

APPENDIX 4.6 - GATE CHECK REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2024

Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection

Gate Check Report

September 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Gate Check Report has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited ("ASH") on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (herein referred to as "SSEN Transmission") operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (the Applicant), who own, operate, and develop the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.
- 1.1.2 The Applicant submits this report in advance of an application to the Scottish Ministers under section 37 of The Electricity Act 1989 for consent to construct and operate approximately 4.5 km of new double circuit 132 kV overhead line (OHL) to connect the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm¹ to the electricity transmission network at Connagill 275/132 kV substation via a 'T' onto the existing Strathy North Wind Farm 132 kV trident wood pole OHL. There would be a requirement for the construction of two trident 'H' wood pole structures to allow the 'T' onto the existing 132 kV OHL.
- 1.1.3 The project is referred to as the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (and hereafter as the Proposed Development). The location of the Proposed Development would be approximately 6.5 km south of Strathy, Sutherland, in the Highlands of Scotland, as shown on **Figure 1.1**. The Proposed Development would initially transport electricity generated by the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm, for a period of approximately 11 months and then after this time would be utilised as 'shared infrastructure' with the consented Strathy South Wind Farm², as further explained below.
- 1.1.4 The application for consent for the Proposed Development will be supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. A Scoping Report setting out the proposed scope of the EIA Report was submitted to the Scottish Ministers on 11th January 2024 with a request for a formal Scoping Opinion³. A Scoping Opinion was subsequently issued by the Scottish Ministers on 27th August 2024.
- 1.1.5 The purpose of this Gate Check Report is to ensure that the application is in keeping with the Energy Consent Unit's (ECU's) good practice guidance⁴, namely to aid in management of the administrative requirements of the submission by outlining consultations with statutory and non-statutory consultees, engagement with the local community and how matters raised during the scoping process have been dealt with in the EIA Report. This allows further dialogue between the ECU, the Applicant and key consultees to seek feedback on departures from methodologies agreed at Scoping stage, the scope of assessment following any changes since Scoping stage, or highlight any other key matters prior to submission of the application.

1.2 Background to the Project

- 1.2.1 The Proposed Development is driven by the need to connect the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm (comprising 13 turbines with 62.4 Megawatts (MW) capacity)⁵ and eventually the consented Strathy South Wind Farm (39 turbines with 208 MW capacity)² to the National Grid at Connagill 275/132 kV substation utilising shared infrastructure.
- 1.2.2 In addition to the Proposed Development, SSEN Transmission have received requests to provide new transmission infrastructure to connect an additional two proposed wind farms in the area, also proposed to connect into Connagill 275/132 kV substation. These wind farms include the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub (comprising 12 turbines with 99.6 MW capacity) and Kirkton Energy Park (comprising 11 turbines with 72.8

¹ Received consent from the Scottish Government in December 2021 (Reference ECU00005239).

² Received consent from the Scottish Government in November 2021 (Reference ECU00002133).

³ Under The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

⁴ Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Energy Consents Unit, February 2022)

⁵ Since consented was granted the wind farm developer has reduced the number of turbines to be constructed to 11.

MW capacity plus). These grid connections, together with the proposed Strathy Wood and Strathy South wind farm grid connections, are collectively referred to as the 'Connagill Cluster Grid Connections'⁶. To facilitate the grid connections, a new switching station, known as Strathy Switching Station, would also be required.

- 1.2.3 Further information on the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections is available at: [Connagill Cluster Wind Farm Connections - SSEN Transmission \(ssen-transmission.co.uk\)](https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/connagill-cluster-wind-farm-connections).
- 1.2.4 SSEN Transmission has undertaken studies during the route option and alignment selection stages of the project to consider environmental, technical and cost factors prior to selecting a rationalised proposed route, alignment and design solution for the Proposed Development. Consultation has been undertaken during both the route and alignment selection stages to seek comments from stakeholders, including members of the public, on the options put forward prior to identifying the Proposed Development that will be subject to assessment within the EIA Report.

⁶ The proposed Armadale Wind Farm was originally included within the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections project. However, in May 2024 the developer of the proposed Armadale Wind Farm withdrew the section 36 application and consequently no longer require a grid connection. As such, this project has been removed from the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.

2. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 The Proposed Development would include the following works, for which section 37 consent under the 1989 Act, including deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, is sought:

- The installation and operation of approximately 4.5 km of new double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel lattice towers; and
- The installation and operation of 2 No. trident wood poles (H Poles) and downlead spans of up to 18 m from each pole, for connection onto the existing trident 'H' wood pole 132 kV OHL.

2.1.2 The following works would be required as part of the Proposed Development, or to facilitate its construction and operation for which deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is sought:

- The construction of a CSE compound to facilitate the transition between OHL and UGC⁷ to be situated at approximate Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference NC 82363 56167 which is positioned in the vicinity of the consented Strathy Wood substation;
- The formation of access tracks (permanent and temporary) and the installation of culverts to facilitate access and ongoing maintenance where required;
- Working areas around infrastructure (i.e. around individual tower and pole foundations) to facilitate construction;
- Tree felling and vegetation clearance to facilitate construction and operation of proposed OHL and access tracks, to comply with the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002⁸; and
- Temporary measures to protect water crossings (e.g. scaffolding and temporary bridges).

2.1.3 Other associated works are required to facilitate construction of the Proposed Development, or would occur as a consequence of its construction and operation. These works, listed below, do not form part of the description of the Proposed Development and are therefore not included in the application for statutory consents. On that basis they are therefore not assessed in detail in this EIA Report. The associated works are:

- Borrow pits and quarries which would be required to source stone for the construction of access tracks. Separate planning applications for these works would be sought by the Principal Contractor; and
- Temporary construction compounds which would be required to facilitate construction of the Proposed Development. The final location and design of temporary site compounds would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and separate planning permissions would be sought as required.
- Modification of the existing distribution network in some areas to accommodate the new OHL. These works are likely to comprise the diversion of short sections of underground cables within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, and would be undertaken by Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD). Consent would be sought by SHEPD as required.

2.2 Other Related Works

2.2.1 A new grid connection would be required to connect the consented Strathy South Wind Farm on-site substation to the Strathy Wood Wind Farm on-site substation via underground cable⁹. From the Strathy Wood Wind Farm on-site substation, both Strathy Wood Wind Farm and Strathy South Wind Farm grid connections would share

⁷ UGC elements are associated with the Strathy South wind Farm Grid Connection and are classed as permitted development under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.

⁸ The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (2002), available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents/made>

⁹ Anticipated to be permitted development.

the OHL infrastructure proposed as part of the Proposed Development. Due to the combined generating capacity of the consented Strathy South and Strathy Wood Wind Farms, the shared connection would be unable to utilise the existing Strathy North trident 'H' wood pole 132 kV OHL to Connagill 275/132 kV substation. Instead, a new section of double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel lattice towers would continue the connection from Dallangwell (at the Strathy North 'T') to Connagill 275/132 kV Substation. The OHL works will be assessed as part of separate application for consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 by the Applicant.

- 2.2.2 SSEN Transmission have also received requests to provide new transmission infrastructure to connect three other proposed wind farms in the area to the National Grid at Connagill 275/132 kV substation, as described in paragraph 1.2.2. These works will be assessed as part of separate applications for consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 by the Applicant.
- 2.2.3 In addition, there would be a requirement for a new switching station and this would be subject to a separate planning application under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) by the Applicant.
- 2.2.4 Cumulative effects between these proposed projects and the Proposed Development will be considered in the EIA Report where appropriate.

3. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

3.1.1 The Proposed Development has been subject to a route and alignment selection process, informed by SSEN Transmission's guidance¹⁰ which provides a framework to ensure environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the routeing process. This has also included the consideration of alternative technology solutions, including underground cable.

3.1.2 The route and alignment process has been documented as follows¹¹:

- SSEN Transmission (December 2023): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections - Consultation Document: Route Options.
- SSEN Transmission (April 2024): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections – Report on Consultation: Route Options
- SSEN Transmission (May 2024): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections - Consultation Document: Alignment Options
- SSEN Transmission (September 2024): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections – Report on Consultation: Alignment Options

3.1.3 A summary of the alternatives considered during the route and alignment process, as well as further, more site-specific alternatives considered during the EIA process, will be set out within the EIA Report.

¹⁰ SSEN Transmission (March 2018), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines of 132kV and above (updated in September 2020)

¹¹ All documents are available on the SSEN Transmission website: [Connagill Cluster Wind Farm Connections - SSEN Transmission \(ssen-transmission.co.uk\)](https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk).

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Scoping

4.1.1 A Scoping Opinion was sought¹² from Scottish Ministers on the environmental information to be provided in the EIA Report. A Scoping Opinion was subsequently issued by the Scottish Ministers in August 2024. The responses, contained within the Scoping Opinion, were considered in detail during the EIA process.

Appendix 1 of this report includes a matrix detailing the key issues that were raised in the Scoping Opinion and how and where they will be addressed in the EIA Report. The scoping matrix will be included in the EIA Report.

4.1.2 It should be noted that The Highland Council (THC) issued their response directly to the Applicant, however, this response was not included in the Scoping Opinion issued by the Scottish Ministers. The scoping matrix included in **Appendix 1** considers the THC response.

4.2 Key Scoping Issues

4.2.1 The Scoping Opinion made reference to site specific issues of interest to the Scottish Ministers, to be considered and addressed in addition to those laid out in responses from consultees. The issues raised were as follows.

EIA Consultation and Scope

“Scottish Ministers expect the EIA report which will accompany the application for the Proposed Development to consider in full all consultation responses attached [to the Scoping Opinion]. Scottish Ministers are broadly content with the EIA set out in the Scoping Report.”

4.2.2 A Scoping Matrix will be appended to the EIA Report summarising all consultation comments received as part of EIA Scoping and where these are addressed within the EIA Report, where relevant.

Route Selection

“Scottish Ministers request that justification of Route Selection is included in the EIA Report.”

4.2.3 The EIA Report will set out the alternative options considered and will discuss the reasons for identifying the proposed alignment and design solution.

Scoping Consultations

“Scottish Ministers note the detailed comments provided by RSPB Scotland and NatureScot and agree with all their requests.”

4.2.4 RSPB Scotland and NatureScot consultation responses received are summarised within **Appendix 1** and will be addressed throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.

Drinking Water and Scottish Water Assets

“Scottish Water provided information on whether there are any drinking water protected areas or Scottish Water assets on which the development could have any significant effect. Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water...and makes further enquiries to confirm whether there are any Scottish

¹² In December 2021 under The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

Water assets which may be affected by the development, and includes details in the EIA report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.

“Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. The EIA report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Company should provide an assessment of the potential impacts, risks, and any mitigation which would be provided.”

- 4.2.5 Further consultation was not required as Scottish Water’s scoping response provided all the required information. A combination of desk studies and site survey work has been undertaken to ascertain the presence of any private water supplies which could be impacted by the Proposed Development. The Soils, Geology and Water chapter of the EIA Report will contain details of any assets and / or private water supplies identified, assess likely impacts and set out suitable mitigation measures, where required.

Aquatic Ecology

“In addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider, at this early stage, any areas of Special Areas of Conservation where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.

“[Marine Science Scotland] also provide standing advice for overhead line development...which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. Use of the checklist provided, should ensure that the EIA report contains the required information; the absence of such information may necessitate requesting additional information which may delay the process. Developers are required to submit the completed checklist in advance of their application submission.”

- 4.2.6 Potential effects on fish and aquatic ecology will be considered within the Ecology chapter of the EIA Report. As noted in the Scoping Report, at least a 10 m buffer will be maintained between the construction works and watercourses, including the River Strathy. Additionally, SSEN Transmissions General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) (specifically Working In, or near Watercourses) will be adhered to throughout construction. The checklist referred to will be completed and provided to Marine Science Scotland.

Peat Landslide Risk

“Scottish Ministers consider that where there is demonstrable requirement for peat landslide hazard and risk assessment (PLHRA), the assessment should be undertaken as part of the EIA process to provide Ministers with a clear understanding of whether the risks are acceptable and capable of being controlled by mitigation measures. The Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (Second Edition)...should be followed in the preparation of the EIA report, which should contain such assessment and details of mitigation measures.

- 4.2.7 A PLHRA will be prepared for the Proposed Development, where required and will form part of the EIA Report.

Visualisation Viewpoints

“Scottish Ministers advise that Viewpoints should be prepared to inform and support the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (‘LVIA’) and must be agreed in advance of preparation with The Highland Council and NatureScot. The Highland Council also advised that it is not possible to use panoramic images for the purposes of visual impact assessment.”

- 4.2.8 Photomontage visualisations of the Proposed Development will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA within the EIA Report, with viewpoint location selection based on guidance, professional judgement and in light of comments received from both THC and NatureScot.

Further Consultation and Design Alternatives

"Ministers expect Company's [sic] to conduct adequate pre-application consultation and to demonstrate what alternatives to the proposal were considered before arriving at the design they apply for. Ministers agree with the Planning Authority that the EIA should include a description of the main development alternatives which are relevant to the proposal and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.

"Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the proposed development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments and request that they are kept informed of relevant discussions."

- 4.2.9 The EIA Report will set out the alternative options considered and will discuss the reasons for identifying a proposed alignment and design solution. Pre-application consultation has been carried out throughout the project, particularly during the route and alignment selections stages, and continuing through the EIA stage. Details of pre-application consultation will be included in the EIA Report.

Mitigation Measures

"The Scottish Ministers are required to make a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as identified in the environmental impact assessment. The mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impacts identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. Applicants are also asked to provide a consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures proposed in the environmental assessment, provided in tabular form, where that mitigation is relied upon in relation to reported conclusions of likelihood or significance."

- 4.2.10 Mitigation measures, where required, will be set out within each technical chapter and summarised in tabular form within a Schedule of Mitigation as part of the EIA Report.

4.3 Further Consultee Engagement

- 4.3.1 Stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since the early design stages of the project and has continued throughout the Scoping and EIA process. A summary of key meetings and engagement that has been undertaken by the Applicant with statutory consultees is detailed below:
- March 2022 - Statutory Consultee Meeting attended by representatives from THC, NatureScot and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to allow SSEN Transmission the opportunity to provide an update on their obligation to provide several wind farm grid connections (all at various stages of development), all converging into Connagill 275/132 kV substation. SSEN Transmission discussed with the statutory consultees the potential for a rationalised approach to development. Feedback received from the statutory consultees was supportive of a rationalised approach.
 - August 2023 – Pre-application meeting facilitated by THC and attended by the Applicant and specialist officers from THC. No external statutory consultees were able to attend the virtual meeting. At this meeting, SSEN Transmission delivered a presentation to provide an update on the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects (including the Proposed Development) and to seek preliminary feedback on route options and design solutions for each connection. This was followed with a round table discussion of comments and suggested actions in relation to the proposals. Following the meeting a Pre-Application

Advice Report was issued by THC on 20th September 2023. The Advice Report provided a note of the meeting and feedback on the information to be included in the EIA by key stakeholders.

- October 2023 – The Applicant engaged with the Ministry of Defence regarding an RAF Tactical Training Ground which the Proposed Development overlaps.
- June 2024 – The Applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with NatureScot specifically in relation to the likely effect of the Proposed Development on the qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Flow Country World Heritage Site.
- July 2024 – The Applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with SEPA providing results from surveys completed including peat depth, habitat data and local hydrology.
- July 2024 – The Applicant carried out further engagement with NatureScot to seek clarification that they were in agreement with elements proposed by the Applicant to be scoped out of the EIA, which were not specifically commented upon in the NS scoping response.
- August 2024 - Further engagement with THC to respond on various matters highlighted within the THC scoping response with respect to the scope of the EIA.

4.4 Community Engagement

4.4.1 In parallel with the statutory consultation process, consultation with the local community has been undertaken to inform and keep the local community up to date with the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. An overview of public engagement during the routeing and alignment selection stages is given below.

Route Selection Stage

4.4.2 The Applicant aimed to streamline the pre-application consultation and routeing process of each connection associated with the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection, to allow stakeholders the opportunity to review the Cluster as a whole and consider the consolidation of infrastructure.

4.4.3 On 30th November 2023 a public consultation event was held at Strathy Village Hall between 15:00 to 19:00, to present the appraisal of the rationalised route options proposed for the various grid connections, including the Proposed Development. This was followed by the issue of a cluster-wide Consultation Document¹³, published in December 2023 which described the project need and described the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections as a whole.

4.4.4 The consultation event was advertised on SSEN Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project website. In addition, a letter mail drop informing of the event was also carried out to over 500 households within the vicinity of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection proposals.

4.4.5 The event provided an opportunity for members of the public to view information about the Cluster, ask questions to the project team and provide feedback.

4.4.6 A total of 17 visitors attended the consultation event. A feedback form was distributed to visitors at the event to provide comments, and feedback was requested to be returned to SSEN Transmission by 12th January 2024. A total of five feedback forms were received by SSEN Transmission during or following the consultation event. The comments and queries raised during the routeing stage public engagement were detailed in a subsequent Report on Consultation¹⁴.

¹³ Connagill Cluster Grid Connections Consultation Document (Route Stage) (December 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission

¹⁴ Connagill Cluster Grid Connections Report on Consultation (Route Stage) (April 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission

Alignment Selection Stage

- 4.4.7 During the alignment selection stage, a public consultation event was held on 20th May 2024 at Strathy Village Hall between 15:00 to 19:00, to present the appraisal of the rationalised alignment options proposed for the various grid connections, including the Proposed Development, followed by publication of a Consultation Document¹⁵.
- 4.4.8 The consultation event was advertised on SSEN Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project website. In addition, a letter mail drop informing of the event was also carried out to over 500 households within the vicinity of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection proposals.
- 4.4.9 The event once again provided an opportunity for members of the public to view information about the Cluster, ask questions to the project team and provide feedback.
- 4.4.10 A total of 14 visitors attended the consultation event. As per the routeing stage, a feedback form was distributed to visitors at the event to provide comments however no feedback forms were returned to SSEN Transmission during or following the consultation event.

4.5 Community Councils

- 4.5.1 Throughout the evolution of the project, SSEN Transmission has maintained dialogue with all community councils in the vicinity of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects and has sought to keep members up to date on project progress, and any upcoming consultation events.

¹⁵ Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Consultation Document (Alignment Stage) (May 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission

5. SUBMISSION INFORMATION

5.1 Submission

5.1.1 It is the intention to submit a Section 37 application for the Proposed Development in October 2024.

5.2 Advertisement

5.2.1 In accordance with the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990, and Regulation 14 of the EIA Regulations, the application will be advertised in the Edinburgh Gazette, a national newspaper and a local newspaper (to be agreed in consultation with ECU).

5.2.2 In agreement with the ECU, the advert will describe the application, state where copies of the EIA Report are located, state a date by which any persons can make representations to the Scottish Ministers in relation to the application, and the address to where representations are to be sent.

5.3 Public Viewing of EIA Report

5.3.1 In accordance with Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations, copies of the EIA Report will be available to view on the dedicated project website at: [Connagill Cluster Wind Farm Connections - SSEN Transmission \(ssen-transmission.co.uk\)](https://ssen-transmission.co.uk). Hard copies of the EIA Report will also be available to view at the following locations:

- The Highland Council Offices (at Golspie).
- Other locations to be agreed with ECU.
- Additional copies will be made available subject to a reasonable fee when requested.

5.4 Consultee Lists

5.4.1 The list of consultees to be sent a copy of the submitted EIA Report will be agreed with the ECU. It is anticipated to include those consultees consulted during the scoping process, and any other stakeholders the Applicant or ECU are aware of with a potential interest in the project or its potential effects, as noted in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Consultees to be Issued the EIA Report

Statutory Consultees	
Energy Consents Unit	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
The Highland Council	NatureScot
Historic Environment Scotland	Transport Scotland
Scottish Forestry	Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital
Non-Statutory Consultees	
British Telecommunications plc	National Air Traffic Society
Civil Aviation Authority - Airspace	Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
Flow Country Rovers Trust	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Fisheries Management Scotland	Scottish Wild Land Group
Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd	Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays)
John Muir Trust	Scottish Water
Joint Radio Company	
Ministry of Defence	
Community Councils and Local Groups	
Strathly and Armadale Community Council	Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council

Caithness West Community Council	
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5.5 Conclusion

5.5.1 The Applicant welcomes any comments that the ECU or any of the statutory consultees may have in relation to this Gate Check Report.

Appendix 1: Scoping Matrix

Abbreviations

BT	British Telecom
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HIAL	Highlands and Islands Airports Limited
JRC	Joint Radio Company
MD-SEDD	Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NDSFB	Northern District Salmon Fisheries Board
NS	NatureScot
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
ScW	ScotWays
SF	Scottish Forestry
SW	Scottish Water
THC	The Highland Council
TS	Transport Scotland

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
001	Scoping Consultations	Scottish Ministers expect the EIA Report which will accompany the application for the Proposed Development to consider in full all consultation responses.	ECU - 01	6	Throughout the EIA Report	All consultation responses received are summarised within this Scoping Matrix and will be addressed throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
002	Scoping Consultations	Scottish Ministers are broadly content with the EIA set out in the Scoping Report. In addition to the consultation responses, Ministers wish to provide comments with regards to the scope of the EIA report. The Applicant should note and address each matter.	ECU - 02	6	Throughout the EIA Report	This has been noted, and all consultation responses received are summarised within this Scoping Matrix and addressed throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
003	Route Selection	Scottish Ministers request that justification of Route Selection is included in the EIA Report.	ECU-O3	6	The Routeing Process and Alternatives Chapter	The noted chapter will set out the alternative options considered and discusses the reasons for identifying the proposed alignment and design solution.
004	Scoping Consultations	Scottish Ministers note the detailed comments provided by RSPB Scotland and NatureScot and agree with all their requests.	ECU – 04	6	Throughout the EIA Report	RSPB Scotland and NatureScot consultation responses received are summarised within this Scoping Matrix and will be addressed throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
005	Scottish Water Assets	Scottish Ministers request that the Applicant contacts Scottish Water and makes further enquiries to confirm whether there are any Scottish Water	ECU-O5	6	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	Further consultation with Scottish Water was not required as Scottish Water's scoping response provided all the required information. This along with published data sets will be sufficient for assessment of potential impacts on the water environment.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		assets which may be affected by the development and includes details in the EIA Report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.				
006	Private Water Supplies	Scottish Ministers request that the Applicant investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. The EIA Report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Applicant should provide an assessment of the potential impacts, risks and any mitigation which would be provided.	ECU-O6	6	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	The presence of any private water supplies along the route have been determined through desk-based and site survey, and likely impacts from the Proposed Development will be set out in the noted chapter. Mitigation measures will be proposed, where relevant.
007	MD-SEDD EIA Guidance	Scottish Ministers reference Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD), who provide generic scoping guidelines and standing advice for OHL development which outline how fish populations can be impacted during construction, operation and decommissioning. The guidelines inform developers as to what should be considered during the EIA Process. The standing advice outlines what information, relating to freshwater	ECU – 07	7	Ecology Chapter	MD-SEDD standing advice and guidance has been noted and potential effects on fisheries interests will be considered in the noted chapter. The checklist will be completed and included with the application.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. A checklist is provided to accompany submission.				
008	Impacts on Fish Populations	Scottish Ministers outline that in addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider any areas of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.	ECU-08	7	Ecology, Soils, Geology and Water and Forestry Chapters	Potential effects on SACs will be considered primarily in the ecology and soils, geology and water chapters. The potential effects of felling will also be considered in these chapters, based on the felling requirements set out within the forestry chapter.
009	Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment (PLHRA)	Scottish Ministers outline that where there is a demonstrable requirement for peat landslide hazard risk assessment (PLHRA), the assessment should be undertaken as part of the EIA process.	ECU – 09	7	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A PLHRA is being carried out as part of the EIA Report and will be as an appendix to the noted chapter.
010	Landscape and Visual Impact – Visualisations	Scottish Ministers advise that Viewpoints should be prepared to inform and support the LVIA and must be agreed in advance with THC and NS.	ECU-10	7	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA chapter will identify and describe the viewpoints used for production of photomontage visualisations to support and inform the LVIA. THC confirmed in their scoping response that they are content with the viewpoint selection included in the scoping report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
011	Alternatives	Scottish Ministers expect the Applicant to carry out adequate pre-application consultation and demonstrate the alternatives considered for the Proposed Development prior to arriving at the final design. The EIA Report should include a description of the main alternatives and a discussion of the main reasons for selection of the chosen option, including comparison of environmental effects.	ECU – 11	7 - 8	The Routeing Process and Alternatives and Scope and Consultation Chapters.	The alternative options considered and the reasons for identifying a proposed alignment and design solution will be set out in the EIA Report, together with details of pre-application consultation.
012	Further Consultation	Scottish Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the Proposed Development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments, and request that they are kept informed of relevant discussions.	ECU – 12	8	N/A	This has been noted. The Energy Consents Unit will be kept informed of any further discussions with consultees.
013	Mitigation	Scottish Ministers outlined that the mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impact identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. The Applicant is also asked to provide a	ECU - 13	8	Throughout the EIA Report Schedule of Mitigation	Mitigation measures will be included where relevant in each technical chapter. A consolidated Schedule of Mitigation will also be presented as an appendix to the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures presented in the EIA Report in tabular form.				
014	Further Consultation	It is acknowledged by Scottish Ministers that the EIA process is iterative and further engagement between relevant parties may be required to refine the design of the Proposed Development. Scottish Ministers request they are kept informed of on-going discussions in relation to this.	ECU – 14	8	N/A	This has been noted. The Energy Consents Unit have been kept informed of any further discussions with consultees.
015	ECU Consultation	The Applicant is encouraged to engage with the ECU at the pre-application stage and before proposals reach design freeze.	ECU - 15	8	Scope and Consultation	The Applicant has engaged with the ECU during the pre-application stages. Pre-application consultation will be set out within the noted chapter of the EIA Report.
016	Scoping Matrix	When finalising the EIA Report, the Applicant is asked to provide a summary in tabular form of where within the EIA Report each of the specific matters raised in the Scoping Opinion have been addressed.	ECU – 16	9	Scoping Matrix	This Scoping Matrix addresses the noted request and will be included as part of the EIA Report.
017	Radio Network	The Project should not cause interference to BT's current and presently planned radio network.	BT	11	N/A	This has been noted.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
018	Designated Historic Sites	HES can confirm that there are no designated assets within their remit in the near surrounding area which would be likely to have significant visibility of the proposed development and are consequently satisfied that significant effects on the setting of assets within HES' remit are unlikely. Therefore, HES agree that further detailed assessment is not required for HES' specific historic environment remit at the national level and can be scoped out of the EIA Report.	HES	12-13	N/A	This has been noted.
019	Airport	At the given position and height, the development would not infringe the safeguarding criteria and operation of Wick Airport. Any variation of the parameters, HIAL will require to be further consulted.	HIAL	14	N/A	This has been noted.
020	Location of Development	RSPB do not think that this is an appropriate location for an OHL due to the direct and indirect impacts on multiple designated sites. There are other options available for siting this OHL and the Applicant needs to fully justify the decision and provide	RSPB-01	15	The Routeing Process and Alternatives.	The alternative options considered and the reasons for identifying a proposed alignment and design solution will be set out in the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		appropriate level of information within the EIA to allow assessment of the predicted impacts.				
021	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Protected Sites	The proposed OHL passes through the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar and the West Halladale SSSI; all designated for internationally and nationally important populations of birds and habitats. The EIA must include sufficient information to inform an Appropriate Assessment by the competent authority.	RPSB-02	16	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	The potential effects on designated sites will be discussed within the Ecology and Ornithology chapters. A shadow Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar and SPA / Ramsar will be included as part of the EIA Report.
022	Alternatives	Full justification of the route selection process should be included within the EIA and report to inform the HRA.	RPSB-03	16	The Routeing Process and Alternatives Chapter	The alternative options considered and the reasons for identifying a proposed alignment and design solution will be set out in the EIA Report.
023	Bird Survey Validity	RSPB do not agree that the current surveys are sufficient for determining impact. Most ornithological surveys were carried out between October 2018 and August 2019 which are now out of date. Although these surveys can be used for context in the EIAR, as well as information gained from other developments, they cannot be used to inform this development itself. RSPB also did not agree that these surveys	RPSB-04	17	Ornithology Chapter	A discussion on the datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		were sufficient at the time [of the 2020 scoping] ¹ and justification is required if only using this data. The only surveys within date are scarce breeding bird surveys conducted between Amay and August 2022. RSPB welcome this inclusion, but consider it insufficient in scope as they neither cover the one full year recommended by NatureScot guidance nor do they cover the full breeding seasons for many of the SPA species.				
024	Wintering Bird Surveys	RSPB recommend including wintering bird surveys, as although wintering birds are not SPA qualifying species, including these surveys is considered best practice and the site may be important for wintering species such as Schedule 1 Hen Harrier and may be on commuting and migration routes for geese and swan species.	RPSB-05	18	Ornithology Chapter	A discussion on the datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the noted chapter.
025	White-tailed Eagle and Curlew Surveys	RSPB hold records of Schedule 1 protected White-tailed Eagle and Red listed bird of concern Curlew in the vicinity of the proposed development,	RPSB-06	18	Ornithology Chapter	A data request obtained from the RSPB will be reviewed and used to inform the assessment included in the noted chapter.

¹ A Scoping Report was submitted to the Scottish Ministers by the Applicant in June 2020 for an OHL connection supported by trident-H wood pole

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		and these should be included in any surveys.				
026	Peat Depth and Habitat Surveys	Peat depth and habitat surveys should be undertaken along the preferred route to inform the final alignment deviation choices.	RPSB-07	18	Ecology and Soils, Geology and Water Chapters	Results of habitat surveys and an assessment of likely impacts on ecological receptors will be set out in the ecology chapter. A peat probing campaign has been carried out across the project to establish peat depths and has been used to inform siting of infrastructure, as well as appropriate mitigation, as will be discussed in Soils, Geology and Water chapter.
027	Ornithology Impact Assessment	RSPB noted that surveys should allow for analysis of negative impacts associated with both construction and operation of OHLs, including collision, displacement, habitat loss and disturbance. This is needed to provide up-to-date information on bird disruption and activity to assess likely effects and inform required mitigation and compensation.	RPSB-08	18	Ornithology Chapter	An assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology will be set out in the EIA Report and appropriate mitigation to avoid or reduce adverse effects will be identified, where required.
028	Information to be included in the EIA Report (Ornithology)	RSPB recommend the following is provided within the EIA Report to demonstrate the survey data are adequate, robust and accurate:	RPSB-09	18	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the ornithology surveys, including survey areas and key results, will be included in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Full information on the VP work undertaken including dates, times and weather conditions. b. Maps showing VP locations that also denote viewsheds and OHL locations including steel lattice towers and ancillary development. c. Maps showing survey areas for breeding bird and wintering bird surveys. d. Maps showing diver, wader, Common Scoter and raptor breeding, foraging and roosting areas, and commuting routes. 				
029	Survey Coverage	The surveys should cover all of the proposed route of the OHL including ancillary structures and existing and proposed new access tracks.	RPSB-10	19	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the ornithology survey areas will be included in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.
030	Developments to be included in the cumulative assessment	Developments considered in Table 3.1 [of the Scoping Report] are insufficient in scope as it does not include all relevant developments at the appropriate level. It should include the	RPSB-11	19	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the developments included in the assessment of cumulative effects will be set out in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		existing Strathy North Grid Connection and any existing 33 kV and 11 kV distribution network infrastructure.				Developments included in the assessment are considered to be proportionate to the scale of the Proposed Development.
031	Cumulative Impacts on SPA and NHZ species	Due to the likely significant effect of this development on the SPA, impacts should be assessed for the SPA populations as well as the NHZ level. A robust cumulative assessment of collision risk, disturbance, displacement and barrier effects should take account of all operational, consented and proposed wind energy schemes and their associated infrastructure that could impact on bird populations of both the relevant NHZ and Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA.	RPSB-12	19	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Potential cumulative effects on important ornithological features (IOF) will be considered in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.</p> <p>Where a potential cumulative effect is identified, this will be assessed against the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA population, as this is considered to be the most appropriate scale for the relevant IOFs; as the NHZ populations are larger than the SPA, and hence potential effects would affect a smaller proportion of the NHZ population compared with the SPA population. This is considered to be a suitable approach.</p>
032	Cumulative Displacement Impacts	The cumulative disturbance and displacement impact on birds from the increase in traffic and noise from the additional use of the existing wind farm access tracks during construction and maintenance of this OHL should be included. Any identified impacts should be assessed against the relevant SPA and NHZ populations.	RPSB-13	19	Ornithology Chapter	Potential cumulative effects on IOF's will be considered in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
033	In-combination effect of other projects	The in-combination effect of other relevant plans or projects within the wider NHZ5 (i.e the Sutherland spaceport and Limekiln and Creag Riabhach OHLs) should be considered.	RPSB-14	19	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Details of the developments included in the assessment of cumulative effects will be set out in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.</p> <p>Developments included in the assessment are considered to be proportionate to the scale of the Proposed Development.</p>
034	Peat Survey	A peat depth survey should be undertaken to minimise impacts on peat by helping to avoid deeper than 0.5 m. Horizontal directional drilling through bedrock should be considered for sensitive peatland habitats that cannot be avoided.	RPSB-15	20	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A peat probing campaign has been carried out across the project to establish peat depths and appropriate mitigation will be set out in the noted chapter and in a Peat Management Plan that will be included as part of the EIA Report.
035	Climate Change	RSPB do not agree that an assessment of climate change has been scoped out of the EIA assessment.	RPSB-16	20	Throughout the EIA	Climate change will be considered throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
036	Candidate WHS	The site overlaps with the candidate Flow Country World Heritage Site ³ . RSPB recommend that an assessment utilising the UNESCO Impact Assessment Guidance Toolkit is undertaken alongside the EIA.	RPSB-17	20-21	Ecology Chapter	A World Heritage Site (WHS) assessment will be undertaken for the Flow Country WHS. The assessment will use the THC toolkit.
037	Mitigation	The EIA report should fully discuss mitigation measures required to reduce	RPSB-18	21	Ornithology Chapter	The noted chapter will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology and will

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		impacts of displacement, disturbance and direct mortality on qualifying SPA species and Birds of Conservation Concern and deterioration of habitats present along the line during both construction and future maintenance. Evidence should be provided for the assumed effectiveness of proposed mitigation based on experience from other projects.				suggest appropriate mitigation to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.
038	Design	Flight activity data from vantage points should be used in conjunction with NatureScot guidance to best minimise impacts on birds through design. Undergrounding / HDD should be considered as mitigation where there is potential for bird collision risk and appropriate line marking as an alternative. HDD should also be considered so that loss of qualifying habitats is avoided.	RPSB-19	21	Ornithology Chapter	The noted chapter will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology carried out in accordance with relevant guidance.
039	BNG, Biodiversity Enhancement and HMP	RSPB support the aim of the Applicant of enhancing biodiversity and achieving BNG and the preparation of an HMP. Opportunities for habitat enhancement through a BNG scheme should be implemented alongside mitigation	RPSB-20	21	N/A	The Applicant is committed to incorporating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into their projects and a BNG assessment will be provided to relevant consultees post submission of the application and prior to determination, secured by a condition of consent.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		hierarchy, including avoiding damage to protected sites and species where possible.				
040	Habitat Management Plan	RSPB support the aim of the Applicant of enhancing biodiversity and achieving BNG and the preparation of an HMP. Opportunities for habitat enhancement through a BNG scheme should be implemented alongside mitigation hierarchy, including avoiding damage to protected sites and species where possible.	RSPB-21	22	Ecology	An overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections is being developed in consultation with NatureScot to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement. An Outline HMP will be included within the EIA Report.
		RSPB recommend the HMP contains detailed ecological justification for any habitat management proposals and seek to enhance key habitats, such as blanket bog, occurring within the area.				
041	Forestry Assessment	SF are concerned that forestry has been scoped out of the EIA process without a detailed assessment of the potential impacts. The scoping report has not adequately addressed the potential impact on woodland, trees or previously afforested land awaiting restock. SF encourage the planning authority to ensure that proposed	SF-01	35	Forestry Chapter	A specific assessment on forestry interests will be completed and included in the EIA Report. This will also set out compensatory planting requirements, where relevant.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		changes to woodland address the requirements of the Control of Woodland Removal Policy (2019) and other relevant guidance to help reach an informed decision on the potential impact of the proposed development. Detailed information on any compensatory planting proposals should also be provided, compliant with UK Forestry Standard.				
042	Compensatory Planting	Any compensatory planting required as a result of the Proposed Development may also need to be considered under The Forestry (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and should follow the process for preparing a woodland creation proposal.	SF-02	35	Forestry Chapter	A specific assessment on forestry interests will be completed and included in the EIA Report. This will also set out compensatory planting requirements, where relevant.
043	DWPA	There are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction, which are designated as DWPA's under the Water Framework Directive, in the areas that may be affected by the proposed works.	SW	36	N/A	This has been noted.
044	Scottish Hill Track	Scottish Hill Track Route 344: Strath Halladale (Trantlebeg) to Strathy crosses or is close to the application	ScW-01	38	LVIA and	The referenced recreational route will be considered within the noted chapters of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		site. It runs along an existing track that will be affected by the Proposed Development and used to access the site. ScW welcome that the Applicant is aware of the Scottish Hill Track and an Outdoor Access Plan is proposed.			Traffic and Transport Chapters	A draft Outdoor Access Plan will also included within the EIA Report.
045	Other Public Access	Details about other forms of public access which may be affected by the application site is enclosed in the Catalogue of Rights of Way Guidance Notes.	ScW-02	38	N/A	This is welcomed.
046	SEPA Interests	As this is a relatively small-scale proposal and the reason for the EIA does not specifically relate to SEPA's interests, SEPA have no site-specific advice to provide and refer the developer to the relevant standing advice.	SEPA	44	N/A	This has been noted. Further consultation took place with SEPA in July 2024, as noted in the Gate Check Report.
047	Traffic and Transport Assessment	TS consider the assessment approach set out in the Scoping Report appropriate. TS consider the potential impact on the trunk road network for the construction of an OHL 35 km away to be negligible. However, a simple threshold assessment should be	TS-01	46	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted. A traffic and transport assessment will be carried out and included in the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		provided in the EIA Report to support this view.				
048	AIL Assessment	TS is satisfied that an Abnormal Indivisible Load assessment be scoped out of the EIA.	TS-02	46	N/A	This has been noted and will be scoped out of the EIA Report.
049	Military Aircraft	The application site falls within part of the UK Military Low Flying System designated Tactical Training Area 14T (TTA 14T), an area within which military aircraft may conduct low level flight training. The MoD has no safeguarding concerns subject to a condition being added to any consent issued, requiring that sufficient data is submitted to ensure that structures are accurately charted to allow deconfliction. The MoD should be consulted at all future stages for this proposed development.	MoD	47-49	N/A	This has been noted. The relevant information will be provided to the MoD on submission of the application.
050	Protected Sites	The Applicant should assess the direct and indirect impacts on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and SPA and their qualifying interest in context of their conservation / management objectives. The proposal should be assessed both as a single development and cumulatively with	NS-01	50	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	Potential effects on the designated sites will be discussed within the noted chapters of the EIA Report. A Shadow HRA for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar and SPA / Ramsar is being carried out as part of the EIA Report and will be appendices to the noted chapters.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		other relevant developments affecting these protected sites.				
051	Appropriate Assessment	The proposal is likely to result in loss of blanket bog, the ability to actively form peat, maintain hydrology and the structure and function of blanket bog. NS consider that an EIA assessment of this proposal is unlikely to result in 'no significant effect' and mitigation is unlikely to result in 'no adverse effect on site integrity' in the appropriate assessment.	NS-02	51	Ecology Chapter	Potential effects on the designated sites will be discussed within the noted chapters of the EIA Report. A Shadow HRA for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar is being carried out as part of the EIA Report and will be an appendix to the noted chapter.
052	Information to be included in EIA Report	NS require the following to be included with the application:	NS-03	52		The following confirms where the relevant information listed in NS's response will be addressed in the EIA Report.
		Habitat survey (NVC) and maps identifying areas / features mentioned in Annex 1 of NS guidance ² .	NS-04	52	Ecology Chapter	Results of habitat surveys and assessment of likely impacts on ecological receptors will be set out in the noted ecology chapter.
		Construction Management Plan detailing how construction methods will minimise impacts on peatland including direct disturbance and changes in hydrology.	NS-05	52	Outline CEMP	An outline CEMP will be included in the EIA Report

² NS <https://www.nature.scot/doc/advising-peatland-carbon-rich-soils-and-priority-peatland-habitats-development-management>).

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		Peat Management Plan	NS-06	52	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	Management of peat will be considered within the noted chapter of the EIA Report.
		Habitat Management Plan	NS-07	52	Ecology Chapter	<p>The Applicant is committed to delivering a Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections, and this is currently being developed in consultation with NatureScot to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement, and to mitigate the potential cumulative impacts on peatland habitat within the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar. This will also include measures to compensate for direct and indirect permanent impacts on peatland habitats outwith the SAC / Ramsar boundary.</p> <p>An Outline HMP will be included in the EIA Report.</p>
053	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA	Consideration must be given to SPA bird species so that Conservation Objectives of the site can be maintained. Further advised that the Proposed Development is likely to disturb and possibly displace SPA species (e.g., waders) through construction activity, and there may also be significant effects on other species, such as red-throated diver, which would have to avoid overhead	NS-08	52	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Potential impacts on important ornithological features, including qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA will be discussed in the noted chapter, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented.</p> <p>Potential effects on designated ornithological features of these sites will also be considered in a Shadow HRA for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA that will form an appendix to the noted chapter.</p>

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		lines whilst flying to and from the sea to feed during the breeding season.				
054	Information from other developments	NS advise that other wind farm developments will provide useful information with respect to SPA species distribution and movement and recommend that they are consulted.	NS-09	52	Ornithology Chapter	Data has been requested from wind farm developers connected to the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects. The datasets that have been shared will be reviewed as part of the desk study and relevant data used to inform the assessment to be detailed in the noted chapter. The most recent available data from the operational Strathy North and consented Strathy Wood wind farms will also be reviewed as part of the desk study and relevant data used to inform the assessment.
055	Proposed Flow Country WHS	The proposed connection lies within a proposed WHS, which is being considered for WHS status due to it being the most outstanding example of a blanket bog ecosystem globally ³ .	NS-10	53	Ecology Chapter	A World Heritage Site (WHS) assessment will be undertaken for the Flow Country WHS and discussed in the noted chapter. The assessment will use the THC toolkit.
056	Salmon and Sea Trout	There is no mention of salmon or sea trout in the [scoping] documentation. Whilst the Board does not envisage there will be any issues relation to their statutory responsibilities to protect and enhance salmon and salmon fisheries	NDSFB	54	Ecology Chapter	Aquatic species will be considered in the noted chapter.

³ The Flow Country candidate WHS has since been confirmed a WHS by Unesco in July 2024

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		in its area, the NSFB would ask that the developer scope in salmon and sea trout, if only to discount them in the EIA.				
057	EMC and microwave radio links	JRC confirmed the proposal is cleared with respect to radio link infrastructure operated by the local energy networks.	JRC	55	N/A	This has been noted.
058	Description of Development	<p>THC require that the EIA Report must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the physical characteristics of the development and the land use requirements for construction, operation and decommission phases. a description of the main characteristics of the construction process, for instance nature and quantity of materials used. the risk of accidents, particularly in regard to substances or technologies used. an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light / 	THC-01	N/A ⁴	The Proposed Development Chapter and Technical Chapters	<p>The Project Description chapter will detail the specific elements of the Proposed Development. The following confirms where each point listed in THC's response will be addressed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Development chapter. Proposed Development chapter. The potential for accidents and disasters will be discussed in the Scope and Consultation chapter, confirming that crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group to respond to such events. This will be discussed in relevant chapters of the EIA Report. The potential for cumulative impacts will be considered within each technical chapter of the EIA Report, where relevant.

⁴ The Highland Council scoping response did not form part of the Scoping Opinion issued by ECU.

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		<p>flicker, heat, radiation, etc.) resulting from the operation of the development.</p> <p>e. the estimated cumulative impact of the project with other consented or operation development.</p> <p>f. a detailed schedule of mitigation.</p>				f. Mitigation measures will be proposed at the end of each technical chapter. A consolidated Schedule of Mitigation will also be presented in the EIA Report.
059	Alternatives	<p>THC require a statement outlining the alternatives studied by the Applicant. This should highlight the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of technologies considered; • location criteria and economic parameters; • access options including laydown areas and accommodation compounds; • design and locational options for all elements of the development including access tracks, borrow pits and grid connections; and • environmental effects of the different options considered. <p>Such assessment should also highlight sustainable development attributes</p>	THC-02	N/A	The Routeing Process and Alternatives Chapter	A description of the route and alignment selection stage of the project, together with other alternatives considered during the EIA process, will be included in a routeing process and alternatives chapter.

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		including for example assessment of carbon emissions.				
060	Assessment	The EIA Report must provide a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected.	THC-03	N/A	Throughout the EIA Report	The assessment of the Proposed Development will be undertaken throughout the EIA Report.
061	Land Use and Policy	THC require that the EIA Report should recognise the existing land uses affected by the development having particular regard for THC's Development Plan inclusive of all statutorily adopted Supplementary Guidance (SG). Particular attention should be paid to the provisions of the Onshore Wind Energy SG inclusive of any Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal. This is in addition to the expectation of receiving a Planning Statement in support of the application itself which, should comply with the Development Plan, should look at the Circulars and Planning Advice Notes. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight relevant policies, not to assess the compatibility of the proposal with policy.	THC-04	N/A	Throughout the EIA Report Planning Statement	These policy documents will be referenced where appropriate throughout the EIA Report and the Planning Statement which will accompany the EIA Report.

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062	Land Use and Policy	<p>THC Development Plans Team note that a range of THC's Development Plan policies will apply to the Proposed Development (alongside National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) adopted in 2023), which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) adopted in 2012; and • Caithness and Sutherland Local development Plan (CaSPlan). Although it was acknowledged that it has limited relevance to this kind of proposal. • Associated Supplementary Guidance. 	THC-05	N/A	Throughout the EIA Report Planning Statement	These policy documents will be referenced where appropriate throughout the EIA Report and the Planning Statement which will accompany the EIA Report.
063	Land Use and Policy	<p>THC Development Plans Team noted that the policy context is evolving and as such the Applicant is advised to review recent Report of Handling for similar national section 37 applications relating to wind farm grid connection developments to further inform the policy section.</p>	THC-06	N/A	N/A	This has been noted.

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064	Land Use and Policy	<p>THC Development Plans Team advise that attention is particularly drawn to NPF4 Policy 3(b) where development proposals for national or major development, or for development that requires an EIA will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. This will include future management. To inform this best practice assessment methods should be used.</p> <p>Proposals should demonstrate how they have met the following criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The proposal is based on an understanding of the existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of irreplaceable habitats. b. Wherever possible nature-based solution have been 	THC-07	N/A	Ecology Chapter	<p>The Applicant is committed to incorporating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into their projects and a BNG assessment will be provided to relevant consultees post submission of the application and prior to determination secured by a condition of consent.</p> <p>An overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections is being developed in consultation with NatureScot to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement. An Outline HMP will be included in the EIA Report.</p>

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<p>integrated and made best use of.</p> <p>c. An assessment of potential negative effects which should be fully mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements.</p> <p>d. Significant biodiversity enhancements are provided, in addition to any proposed mitigation.</p> <p>e. Local community benefits of the biodiversity and / or nature networks have been considered.</p>				
065	Sustainability	THC outline that a Sustainable Design Statement is required which includes details on design, building materials and minimising environmental impacts of development.	THC-08	N/A	Planning Statement	Sustainable design principles will be discussed within a Planning Statement that will accompany the EIA Report.
066	Landscape and Visual	THC outline the need for the distinction between landscape and visual contexts, and so therefore require separate assessments, without the use of	THC-09	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA chapter will consider and assess the subjects of landscape and visual amenity separately.

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		panoramic imagery for the visual impact assessment.				
067	Landscape and Visual	THC are generally content with the viewpoints proposed in the Scoping Report. The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoint shall be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information.	THC-10	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA chapter will identify and describe the viewpoint used for production of the photomontage to support and inform the LVIA.
068	Landscape and Visual	THC suggest that photomontages should be prepared to Highland Council Standards. Separate volumes of visualisations should be prepared to both Highland Council Standards and NatureScot guidance. These should be provided in hard copy and request that for THC's volume, these are provided in an A3 ring bound folder for ease of use.	THC-11	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	A photomontage to assist with the assessment and determination of the EIA will be produced in accordance with NS guidance and THC guidance and will be included in separate volumes of the EIA Report. It will cover all relevant impacts of all elements of the Proposed Development and will be provided in an A3 hard copy. The visual assessment will be receptor-based and will consider all potential receptors within the study area rather than a small number of viewpoints, which will provide a more detailed and robust assessment. The visualisation will be illustrative of the type of view that would be obtained and will be considered fully representative of visual receptors using the study area.
069	Landscape and Visual	The EIA should include the expected visual impact of all elements associated with a proposed development (including	THC-12	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA will consider the impacts of all elements associated with the Proposed Development.

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		the tracks, substations, battery storage and on-site borrow pits).				
070	Landscape and Visual	The LVIA should clearly set out the methodology with a clear matrix approach supported by descriptive text setting out how conclusions have been reached.	THC-13	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA will be carried out in accordance with best practice guidance 'The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)' and criteria used will be in accordance with this guidance in terms of identification and presentation of significant effects.
071	Landscape and Visual	THC require that all core paths and long-distance trails, are assessed when considering the impacts on recreational routes.	THC -14	N/A	Landscape and Visual and Traffic and Transport Chapters	The noted chapters will consider impacts on recreational routes.
072	Landscape and Visual	THC expect that LVIA refers to the Councils Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance and expect an assessment of the proposal against the criterion set out within this guidance.	THC-15	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA will consider the criterion noted within this guidance.
073	Landscape and Visual	THC expect that the LVIA assesses the impacts on any landscapes designated at a national and local scale.	THC-16	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA will consider the impacts on designated landscapes.
074	Landscape and Visual	THC consider it appropriate to include an assessment of the special qualities of the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra	THC-17	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA will include an assessment of the special qualities of the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA.

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		Special Landscape Area (SLA) within the LVIA.				
075	Landscape and Visual	THC expect that an assessment of the impact on all potentially effected Wild Land Areas (WLAs) be included in the EIAR, given the proximity to a number of WLAs and the theoretical visibility of the scheme from within the WLAs.	THC-18	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	WLA 39: East Halladale Flows lies more than 6 km from the Proposed Development to the east and would have no intervisibility with the Proposed Development and would therefore not be included in the landscape assessment.
076	Landscape and Visual	The residential visual amenity should be assessed for all properties, settlements, housing groups within 2 km of the development within the LVIA. THC agree that given Braerathy Lodge is derelict and is to be demolished, it is acceptable to scope out of the assessment.	THC-19	N/A	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The noted chapter will consider potential effects, including cumulative effects, of the Proposed Development on visual amenity during construction and operation. This is noted regarding Barerathy Lodge.
077	Cultural Heritage	The application boundary may contain a number of historic environment assets, which may not be accurately represented on the HER so all upstanding remains should be identified by survey and the potential for buried features or deposits, stated in the report. Where impacts are unavoidable,	THC-20	N/A	Cultural Heritage Chapter	Details of the EIA Report's findings on cultural heritage will be set out in the noted chapter.

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		methods to mitigate this impact are expected to be discussed in detail.				
078	Cultural Heritage	<p>THC are content to scope out the impacts of the proposal on designated heritage assessments given there are no designated assets both within and immediately surrounding the site. However, the noted Cultural Heritage Assets require to be assessed at application stage given these are located in the vicinity of the proposal.</p> <p>In addition, the application site is located within the candidate Flow Country World Heritage Site³, with perceived impacts on this designation required to be assessed within any future submission.</p>	THC-21	N/A	Cultural Heritage and Ecology Chapters	<p>This has been noted.</p> <p>Potential for direct effects on cultural heritage assets will be addressed in the noted chapter.</p> <p>Given the Flow Country WHS is for natural landscapes, this will not be covered in the cultural heritage assessment, but an assessment will instead form an appendix to the Ecology chapter.</p>
079	Ornithology	The presence of Schedule 1 birds and qualifying interests of SPAs and other areas designated for avian interests must be included and considered as part of the planning application.	THC-22	N/A	Ornithology Chapter	<p>The noted chapter will consider natural heritage designations for avian interests. It will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology and will suggest appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.</p> <p>Specifically in relation to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, a Shadow HRA will be provided as an appendix to the noted chapter.</p>

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080	Ornithology	An assessment of the impacts to birds through collision, disturbance, electrocution and displacement from foraging, breeding, roosting habitat will be required for both the proposed development and cumulatively with other proposals.	THC-23	N/A	Ornithology Chapter	The noted chapter will include an assessment of the Proposed Development and cumulatively with other proposals, on ornithology, and will suggest appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.
081	Ornithology	THC noted that the EIAR should be clear on the survey methods and any deviations from guidance.	THC-24	N/A	Ornithological Chapter	Details of survey methods will be presented in the noted chapter.
082	Ornithology	THC note that given the level of protection of species within the North Caithness Cliffs SPA it requires to be scoped in within any EIA submission unless confirmed by NatureScot.	THC-25	N/A	Ornithology Chapter	The majority of the qualifying features of the North Caithness Cliffs SPA are breeding seabird species and are not expected to make regular use of the Proposed Development site. Although the Proposed Development is located within suitable foraging habitat for peregrine, the Proposed Development site is located outwith the core foraging range for breeding peregrine (2 km; NatureScot, 2016 ⁵). As such, there is not considered to be any pathway for effects between the Proposed Development site and the SPA. Potential impacts on the North Caithness Cliffs SPA will be scoped out of the ornithological assessment, as agreed with NatureScot during pre-submission consultation.

⁵ NatureScot. (2016). Assessing connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Version 3.

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083	Ornithology	THC note that given the level of protection of species within the North Sutherland Coastal Islands SPA designated site, these required to be scoped in within any EIA submission, unless confirmed by NatureScot.	THC-26	N/A	Ornithology Chapter	The North Sutherland Coastal Islands SPA is designated for wintering barnacle goose, which has a core foraging range of 15 km (NatureScot, 2016 ⁵). As the SPA is located 18.82 km from the Proposed Development (at the closest point), there is not considered to be any pathway for effects and will be scoped out of the assessment, as agreed with NatureScot during pre-submission consultation.
084	Ecology	THC noted that the EIAR should provide a baseline survey of the bird and animals (mammals, reptiles and amphibians etc.) interest on site.	THC-27	N/A	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	The relevant ecological and ornithological baseline survey results and associated assessments will be presented in the noted chapters.
085	Ecology	THC noted that the EIAR should provide an account of the habitats present on the proposed development site. It should identify rare or threatened habitats, and those protected by European or UK legislation, or identified in national or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).	THC-28	N/A	Ecology Chapter	Detailed results from UKHab and NVC surveys and associated target notes (including for notable species) will be summarised in the noted chapter. Results from surveys have been used to inform the iterative design process and avoid or minimise impacts on sensitive habitats where practicable.
086	Ecology	Habitat enhancement and mitigation measures should be detailed, particularly in respect to blanket bog, in the context of both biodiversity conservation and the inherent risk of peat slide. Details of any habitat	THC-29	N/A	Ecology Outline HMP Landscape Strategy	Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an Outline Habitat Management Plan.

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		enhancement programmes for the proposed site should be provided. The EIAR should address whether or not the development could assist or impede delivery of elements of the BAPs.				
087	Ecology	THC expect that a Peat Management Plan should be submitted to overcome significant effects on peatland and Carbon Rich Soils, Deep Peat, and Priority Peatland Habitat.	THC-30	N/A	Peat Management Plan	A Peat Management Plan (PMP) will be provided.
088	Ecology	THC expect that an up to date National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey and a commitment to undertake peatland restoration on an area of an increased size to that of the application site. The EIAR should provide details of all direct, indirect, permanent and temporary impacts to any bog habitat present on the site.	THC-31	N/A	Ecology Chapter Outline HMP Landscape Strategy	Detailed results from UKHab and NVC surveys and associated target notes (including for notable species) will be summarised in the noted chapter. The Applicant is committed to delivering a HMP for the Proposed Development in combination with other projects that make up the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections. An Outline HMP will be provided in the EIA Report.
089	Ecology	THC note that the EIAR should address the likely impacts on the nature conservation interests of all designated sites in the vicinity of the proposed	THC-32	N/A	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters.	The relevant ecological and ornithological noted chapters will consider natural heritage designations. A shadow Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC /

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		<p>development. Proposals for any mitigation that is required to avoid impacts or reduce to a level where they are not significant should be included.</p> <p>The potential impact of the development on other designated areas such as SSSI's should be considered and where possible, appropriate mitigation outlined in the EIAR.</p>				Ramsar and SPA / Ramsar will be included as part of the EIA Report.
090	Ecology	If wild deer are present or will use the site, an assessment of the potential impact on deer will be required.	THC-33	N/A	Ecology Chapter	<p>The Proposed Development would not result in a significant loss of woodland habitats (or other upland habitats) that would support deer. Deer are not a legally protected (other than for animal welfare purposes and specific restrictions on shooting seasons etc.), notable or rare/ threatened species, and would therefore not be evaluated as an important ecological feature (IEF) for the purposes of ecological impact assessment.</p> <p>Although there may be some localised displacement during construction works of the Proposed Development, there is no potential for them to be significantly affected and therefore they will be scoped out of detailed assessment.</p>
091	Ecology	THC noted that the EIAR needs to address the aquatic interests within local watercourses that may be affected	THC-34	N/A	Ecology Chapter	This will be considered as part of the assessment in the noted chapter.

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		by the development. The EIAR should evidence consultation input from the local fishery board(s) where relevant.				The Northern District Fisheries Board were consulted at scoping stage and their comments have been captured in this matrix.
092	Ecology	THC noted that the EIAR should include a map and assessment of impacts upon GWDTE and buffers.	THC-35	N/A	Ecology and Soils, Geology and Water Chapters	Details of the UKHab and NVC survey will be presented in the Ecology chapter, whilst an assessment on potential GWDTE will be included in Soils, Geology and Water chapter.
093	Ecology	<p>A draft Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and Species Protection Plan (SPP) should be produced as part of the EIA including any proposals for mitigation and enhancement in relation to important habitats and species.</p> <p>Any compensatory planting should be carefully considered and included in the HMP.</p> <p>The HMP should include a comprehensive monitoring programme for all habitat improvements and breeding birds on the site.</p> <p>The HMP should include a protocol for reporting collisions to NS.</p>	THC-36	N/A	Outline HMP	<p>An overarching HMP for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections is being developed in consultation with NatureScot to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement, and to mitigate the potential cumulative impacts on peatland habitat within the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar. This will also include measures to compensate for direct and indirect permanent impacts on peatland habitats outwith the SAC / Ramsar boundary.</p> <p>The Applicant has developed a series of SPPs in agreement with statutory consultees, including SEPA and NatureScot. These will be appended to the EIA Report.</p>
094	Ecology	THC expect that as marsh saxifrage is a qualifying feature of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SAC, it should	THC-37	N/A	Ecology Chapter	Marsh saxifrage colonies are found in wet flushes within the blanket bog in two parts of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC (one within Shielton

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		be included in the EIA unless confirmed otherwise by NS.				<p>Peatlands SSSI and one near Loch Ruard on the boundary of Blar nam Faoileag SSSI and Coire na Beinne Mires SSSI) both of which are more than 30 km to the southeast of the Proposed Development (NatureScot, 20216).</p> <p>Marsh saxifrage is only found where green flushes of vegetation form within this SAC. This habitat is unusual within the SAC and is markedly different from the surrounding, heathery vegetation. There is not considered to be any pathway for any effect on marsh saxifrage colonies within the SAC due to direct or indirect impacts from the Proposed Development and therefore will not be included in the ecology assessment of the EIA Report.</p> <p>NS have been consulted and are in agreement with this approach.</p>
095	Ecology	THC expect that Strathy Point SAC should be included in the EIA unless confirmed otherwise by NS.	THC-38	N/A	Ecology Chapter	<p>Based on the separation distance and qualifying features of the Strathy Point SAC, there is not considered to be any pathway for effects from the Proposed Development and therefore will not be included in the ecology assessment of the EIA Report.</p> <p>NS have been consulted and are in agreement with this approach.</p>

⁶ NatureScot (2021). Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Conservation Advice Package. Available online at: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8218> [Accessed October 2023].

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096	Ecology	The Scoping Report proposed that all important ecological features (IEFs) identified in the EclA as being of Local or lower importance, and for which there is not considered to be any potential for significant effects, to be scoped out. THC confirmed it is their view that these should be scoped in and demonstrated within any EIA submitted.	THC-39	N/A	Ecology Chapter	All IEFs identified in the EclA as being of Local or lower importance, and/or for which there is not considered to be any potential for significant effects from the Proposed Development, will be scoped out of the ecological impact assessment. This is in line with the CIEEM EclA guidance, which states that <i>“Impacts that are either unlikely to occur, or if they did occur are unlikely to be significant, can be scoped out.”</i> [para 5.8]. NS have been consulted and are in agreement with this approach.
097	Ecology	THC expect that aquatic ecological features shall be included within any future submission, unless confirmed otherwise by NS.	THC-40	N/A	Ecology Chapter	This will be considered as part of the assessment in the noted chapter.
098	Operational Noise	THC request that a noise assessment with regard to operational phase of the development be submitted within the EIAR. THCs Environmental Health Team request that the Applicant confirms that consideration has been given to the Document 5.3.14H ES Chapter 14 Appendix 14H – National Grid Technical Guidance Note TGN (E)322	THC-41	N/A	Scope and Consultation	The Applicant has given consideration to the National Grid Technical Guidance Note TGN (E) 322 (2021) and a detailed assessment of operational noise is not considered necessary and will not be included as part of the EIA. Construction noise and vibration would be short term and intermittent and can be controlled through the implementation of a Noise Management Plan, which would be development as part of the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) prepared by

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		(2021) to determine scoping out operational noise.				<p>the Principal Contractor. The Noise Management Plan would be agreed with The Highland Council as Local Authority, and all construction activities would be undertaken in accordance with good practice guidelines set out in BS 5228-1 and BS 5228-2.</p> <p>As such, and given the remoteness of construction activity for the project, no detailed assessment of construction noise and vibration associated with plant noise or traffic will be included as part of the EIA.</p>
099	Cumulative Noise	The noise assessment must take into account the potential cumulative effects from an other existing or consented developments.	THC-42	N/A		
100	Background Noise Measurements	THC recommend the Applicant consult with THC's Environmental Health Officer to agree Noise Monitoring Locations and finalise the proposed methodology.	THC-43	N/A		
101	Construction Noise and Vibration	THC expect an assessment of construction noise and vibration be included within any future submission to ensure it can be appropriately assessed.	THC-44	N/A		
102	Construction Noise Assessment	If the Applicant intends to undertake noisy work out-with the aforementioned times, a detailed construction noise assessment will be required to be submitted to the planning authority.	THC-45	N/A	N/A	This has been noted.

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103	Traffic and Transport	<p>THC recommend that reference is made to the following documents in the EIAR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Development Guidance on the Preparation of Transport Assessment 	THC-46	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted. Reference to these documents will be made in the noted chapter.
104	Public Road Improvement Works	Any local public road improvements deemed necessary should be design in accordance with THC's published Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments.	THC-47	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	<p>This has been noted.</p> <p>No public road improvements would be required for the Proposed Development.</p>
105	Traffic and Transport - Operational Assessment	THC are content that an assessment of the operational phase is scoped out of assessment.	THC-48	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.
106	Transport – All Assessment	THC are content that an Abnormal Indivisible Load assessment be scoped out of assessment.	THC-49	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.
107	Transport – Decommissioning Assessment	THC are content that an assessment of the decommissioning phase is scoped out of assessment.	THC-50	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.

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108	Transport – Construction Assessment	<p>To enable consideration of construction traffic, as a minimum, THC expect the following information to be included in the EIAR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The number and type of vehicle movements that will be generated during the construction phase and details of access routes that will be taken. b. A review of the preferred access route for abnormal loads from Port of Entry to the site and details of mitigation measures proposed. c. A similar review of the routes to site for general construction traffic and details of mitigation measures proposed. d. A framework Construction Traffic Management Plan that sets out how the impact of construction traffic is to be minimised and mitigated. 	THC-51	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	<p>This information will be provided in the noted chapter, where relevant.</p> <p>No abnormal loads will be required for component delivery to the site.</p>

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109	Traffic and Transport	When compiling data on predicted traffic movements serving the development the assessment should set out and justify all assumptions made in support of the trip levels used.	THC-52	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	Further details of the traffic generation will be provided in the noted chapter.
110	Traffic and Transport	<p>THC would prefer if effort could be made to identify other committed developments in the area that have the potential to influence traffic levels on the proposed access routes.</p> <p>It is important to recognise that the public (trunk) roads serving this site are heavily influenced by tourist traffic during the busier summer season. This should be clearly set out how this has been recognised in the assessment process.</p> <p>Any predicted traffic generated by any timber extraction required in connection with the development should be recognised in the assessment.</p>	THC-53	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	<p>Committed developments will be accounted for in the assessment in the noted chapter.</p> <p>The assessment for the trunk road network will be based on AADT traffic flows to ensure a fair baseline. Additional loading at summer will increase the baseline, resulting in a lower impact on the network, potentially reducing mitigation.</p> <p>Timber extraction will be accounted for in the traffic generation.</p>
111	Traffic and Transport	THC note that a suitable agreement relating to Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act and appropriate planning legislation may be required.	THC-54	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	Details on a Wear & Tear agreement will be included in the noted chapter and within a Schedule of Mitigation.

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					Schedule of Mitigation	
112	Traffic and Transport	THC note that intended arrangements for surveying and recording the existing condition of the local public roads impacted by the proposed construction works prior to any works commencing. It should clarify how the condition of roads will be review and at the end of the proposed development, along with how repair will be undertaken.	THC-55	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This information will be provided in the noted chapter.
113	Traffic and Transport	THC provided advice on the detail to be included in the Transport Statement . Assessment.	THC-56	N/A	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted and the information will be provided in the noted chapter and supporting appendix.
114	Peat Slide Risk Assessment	THC consider the risk of engineering instability relating to the presence of peat on site is included in the EIAR. This should include a comprehensive peat slide risk assessment.	THC-57	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	Potential effects on peat, including peat slide risk and potential for landslides will be discussed within the noted chapter. A Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment will be provided.
115	Water Environment	THC consider the EIAR should address pollution risk and environmental sensitivities of the water environment.	THC-58	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter Outline CEMP	This information will be provided in the noted chapter and an Outline CEMP will be provided.

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116	Peat	<p>THC consider the EIAR should include a detailed map of peat depth and evidence that the scheme minimises impact on areas of deep peat.</p> <p>The peat depth survey should be presented as a table detailing re-use proposals.</p> <p>THC consider the EIAR should include site-specific principles on which construction method statements would be development for engineering works in peat land areas and reference to drainage impacts, dewatering and disposal of excavated peat.</p>	THC-59	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A peat probing campaign has been carried out across the project to establish peat depth and appropriate mitigation. Details will be presented in the noted chapter and a Peat Management Plan will be provided.
117	Hydrology and Hydrogeology	<p>THC consider the EIAR needs to address the nature of the hydrology and hydrogeology of the site and assess the potential impacts on watercourses, water supplies including private water supplies, water quality, water quantity and on aquatic flora and fauna, and demonstrate it will not be degraded by site drainage and excavations.</p>	THC-60	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	This information will be provided in the noted chapter.
118	Hydrology	<p>THC would welcome a full hydrological assessment being scoped in to avoid direct and indirect impacts to any</p>	THC-61	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	This information will be provided in the noted chapter.

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		peatland habitats and / or ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystems.				
119	Watercourse Crossings	THC expect the EIAR to identify all water crossings and include a systematic table of watercourse crossing with detailed justification for any such elements and design to minimise impact.	THC-62	N/A	N/A	No temporary or permanent watercourse crossings are required for the Proposed Development.
120	Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage	THC's Flood Risk Management Team had no comment to make. However, it was noted that a minimum of a 50 m buffer of all watercourses / bodies to hardstandings, tracks and should be noted and shown on a suitably scaled drawing; various flood risk and surface water Drainage Principles, design standards and best practice measures for the management and control of drainage were highlighted by THC, and they confirm that water crossings in the form of culverts or bridges, or upgrades to existing crossings must be designed to accommodate to 1 in 200 year flood event, plus climate change; and the EIA should be informed by the Council's	THC-63	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	<p>Figures will be produced to accompany the noted chapter to show all proposed temporary and permanent infrastructure overlain with all lochs and watercourses.</p> <p>The potential effects on watercourses and waterbodies, and suitable buffers to be maintained, will be discussed within the noted chapter. Locations where this is not possible will be set out in the noted chapter and required safeguards will be detailed.</p> <p>Appropriate mitigation will be discussed within the noted chapter.</p> <p>No watercourse crossings are required.</p>

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		Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment SG.				
121	Private Water Supplies	The Applicant will be required to carry out an investigation to identify any private water supplies, including pipework which may be adversely affected by the proposed development and submit measures to prevent contamination or physical disruption.	THC-64	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	The presence of any private water supplies along the route will be determined through consultation with The Highland Council and site survey, and the likely impacts from the Proposed Development will be set out in the noted chapter.
122	Geology	The Scoping Report proposed that effects on geology be scoped out of assessment as no sensitive geological features (except peat) have been identified. THC expect that effects on geology should be scoped in to ensure that it is appropriately assessed and considered given the location of the proposal within the Candidate Flow Country WHS ³ .	THC-65	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water and Ecology Chapters	While this will be discussed in the noted chapter, with the exception of carbon rich soils and peat, no sensitive geological features have been identified within the study area; the superficial and solid geology is not rare nor is it afforded protection. A full assessment of potential effects on carbon rich soils and peat will be included in the assessment of the Soils, Geology and Water chapter. An assessment of the WHS, using the THC toolkit, will be included in the Ecology chapter.
123	Flood Risk Assessment	THC request that a full flood risk assessment is provided in the EIAR.	THC-66	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	Published mapping confirms that virtually all of the Proposed Development is not located in an area identified as being at flood risk (now or in the future to 2080) and where flood risk is recorded it is typically small in extent and bounds watercourse corridors. A screening of potential flooding sources (fluvial, coastal, groundwater, infrastructure etc.) will be

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						presented in the noted chapter, and measures that would be used to control the rate and quality of runoff will be specified in the site-specific CEMP and form part of a Drainage Impact Assessment which will be prepared as part of the detailed design stage of the Proposed Development by the Principal Contractor. Like other sites, including neighbouring developments, it is expected that this would be secured by a planning condition.
124	Drainage Impact Assessment	THC are content that a Drainage Impact Assessment is scoped out of the EIA.	THC-67	N/A	N/A	This has been noted.
125	Water Quality Monitoring	THC are content that no water quality monitoring be carried out, instead published SEPA water quality data be used to characterise baseline water quality.	THC-68	N/A	N/A	This has been noted.
126	Geomorphological Assessment	THC request that a geomorphological assessment be scoped in due to the potential impacts on the Candidate Flow Country WHS ³ .	THC-69	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	No permanent works are proposed in any water features and with safeguards in place (that will be set out in the noted chapter), no geomorphological effects are anticipated and therefore no detailed geomorphological assessment will be included as part of the EIA.
127	Soils, Geology and Water –	THC expect that cumulative effects are scoped in within any submission to	THC-70	N/A	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A cumulative assessment will be completed and set out in the noted chapter.

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	Cumulative Assessment	ensure this can be appropriately considered within the planning assessment.				
128	Candidate Flow Country World Heritage Site	THC has produced a toolkit for developers to use in assessments to consider impacts to the WHS and a Planning Position Statement, with links provided to access the documents.	THC-71	N/A	Ecology Chapter	A World Heritage Site assessment will be undertaken for the Flow Country WHS and provided in the EIA Report.
129	Air Quality and Climate Change	THC's view is that impact on air quality and climate change shall be included within the EIAR.	THC-72	N/A	Throughout EIA Report	The nature of construction activities means these would be localised, short term and intermittent. Emissions associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to temporary and short-term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide as a result of dewatering and exposing peat and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of global warming potential (GWP). Any potential effects would further be minimised through the implementation of a CEMP, which will be produced prior to construction starting by the Applicant and Principal Contractor, and the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (agreed with NatrueScot and SEPA). Climate change will be considered throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
130	Forestry	<p>THC's view is that a forestry assessment shall be included within the EIAR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The EIAR should indicate all the areas of woodland / trees that would be felled to accommodate the development, including any off-site works / mitigation. b. Compensatory woodland is a clear expectation of any proposals for felling and such mitigation needs to be considered in the assessment. Compensatory planting should be within the Highland area and not form part of an already approved forest plan / proposal. c. Any proposed compensatory planting will be the subject of the Forestry (EIA) Regulations 2017 and a separate application will be required to be submitted to Scottish Forestry. 	THC-73	N/A	Forestry Chapter	The design of the access tracks has been revised since issue of the Scoping Report in January 2024 with the Applicant now proposing to utilise the existing tracks through Strathy North Wind Farm and constructing a new permanent track to link the existing track, through Strathy Forest, to access towers on the western extent of the River Strathy. The new track has been designed to be routed through largely windblown and decaying forestry to minimise impacts, however an extent of forestry plantation felling will be required and as such a forestry assessment will be completed and included in the EIA Report. The EIA Report will set out compensatory planting requirements, as required.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<p>d. Areas of retained forestry or tree groups should be clearly indicated and methods for their protection described.</p> <p>e. If timber is to be disposed of, details of methodology should be submitted.</p> <p>THC notes that if the development is granted consent, native woodland could be created to offset carbon released in the construction period. This should be on an appropriate site, located within THC area, and as close as possible to the application site.</p>				
131	Land Use and Agriculture	THC are of the view that given there remains a potential impact on neighbouring landowners in relation to the proposed works, even if considered minimal, a land use assessment should be included within the EIAR.	THC-74	N/A	The Proposed Development	The potential for impacts on land use will be covered in The Proposed Development chapter.
132	Contaminated Land	THC note that further information is not required to support the application as there does not appear to be a potential source of contamination onsite.	THC-75	N/A	N/A	This has been noted.

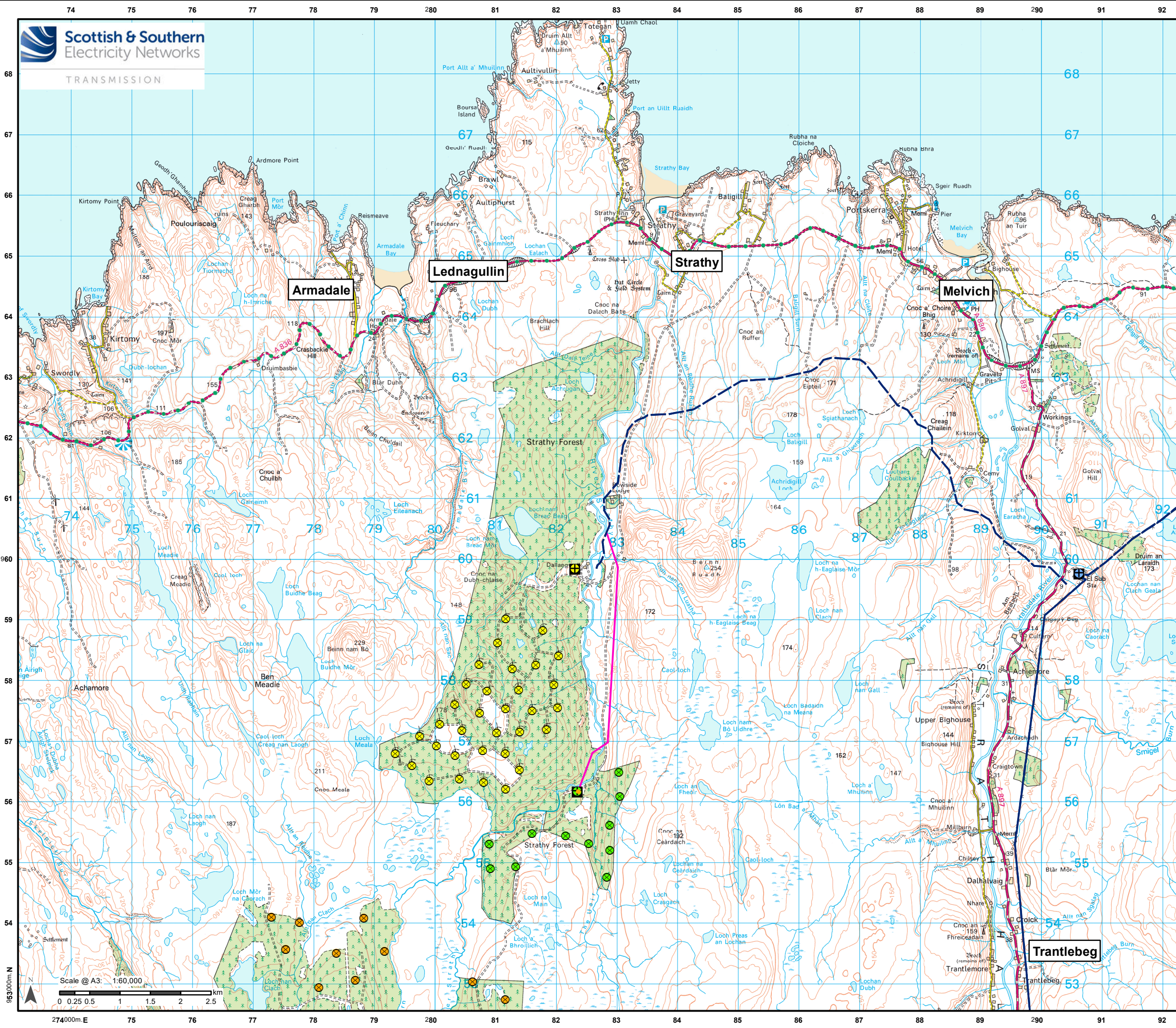
No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
133	Aviation, Radar and Telecoms	The EIAR should demonstrate what community assets have been identified and the outcomes of any consultations with relevant authorities.	THC-76	N/A	Scope and Consultation Chapter	Scoping responses were received from telecommunication and aviation bodies. Consultation was carried out with the Ministry of Defence, as set out in the Gate Check Report.
134	Telecoms	THC are content to scope out impacts to digital television, TV, signals, digital radio and FM radio reception from the EIAR.	THC-77	N/A	N/A	This has been noted.
135	Socio-Economic, Recreation and Tourism	THC outline that a Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation EIA chapter is required. It is stated that the EIA should estimate who may be affected by the development, in all or in part, which may require individual households to be identified, local communities or a wider socio economic groupings such as tourists and tourist related businesses, recreational groups, economically active, etc. The application should include relevant economic information connected with the project, including the potential number of jobs, and economic activity associated with the procurement, construction and operation of the development.	THC-78	N/A	Socio-Economic and Tourism Chapter	The requested information will be provided in the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
136	Access Management Plan	THC note relevant policy that the AMP should be in accordance with. It is noted that it should cover existing access and how that will be dealt with during the development and any future access provision within and linking to the development.	THC-79	N/A	Draft Access Management Plan	A draft Outdoor Access Plan will be provided.
137	Construction Management and Health and Safety	<p>The EIA Report needs to address all relevant climatic factors which can greatly influence the impact range of may of the preceding factors on account of seasonal changes affecting rainfall, sunlight, prevailing wind directopm etc.</p> <p>Depending on the proximity of the working area and access route to any houses etc. The Applicant may require to submit a scheme for the suppression of dust during construction.</p> <p>THC in prinicple would request that an Outline CEMD is included with the application.</p>	THC-80	N/A	Throughout the EIA Report	<p>Climate change is considered throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.</p> <p>An Outline CEMP will be provided. This will set out measures for the management of dust during construction, as set out in a Dust Management GEMP.</p>
138	Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)	THC are content that EMF can be scoped out of any submitted EIA however details of the relevant	THC-81	N/A	Scope and Consultation Chapter	This has been noted. The Proposed Development will adhere to the relevant regulations and guidance relating to EMF, as will be set out in the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		compliance with government policy shall be detailed within the submission.				
139	Major Accidents and Disasters	THC are content that potential effects of the proposed development related to the vulnerability to major accidents and disasters can be scoped out of any submitted EIA, although details of crisis management plans and continuity plans shall be included within the submission given the potential for this to impact on residential wellbeing and services within the area.	THC-82	N/A	Scope and Consultation Chapter	This has been noted. The potential for accidents and disasters will be discussed in the noted chapter, confirming that crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group to respond to such events.
140	Significant Effects on the Environment	THC require the EIA to describe the likely effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects of any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development.	THC-83	N/A	Throughout the EIA Report	The assessment of likely significant environmental effects will be undertaken within each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report.
141	Significant Effects on the Environment	THC request that when measuring the positive and negative effects of the development, a four point scale is used advising any effect to be either strong positive, positive, negative or strong negative.	THC-84	N/A	EIA Methodology Chapter	The approach to the assessment of effects in this EIA Report will be set out in the noted chapter and defined within each of the technical chapters within the EIA Report. Effects will be assessed in accordance with best practice and industry standards across the technical topics. As such, the request for

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						consideration of effects across a four point scale is not considered appropriate.
142	Mitigation	A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment must be set out within the EIA Report. A clear summary table of all mitigation measures associated with the Proposed Development should be provided and entitled draft 'Schedule of Mitigation' and clarify where other groups are involved in its implementation.	THC-85	N/A	Throughout EIA Report	Mitigation measures will be proposed at the end of each technical chapter. A consolidated Schedule of Mitigation will also be presented in the EIA Report.
143	Mitigation	THC suggests that it should be made clear within the EIA or supporting information, exactly which groups are involved in local liaisons, the remit of the group and the management and resourcing of the required effort.	THC-86	N/A	The Proposed Development Chapter	This has been noted. SSEN Transmission considers it important to act as a responsible developer with regards to the communities which host the construction works. The delivery of a major programme of capital investment provides the opportunity to maximise support of local communities. Employment of construction staff would be the responsibility of the Contractor; however, the Applicant would encourage the Contractor to make use of suitable labour and resources from areas local to the Proposed Development where possible.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
						This will be discussed further with THC and local community groups prior to the commencement of construction.

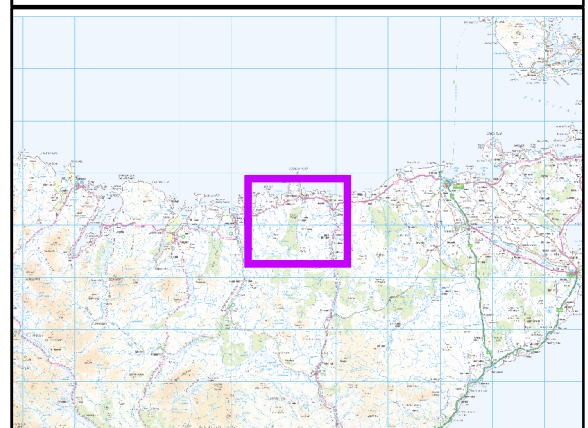


Legend

- Overhead Line (OHL) Works**
- Proposed OHL Alignment
 - Proposed Sealing End Compound

- Existing Infrastructure**
- Connagill Substation
 - Strathy North Wind Turbines
 - Strathy North Substation
 - Existing Strathy North 132 kV OHL

- Consented Infrastructure**
- Strathy South Wind Turbines
 - Strathy South Substation
 - Strathy Wood Wind Turbines
 - Strathy Wood Substation



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Project No: LT559
Project: Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection - Gate Check

Title: Figure 1: Location Plan and Overview

Drawn by: FL/ MT Date: 02/09/2024

Drawing: 122023-GCR-D1-0-1.0

