



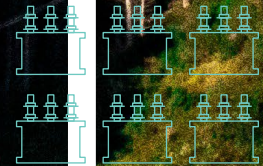
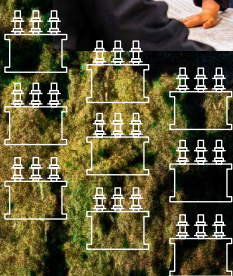
Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Consultation Summary Report

Foyers Substation Works

November 2024



About us

We are SSEN Transmission, and we are part of the SSE plc Group. We are responsible for maintaining and investing in the high voltage 132kV, 275kV and 400kV electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland.

Our network consists of underground and subsea cables, overhead lines on wooden poles or steel towers, and electricity substations. It extends over a quarter of the UK's land mass, crossing some of its most challenging terrain.

Our priority is to provide a safe and reliable supply of electricity to our communities. We do this by taking the electricity from generators and transporting it at high voltages over long distances through our transmission network for onwards distribution to homes and businesses in villages, towns and cities.

Our operating area is home to vast renewable energy resources, and this is being harnessed by wind, hydro and marine generation. Working closely with National Grid Electricity System Operator (the 'ESO'), we enable electricity generators to connect to the transmission system, allowing the electricity generated by them to be transported to areas of demand across the country.

We are committed to inclusive stakeholder engagement, conducting regular external assurance audits on both our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and delivery plans, and were awarded 'Advanced' status by AccountAbility, the international consulting and standards firm for the third year in a row in 2024.

Find out more: www.ssen-transmission.co.uk



Why do we hold community consultation events?

As a stakeholder-led business, we aim to be as accessible as possible to all our stakeholders and keep them informed and consulted throughout a project's lifecycle. Most of the consultations we carry out are voluntary, as we recognise the clear benefits of engaging early with our stakeholders. This engagement allows us to collate relevant and insightful feedback, ensuring local communities and wider stakeholders have the opportunity to help inform the development and design of our project proposals.

We do this by listening closely to identify any areas of concern or issues arising, allowing us to then consider the next steps required prior to refining proposals. This may involve adapting our initial proposals, considering, or investigating alternative routes or sites or looking at adopting a different technology in some areas.

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

Background – Foyers Substation Works

Requirement:

The need for the [Foyers Substation Works](#) project is being driven by operational requirements and asset condition assessments of the affected existing transformers serving the Foyers Power Station.

The project is required to upgrade existing transmission assets at Foyers Power Station, which converts the 18kV output to 275kV for export to the transmission network. These assets are coming to the end of their operational life and need replacing. The consequent deterioration in their condition poses a risk of failure, meaning the power station would no longer be able to generate renewable energy risking reliability of supply to customers.

Project elements:

The project will consist of an in-situ replacement of the 2 grid transformers at Foyers Power Station, renewing the existing 275kV underground cable as well as the installation of a new bay at Foyers Switching Station to connect the existing hydro power station to the grid.

Find out more about the project:

www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/foyers



Consulting on the project

In October 2022, we launched our initial project consultation on early proposals sharing and seeking comment on site options considered, introducing the project and starting our engagement with communities and wider stakeholders.

Following this, the design was refined to reduce the extent of development footprint significantly by removing the need to construct a new substation platform between the existing Foyers Power Station Substation and the existing Switching Station. To remove this need, we proposed to replace the existing transformers at the Power Station Substation on a 'like-for-like' basis and consult on the refined design of the Switching Station.

Members of the project team subsequently met with Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council in March 2024 to provide a project update ahead of the next stage of consultation.

Pre-Application Consultation – April 2024

A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted to The Highland Council on 1 April 2024. This is the first stage in the planning application process, and the beginning of a formal consultation period that must allow for at least 12 weeks between the start of the pre-application consultation and feedback, and submission of a planning application. There is a requirement to hold at least two events to provide the opportunity for members of the public to comment on the proposals, the first of which was held in April 2024, with the second initially intended to occur in June 2024.

This Consultation Summary will focus on the April 2024 formal pre-application consultation.

Advertising process

The consultation events were advertised using the following platforms:

- A postcard was sent to **over 3,000** properties in the vicinity of the proposals
- An advertisement was placed in the Press and Journal
- Councillors and Community Councillors were emailed in advance of the consultations with information and a poster that they were encouraged to share within their local area and on social media.

Foyers substation works

Pre-application consultation event



We are holding a statutory pre-application consultation event for our proposed Foyers substation works project. The pre-application process is a key first step in the Town and Country planning process for this planning application.

About the project

The project is required to upgrade the two existing transformer assets at Foyers Power Station. These assets are coming to the end of their operational life and need replacing.

The upgrade will include a platform extension to Foyers switching station to house new infrastructure including a new bay to allow the existing hydro power station to connect to the grid. A new underground cable to connect the existing hydro power station substation to the switching station is also required alongside a new transformer at the existing substation.

The event will be held on:

Thursday 25 April 2024, 2–7pm
Stratherrick Public Hall, Gorthleck, IV2 6YS

During our drop-in event you will be able to view further information about our proposed substation works, meet the team, ask questions and share feedback ahead of our second public event.



To find out more, visit the project website by scanning the QR code, or use the following URL:
ssen-transmission.co.uk/foyers



If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Community Liaison Manager:

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 @ssentransmission  @SSETransmission

The project poster sent to over 3,000 properties

Stakeholder participation

Attendance

The public consultation event was held on Thursday 25 April at Stratherrick Public Hall. Not all attendees signed in to the event and therefore numbers are based on best estimate.

Approx. 20

members of the local community attended the in-person consultation event



Providing feedback

Whilst anecdotal feedback received during the in-person event was noted by the team, throughout the consultation process, local attendees were encouraged to submit feedback forms or provide their comments directly to the Community Liaison Manager via email or letter.

An online feedback form was created and made available via the project webpage.

The formal consultation period ran between **25 April and 24 May 2024**, however comments, correspondence and meetings undertaken following the formal consultation end date have been considered by the project team.

Formal responses:

Despite the relatively low attendance at the in-person consultation event, we received a high volume of responses to the consultation from stakeholders interested in the project. This was solely submitted via email with one feedback form received and two electronic letters.

Most of the emails received followed the same template citing the same topics of concern.

Over 100

Stakeholder emails were received regarding the proposals

Meetings:

Additional feedback was provided from locally impacted stakeholders during the following meetings:

- Discussion occurring during the Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council meetings on 26 March 2024 and 30 April 2024
- Two online meetings were held with the Farigaig and Boleskine Residents Association on 29 April and 15 August 2024
- A site visit was conducted for Ward Councillors on 04 June 2024
- Discussion undertaken during the Foyers Substation Site Visit with community members, ward councillors and community council members on 28 August 2024.

This engagement will continue as the project develops.



Themes of feedback, our response and actions taken

As part of the feedback analysis, common topics raised within the content of the responses (forms, letters and emails) were categorised into key themes to allow for the top interests to be easily identified. The breakdown of themes within each section were consistent with feedback received in person at the events.

Feedback	Our Response
<p>Tree felling:</p> <p>Feedback suggested that the proposed felling of 2.5 acres of trees (compartment between B852 and switching station access road) should be avoided.</p> <p>Concerns were raised that the tree loss would result in the destruction of the special landscape area of natural heritage that characterises the community and pose impacts to wildlife.</p> <p>Feedback also included concerns that the tree felling will open up the view to the switching station and existing pylon, whilst removal will also result in less shielding of construction activities (noise and dust).</p>	<p>The vast majority of the forestry in question is commercial forestry which has reached its maturity and therefore must be imminently removed, irrespective of the proposed development.</p> <p>Following the concerns raised by residents, SSEN Transmission has instructed and subsequently published a Resilience Survey and Woodland Condition Report which has assessed the condition of the tree compartment in question.</p> <p>These surveys (Scottish Woodland Assessment, Wind speed desk survey) have confirmed that the compartment of trees and their condition pose a risk not only to electric infrastructure but also to the public.</p> <p>Every effort will be taken to retain any healthy native trees within the compartment.</p>
<p>Site extension location:</p> <p>It was suggested the switching station should be extended to the West for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further away from residential properties • lesser impact on the existing footpath • lesser visual impact • proposed tree felling would not be required <p>It was also suggested the whole switching station be relocated.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission have carefully considered alternative siting of the extension. An extension to the West would result in a greater loss of native woodland. The topography of the land to the West is also unsuitable due its steep nature. The site location choice needs to consider a necessary construction perimeter around the actual platform.</p> <p>Tree Felling in proximity will be required however we will consider the planting carefully with a view to provide natural screening in a quick and resilient way.</p> <p>All footpaths affected by the project will be reinstated and where necessary re-located in agreement with the relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Relocating the whole switching station cannot be justified from a cost perspective and would also result in a far greater loss of habitat.</p> <p>A different site selection would have no impact on the proposed felling of the tree compartment between the B852 and the switching station (see above 'Tree felling').</p> <p>See also 'Loch Kemp Connection'.</p>

<p>Removal of Pylon: Feedback stated that the terminal pylon at the switching station is currently shielded from view by existing tree cover.</p> <p>Concerns were raised that tree removal could open up the view of the pylon and on that basis, it was suggested the existing pylon be removed and the Overhead Line undergrounded on the approach to the switching station.</p>	<p>The project team has considered removal of the tower and the subsequent undergrounding of the overhead line based on a request received.</p> <p>However, due to the requirement of a Sealing End Compound (SEC) which would be around 1ha in size and involve conversion of the tower at the SEC being larger than the existing structure, alongside the considerable cost implications, we have dismissed this proposal on the grounds of cost and habitat loss.</p> <p>We want to ensure that residents are provided with a good indication of what the proposed works might look like in the local area upon completion, ahead of submission of a planning application and will aim to provide 3D visualisations at the 2nd Pre-Application event in early 2025.</p>
<p>Construction impact: Concerns that noise, dust and vibration from construction works from the site could have negative impacts on wildlife, residents, visitors and businesses, resulting in adverse disturbance were raised.</p> <p>It was suggested that businesses relying on the tranquil environment will be considerably impacted by the works and construction traffic would add considerable issues to the narrow and already busy road.</p> <p>It was stated that no construction traffic should be allowed between the Gate Lodge and Foyers Lodge. Staffing was raised as a particular issue in hospitality businesses and cumulative traffic impacts from construction might deter staff currently commuting between Inverness and Foyers.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission have a keen interest in working closely with local communities during the construction phase of any project to minimise impact.</p> <p>The local natural and socio-economic environment is a key driver in construction considerations and working closely with the local community means that various considerations can be taken into account ahead of any construction work starting. Our contractors are working to an agreed code of conduct and to the latest standards in terms of health and safety, noise, dust and vibration impacts. A line of communication will be held with the community and immediate residents throughout the construction phase.</p> <p>We have committed to no construction traffic using the public road between the Gate Lodge and Foyers Lodge. A detailed Traffic Management Plan for the area will be made available and discussed with the appropriate authorities and all communities impacted in the wider area.</p>
<p>Loch Kemp Connection It was suggested that the proposed project should disregard provisions for the proposed Loch Kemp Pumped Hydro Scheme (PHS) connection as Loch Kemp PHS has not yet planning permission.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission are currently contractually obliged to work on the development of a connection for Loch Kemp PSH. This includes a connection option at Foyers Switching Station.</p> <p>Whilst a contract between the Loch Kemp PSH developer for a connection remains in place, the switching station extension must take account of this connection.</p>

<p>Cumulative Impact: Feedback suggested that the cumulative impact of various projects (SSEN Transmission and other) in the area would put considerable strain on the local community and local businesses especially with regards to the cumulative construction impact.</p>	<p>We recognise the emergence of proposed renewable developments around Loch Ness, alongside the increase of SSEN Transmission infrastructure required to provide these connections has resulted in community concerns regarding cumulative impacts.</p> <p>We are keen to explore options of collaborative working with other developers and the community, with the objective of mitigating cumulative construction impacts.</p> <p>We are aware of a developer forum in the South Loch Ness Area which we would be looking to join and whilst we typically set up our own Community Liaison Groups, we've found communities have for example formed Community Liaison Groups run by the Community and covering all projects in areas where there are also renewable generators operating. Ahead of any construction commencing we want to work closely with the community to consider the best forums which would help address any potential issues arising from cumulative impact.</p>
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 **Next steps**

Tree Felling:

The additional surveys and assessment have led to the tree felling being removed from the scope of the project. Because of the risks identified, the tree compartment in question (which is in SSEN Transmission ownership and therefore our liability) will be required to be removed regardless of the Foyers Switching Station Project development and any extension of the switching station.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders regarding these works.



Resubmitting our Proposal of Application Notice:

Following our public consultation in April 2024, we have identified a requirement to increase our land take at Foyers Power Station slightly to meet modern safety and maintenance standards. This means this work no longer falls within permitted development rights and will now form part of the planning application. As such, we are required to restart the pre-application process to account for these changes.

A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted to The Highland Council on 06 November 2024. This is the first stage in the planning application process, and the beginning of a consultation period that must allow for at least 12 weeks between the start of the pre-application consultation and feedback, and submission of a planning application.

The red line boundary that has been submitted with the PAN represents the maximum extent of the land potentially included in the application site, but this area may be reduced or rationalised as the development proposal becomes finalised.

Public Consultation:

As part of the PAN, there is a requirement to hold at least two statutory consultation events to provide the opportunity for members of the public to comment on the proposals.

The first public event will be held on:

28 November 2024

Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust, The Wildside Centre, Whitebridge, IV2 6UN

3pm-7pm.

A second event will be held in Q1 2025 at which feedback will be given on the views obtained at the first event. There will also be a short opportunity for comment after this second event and comments will be included in a Pre-application Consultation (PAC) Report.

More information will be hosted on the [project website](#) in advance of the consultation event.

Survey work:

- During November and December it is proposed that we undertake ground surveys to aid with our detailed design.
- Some environmental survey work may be required to be undertaken throughout winter 2024/25. This will be determined by our environmental consultants and if determined as required, we will ensure that any survey works required are communicated locally in advance.

Resources

Further resources relevant to the project are available via the links below:-

- [Proposed Site Plan – April 2024](#)
- [Consultation Booklet – April 2024](#)
- [Project Website](#)
- [Advert – November 2024 Consultation Events](#)



How to get in touch

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact the project Community Liaison Manager

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