. Location of site requires re-routing of existing access track. Infraworks model identifies significant earthworks and options to microsite would result in minimal improvement.	OS contour lines illustrate steep gradient and Infraworks model identifies significant earthworks would be required to accommodate a site at this location. Earthworks would be reduced by moving the site further southeast.	OS contour lines illustrate gentle sloping gradient. Infraworks model confirms minimal earthworks.	
		Geology	Large area of Class 1 peat identified at this site option.		Large area of Class 1 peat identified at this site option.	Large area of Class 1 blanket bog peat identified at this site option.	Large area of Class 1 blanket bog peat identified at this site option.	Large area of Class 1 peat identified at this site option.	
	Environmental Conditions	Elevation	This site option is below 100 m elevation and wind speed below the 48 m/s threshold.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	

Category		Sub-Topic	Site A	B	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F	G
		Salt Pollution	This site option is approximately 3.5 km from the nearest coast.		The site option is approximately 2.5 km from the nearest coast. The switching station may have to be housed indoors for this reason. Due to the requirements of the design, there will be limitations to the technology choice.	This site option is approximately 3.9 km from the nearest coast.	The site is approximately 4.5 km from the nearest coast.	The site is approximately 3.6 km from the nearest coast.	
		Flooding	From review of the SEPA flood maps, there is no apparent flood risk in this area, however a formal flood risk assessment is recommended to be carried out to confirm.		From review of the SEPA flood maps, there is no apparent flood risk in this area, however a formal flood risk assessment is recommended to be carried out to confirm.	From review of the SEPA flood maps, there is a medium likelihood of surface water flooding adjacent to the site. It does not appear to pose any risk to the site but it is recommended that a formal flood risk assessment is carried out.	From review of the SEPA flood maps, there is no apparent flood risk in this area, however a formal flood risk assessment is recommended to be carried out to confirm.	From review of the SEPA flood maps, there is no apparent flood risk in this area, however a formal flood risk assessment is recommended to be carried out to confirm	
		Carbon Footprint	All site options would result in a similar carbon footprint due to the removal of Class 1 peat..		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
		SF6	SF6 free equipment could be utilised for all site options.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
		Contaminated Land	No contaminated land is expected at this site option, however further investigation would be required if this option was to be progressed further.		As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	As per Site Option A.	
		Noise (proximity to dwellings / residential properties)	There are no dwellings within a reasonable distance (approx. 500 m) for noise to be of a major concern.		There are no dwellings within a reasonable distance (approx. 500 m) for noise to be of a major concern.	This site option is within 1000 m of a dwelling (Bowside Lodge), although there is screening at the dwelling. At this distance this site option poses a low risk.	This site option is within 150 m of a dwelling (Bowside Lodge), although there is screening at the dwelling.	There are no dwellings within a reasonable distance (approx. 500 m) for noise to be of a major concern.	
	Construction Access	Substation Access Road (from public road)	Circa 1 km from the existing access track. An existing minor track proceeds to this site option location but would require significant upgrade.		Existing access track runs very close to this site option. A minor new access track would be required.	Existing access track is very close to this site option. A minor new access track would be required.	Existing access track is very close to this site option. A minor new access track would be required.	Circa 1.7 km from the existing access track. An existing minor track proceeds to this site option but would require significant upgrade.	
		Transformer Delivery Route	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	Operation and Maintenance	Access	Good access via existing access track off the A836. Existing minor track leading to the site option would require to be upgraded (approximately 1 km in length).		Good access via existing access track off the A836.	Good access via existing access track off the A836.	Good access via existing access track off the A836.	Good access via the existing access track off the A836. Existing minor track leading to this site option would require to be upgraded (approximately 1.7 km).	