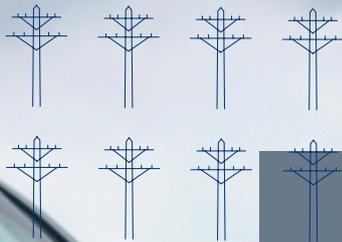


Highland Wind Farm Connection

Public Consultation
November 2024



ssen-transmission.co.uk/highland

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The information event will be taking place on:
Tuesday 12th November, 2–7pm
Strathdearn Hall, Tomatin, IV13 7YN



Powering change together



The time has come to further enhance Scotland’s energy infrastructure, providing power for future generations as we move towards net zero.

The shift to a cleaner, more sustainable future is about more than climate change. It’s about ensuring future generations have the same opportunities to thrive as we have all had.

Countries around the world are investing in their energy infrastructure to support the demands of modern economies and meet net zero targets. The UK is leading the way in building a modern, sustainable energy system for the future.

We all have a part to play

When it comes to net zero, we have to be in it together. The UK and Scottish governments have ambitious net zero targets, and we’re playing our part in meeting them.

We work closely with the National Grid Electricity System Operator to connect vast renewable energy resources—harnessed by solar, wind, hydro and marine generation—to areas of demand across the country. Scotland is playing a big role in meeting this demand, exporting two thirds of power generated in our network.

But there’s more to be done. By 2050, the north of Scotland is predicted to contribute over 50GW of low carbon energy to help deliver net zero. Today, our region has around 9GW of renewable generation connected to the network.

At SSEN Transmission, it is our role to build the energy system of the future.

We’re investing £20 billion into our region’s energy infrastructure this decade, powering more than ten million UK homes and 20,000 jobs, 9,000 of which will be here in Scotland.

Who we are

We’re responsible for maintaining and investing in the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland. We’re part of SSE plc, one of the world’s leading energy companies with a rich heritage in Scotland that dates back more than 80 years. We are also closely regulated by the GB energy regulator Ofgem, who determines how much revenue we are allowed to earn for constructing, maintaining and renovating our transmission network.

What we do

We manage the electricity network across our region which covers a quarter of the UK’s land mass, crossing some of the country’s most challenging terrain. We connect renewable energy sources to our network in the north of Scotland and then transport it to where it needs to be. From underground and subsea cables and overhead lines to electricity substations, our network keeps your lights on all year round.

Working with you

We understand that the work we do can have an impact on communities. So we’re committed to minimising our impacts and maximising all the benefits that our developments can bring to your area. We’re regularly assessed by global sustainability consultancy AccountAbility for how we engage with communities. That means we provide all the information you need to know about our plans and how they will impact communities like yours. The way we consult is also a two-way street. We want to hear people’s views, concerns, or ideas and harness local knowledge so that our work benefits their communities: today and long into the future. You can share your views with us at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/talk-to-us/contact-us/



Scan the QR code with your smartphone to find out more about how these policies have been assessed and determined.

Project overview

Project requirements

As Transmission Operator for the north of Scotland, we enable electricity generators to connect to the transmission system by providing their connections which allow the electricity generated to be transported to areas of demand.

Subject to the developers securing consent, we are required to connect the Highland (168 Megawatts (MW)) Wind Farm to the transmission network. To facilitate this, we are proposing to construct a new 132kV overhead line (OHL) on the route. There may also be sections of the connection where there is a requirement for underground cable.

Project elements

The proposal is a single circuit 132kV using a steel trident pole arrangement supporting the overhead line running over a distance of approximately 12km in length with sections of underground cable (UGC) between the proposed Highland Wind Farm substation and the existing Tomatin substation.

The average height of the steel trident pole is 13 metres, with an average span of approximately 100 metres which is currently the preferred technology solution.

At times during construction traffic management will be required, consultation will be undertaken on this in due course.

Tomatin Substation Extension

We are currently required to provide connections for four proposed new wind farms and wind farm extensions in the Tomatin area, and together these projects are referred to as 'The Tomatin Cluster'.

We are therefore proposing to extend the existing Tomatin Substation to house the transmission infrastructure required to facilitate this renewable generation.

Help shape our plans

The work we have planned has the potential to deliver massive benefits in your community, Scotland, and beyond. Yet we know that achieving our goals will require a lot of work that will impact your lives. That's why we want to work with you every step of the way throughout the planning and delivery stages of these essential and ambitious works.

We're committed to delivering a meaningful consultation process that actively seeks the views of everyone affected by our plans. That means making our plans clear and easily accessible, so that you can give us input throughout each stage of the development process.

We want to harness your local knowledge so that we spot any unforeseen challenges early and maximise the potential benefits and opportunities for your communities.

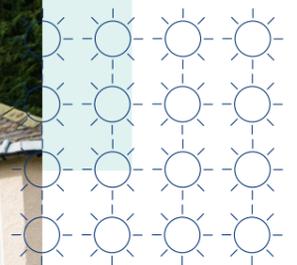
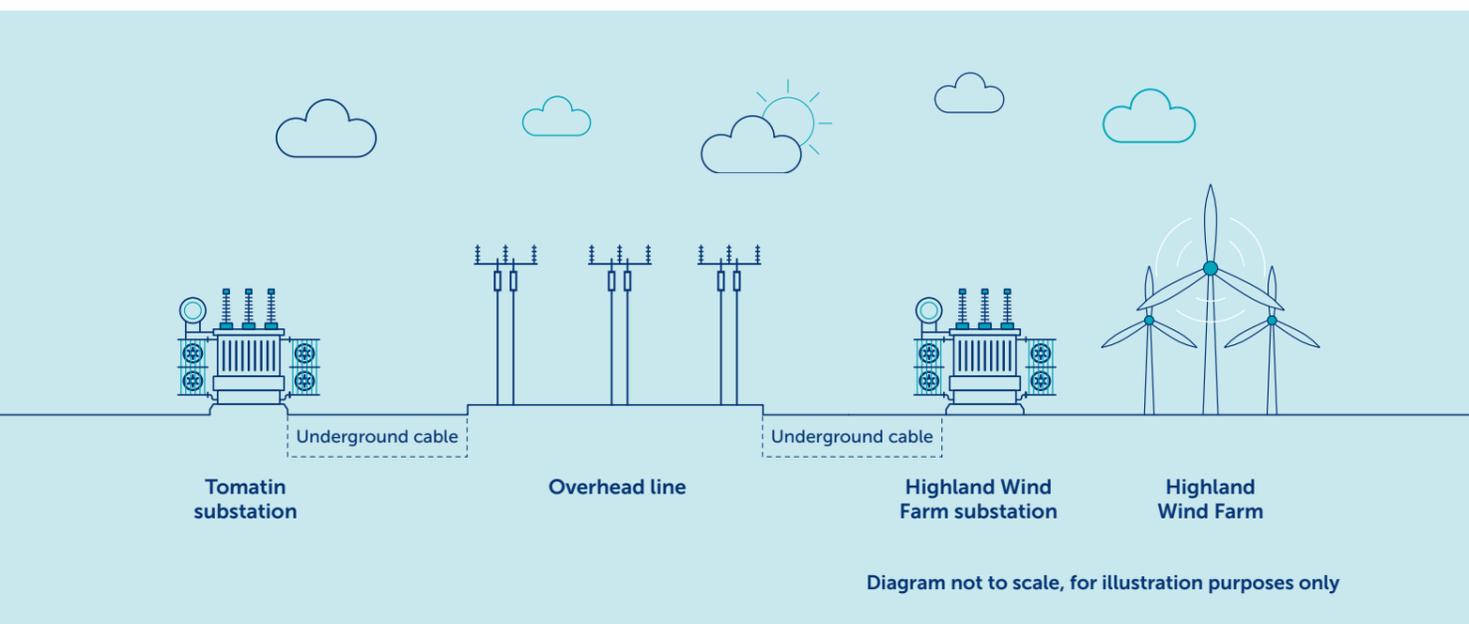
Because, ultimately, we want you to work with us to ensure that the energy infrastructure we build will be the best it can possibly be.

Throughout the consultation, we'll present our approach to developing the project, including changes made since we last consulted with you. We will also provide some visualisations and maps to show you where everything will be located.

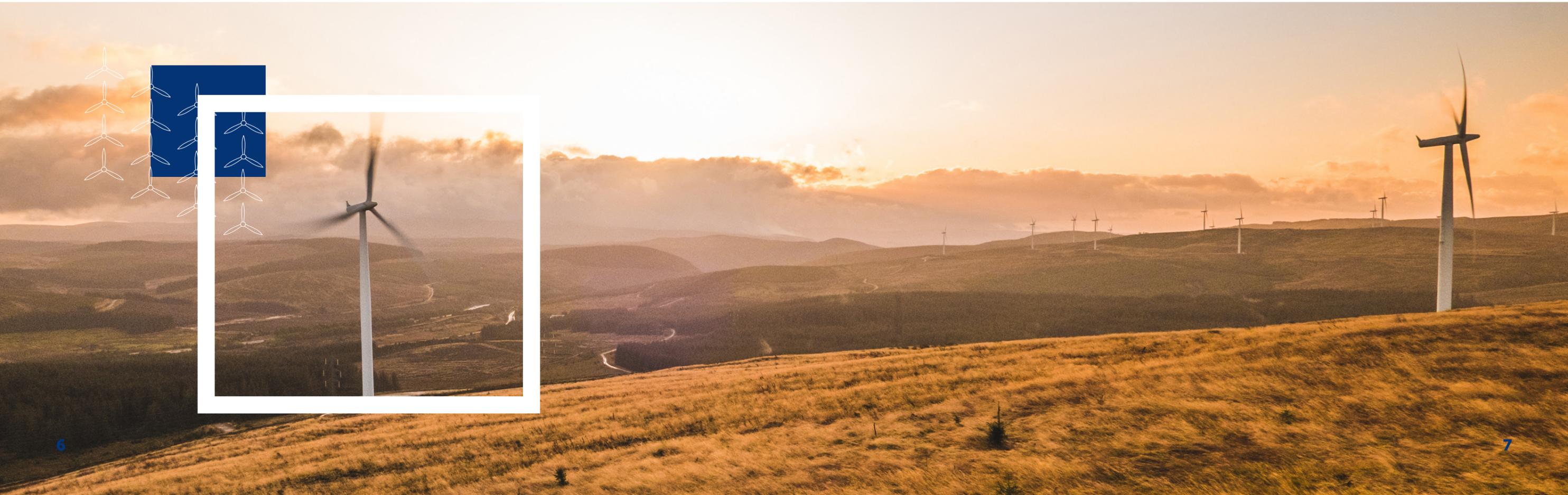
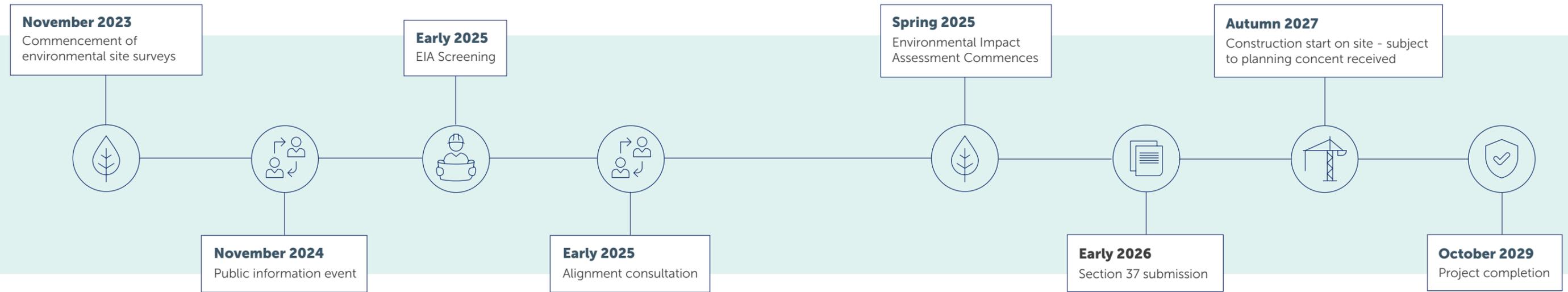
We want you to share your thoughts and opinions on our plans for connections for Highland Wind Farm and on our preferred route. We invite you to share where you think we can make improvements and any concerns you might have about the impact of our work. By telling us what you think, you will help shape our proposals.

Who we're consulting with

As well as communities, we are keen to hear feedback from a broad range of other stakeholders including but not limited to landowners, businesses, non-statutory consultees and statutory consultees such as local authorities and environmental agencies.



Project timeline



Meeting our obligations

Our Transmission Operators licence requires us to provide best value for customers and GB consumers.

As a natural monopoly, SSEN Transmission are closely regulated by the GB energy regulator Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), who determine how much revenue we are allowed to earn for constructing, maintaining and renovating our transmission network.

These costs are shared between all those using the transmission system, including generation developers and electricity consumers.

We therefore work to strict price controls which means the following environmental, engineering and economic considerations form a key part of our routeing process.

Environmental assessments

Desk-based assessments using available mapping and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) data, together with initial site walkovers by specialists, have been undertaken to gather baseline information. This is crucial to enable us to understand the key environmental constraints and sensitivities within the area of search for the proposed connection. This work has been undertaken during 2024 and has helped to identify key environmental issues including landscape and visual amenity, sensitive habitats, protected ecology and ornithology, forestry, hydrology, hydrogeology, recreation and cultural heritage. Following the confirmation of a preferred route for the connection, further detailed studies and assessment work are ongoing to support the consenting process.

Consenting

Before a project progresses to consent application stage and depending on its scale and nature an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 'Screening' through the (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 is recommended. If the project meets or exceeds certain criteria, then it is deemed to be an EIA Development and any application for consent must be accompanied by a formal EIA Report. If it is not EIA Development, SSEN Transmission will provide equivalent, proportionate environmental information through a voluntary Environmental Appraisal (EA) Report.



Engineering and economic considerations

In addition to the suite of environmental assessments undertaken, the following engineering and economic considerations form a key part of our routeing process:

- Construction costs and buildability (largely affected by ground conditions, such as peat/rock/flooding/contaminated land, etc).
- Operations and maintenance requirements.
- Outage requirements and network constraints.
- Vicinity to other electrical assets.
- Vicinity to any other utility, overhead or underground.
- Proximity to wind turbines and wind farm infrastructure.
- Urban development.
- Forestry and biodiversity.
- Technology costs and design parameters.
- Site accessibility.

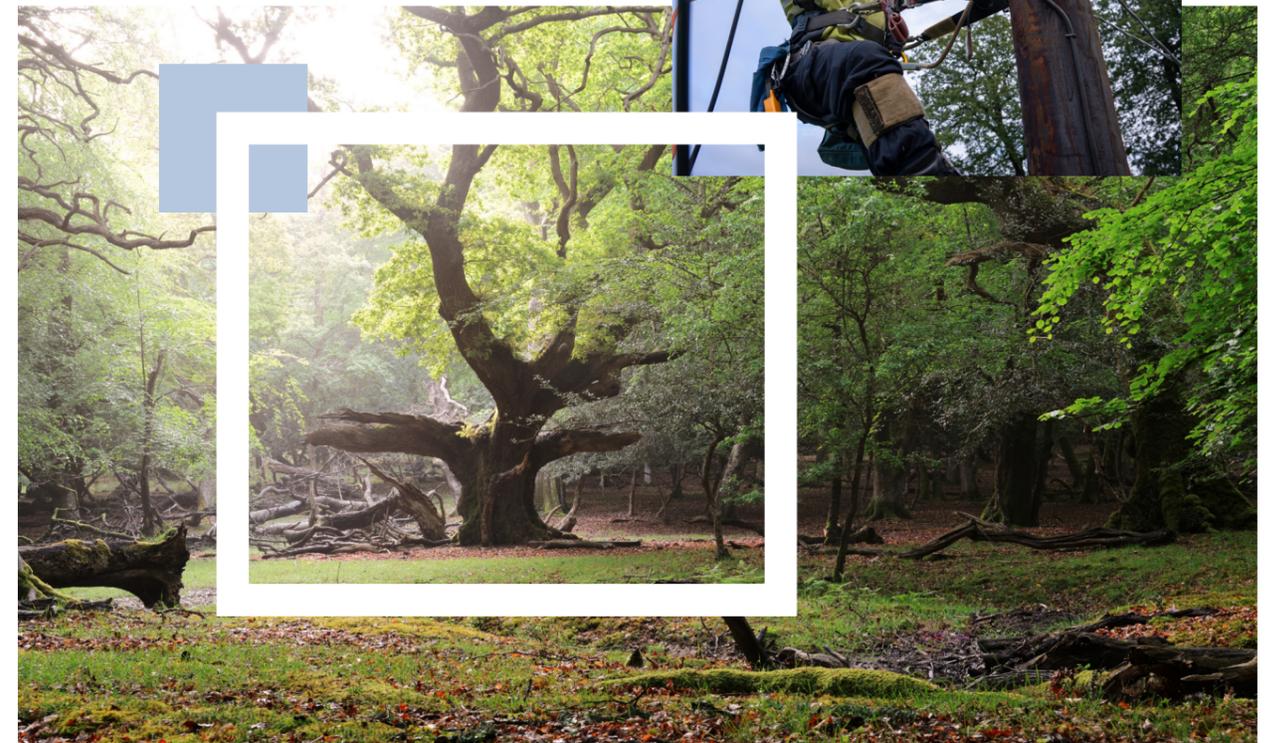
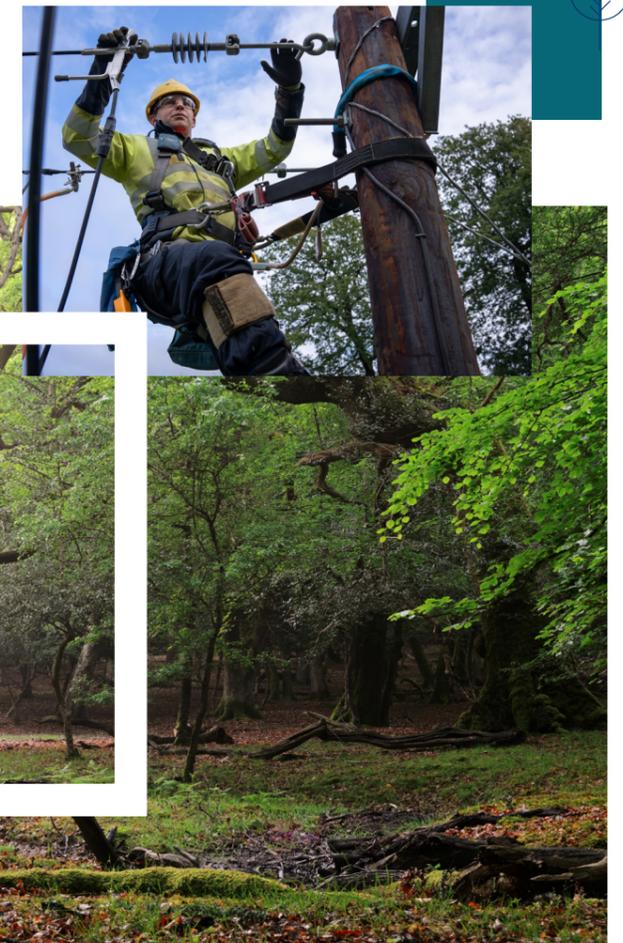
Our overhead line routeing and design process

We have developed and implemented formal Guidance for the selection of routes and alignments for our new Overhead Lines (OHL).

The main aim of the Guidance is to provide a consistent approach to the selection of new OHL alignments and is underpinned by our statutory obligations to:

'Develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical electricity transmission system in its licenced area' and in so doing, to 'have regard to the desirability of preserving the natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of special interest and protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and do what we reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites buildings or objects'.

These duties capture the principal objective of the routeing process which is to balance technical and cost considerations with environmental considerations, to select a proposed alignment which is economically viable, technically feasible, minimises impacts on important resources or features of the environment and reduces disturbance to those living in it, working in it, visiting it or using it for recreational purposes.



Overhead line key stages

For new OHL projects, the process follows a number of stages, each iterative and increasing in detail and resolution, bringing cost, technical, environmental and people considerations together in a way that seeks the best balance. This staged process leads to the identification of a proposed OHL alignment that is capable of being granted consent by Scottish Ministers under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989. The key stages are:

Stage 1: Strategic options assessments/routing strategy

The starting point in all OHL projects is to establish the need for the project and to select the preferred strategic option to deliver it. This process will be triggered by the preparation of a number of internal assessments and documents which identify the technology to be used and the point on the existing Transmission network where a connection can be made. The Routeing Strategy also determines which of the following stages are required.

Stage 2: Corridor selection

Corridor Selection seeks to identify possible corridors which are as short as practicable, which are not constrained by altitude or topography and which would avoid, where possible, any interaction with man-made infrastructure and features of environmental sensitivity. Corridors may be 1km wide or may extend over many kilometers in width, depending on the scale and length of the project. For this project, and for wind farm connections in general, the Corridor stage is omitted as the location of the wind farm and point of connection on the network naturally define a Corridor of a few kilometers in width. Routeing a new OHL any further afield than this would be too expensive and add unnecessary infrastructure to the landscape.

What happens next?

The current status of the connection is Route selection (Stage 3). Following stakeholder engagement with the public, statutory bodies and landowners, this will be finalised as a proposed route taken forward to Alignment selection (Stage 4) for formal environmental assessment and consent application.

We are here

Stage 3: Route selection

Route Selection seeks to find a route within the corridor which avoids where possible physical, environmental and amenity constraints, is likely to be acceptable to stakeholders, and is economically viable, taking in to account factors such as altitude, slope, ground conditions and access. The dimensions of a route will depend on the context provided by the corridor. A route may be several kilometres in length and may range from 200m to 1km in width, depending on the scale of the project, the nature and extent of constraints and the character of the area in question. A number of route options are usually identified and assessed, leading to a potential route being selected.

Stage 4: Alignment selection

Alignment Selection seeks to identify an alignment within the preferred route and to define the access strategy which will be adopted in terms of, for example, the nature and extent of temporary and/or permanent access tracks and possible road improvements. The alignment will be defined by, amongst other things, the location of terminal and angle support structures for OHLs and sealing end compounds for Underground cables. It will be influenced by local constraints, such as individual properties, their aspect, and amenity; ground suitability; habitats; and cultural heritage features and setting. There may be more than one distinct alignment option through the optimal route. It is more likely however that variants to sections of an alignment may arise where there are different ways to avoid a constraint.

Routeing stage - key environmental constraints

Constraints between the Highland Wind Farm Substation and the Tomatin Substation include a number of residential receptors within Strathdearn, residents of Laggan, Glenmazeran Lodge, Banchoruan, Glenkyllachy Lodge, Dalmigavie Lodge, Garbole, Banchor, Dalarossie Cottage and Corrievorrie.

The terrain in the corridor is a mix of moderate hills with some steep slopes, specially at the south-eastern extent, and then areas with more gradual undulated terrain. The proposed routes fall within the Wild Land Area 20 Monadhliath, which is designated for the rounded hills, glens and strong sense of remoteness.

There are no statutory designations/nature conservation sites within a 1km radius of all the proposed routes. However, irreplaceable ancient woodland, irreplaceable blanket bog and Annex I woodland habitats are present across all the proposed routes. In addition, the proposed routes pass through the River Findhorn valley, which has the potential to support target ornithological species breeding sites.

Two Listed Buildings are noted within the corridor, the Kyllachy House and the Garbole Bridge Over The Kyllachy Burn. There is also the potential for unknown archaeological remains to exist within each option.

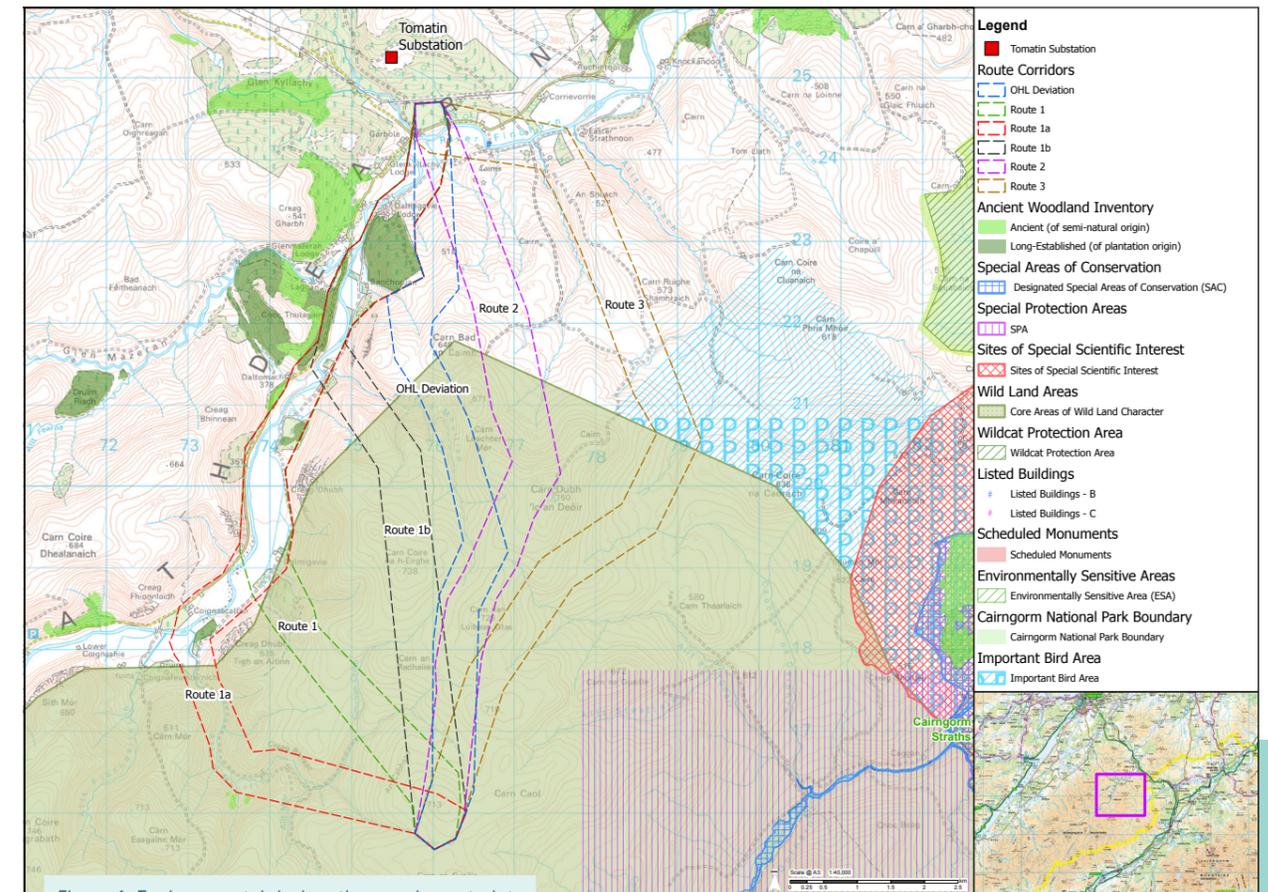


Figure 1. Environmental designations and constraints

The figure above shows some of the key environmental constraints which have been considered when assessing potential OHL routes. When assessing potential overhead line (OHL) routeing, consideration has been given to minimising potential impacts on all of the habitats, including peatland vegetation, ancient woodland and bird and insect species.

Routing Stage - outcomes

The Routeing assessment concluded that the identified 'Deviation Route' is the potential route which we believe offers the best balance of technical and environmental impact considerations identified through the initial assessments. This is now subject to consultation with stakeholders, where local and previously unknown considerations may confirm or alter the initial preference. Once confirmed, this becomes the Potential Option to take forward to the Alignment Selection stage of project development.

Route 1

Route 1 follows the River Findhorn in a south westerly direction from the connection with the underground cable (UGC) routes in the north, before following the steep south east slope out of the strath south of Dalmigavie onto moorland. Combined Route 1 then travels south east to the summit of Carn Caol. This route will consist of OHL from the River Findhorn, converting to UGC for the final 2km prior to the connection with Highland Wind Farm at the summit of Carn Caol.

Route 1A

Route 1A follows the River Findhorn in a south westerly direction from the connection with the UGC routes before trending south up Carn Mòr and then east to the summit of Carn Caol. This route will consist of OHL from the River Findhorn, converting to UGC for the final 2km prior to the connection with Highland Wind Farm at the summit of Carn Caol.

Route 1B

Route 1B follows the River Findhorn in a south westerly direction from the connection with the UGC routes before climbing the prominent spur of Torr a' Mhuilinn beside the steep sided glen of Allt a' Mhuilinn. Combined Route 1B then trends south to the summit of Carn Caol. This route will consist of OHL from the River Findhorn, converting to UGC for the final 2km prior to the connection with Highland Wind Farm at the summit of Carn Caol.

The potential route would require the careful placement of poles and underground cable corridor; particularly in relation to targeting the avoidance of sensitive habitats, such as priority peatland. The alignment selection would also require the application of further mitigation, at both construction and operational stages, to avoid and reduce potential effects on any specific environmental receptors.

Route 2

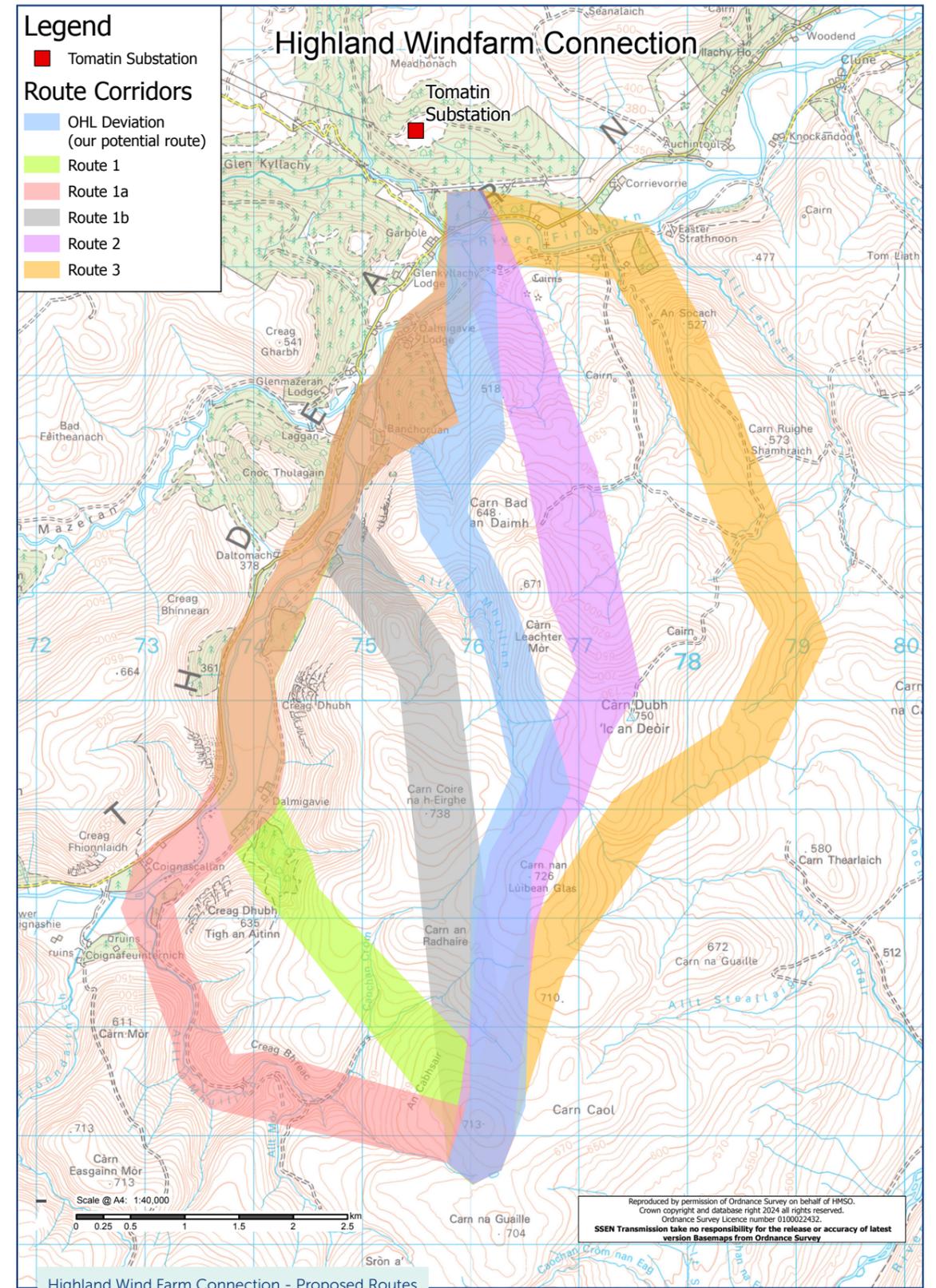
Route 2 trends south from the connection with the UGC routes near the River Findhorn, across moorland and to the summit of Carn nan Lùibeàn Glas, then south to the summit of Carn Caol. This route will consist of OHL from the River Findhorn, converting to UGC for the final 2km prior to the connection with Highland Wind Farm at the summit of Carn Caol.

Route 3

Route 3 trends east from the connection with the UGC routes near the River Findhorn, before travelling south east along the Allt Lathach. The route then climbs Carn Ruighe Shamhraich before travelling south west to the summit of Carn Caol. This route will consist of OHL from the River Findhorn, converting to UGC for the final 2km prior to the connection with Highland Wind Farm at the summit of Carn Caol.

OHL Deviation Route (our potential route)

Deviation Route trends south from the connection with the UGC routes near the River Findhorn, following the peaks of Carn Bad an Daimh, and Càrn Leachter Mòr before trending west around the peak of Carn nan Lùibeàn Glas, and south to the summit of Carn Caol. This route will consist of OHL from the River Findhorn, converting to UGC for the final 2km prior to the connection with Highland Wind Farm at the summit of Carn Caol. This was determined as the potential route due to several engineering and environmental considerations.



Route options considerations

We identified six route options based on initial desk-based review and site visits within the Area of Search. Table 1 displays the environmental and engineering appraisal rating in a red, amber, and green scoring process for the route options considered.

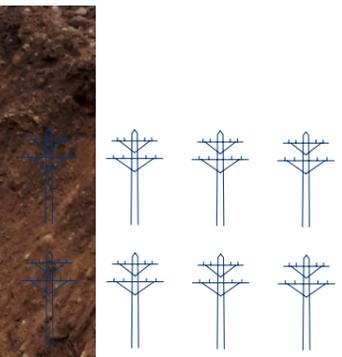
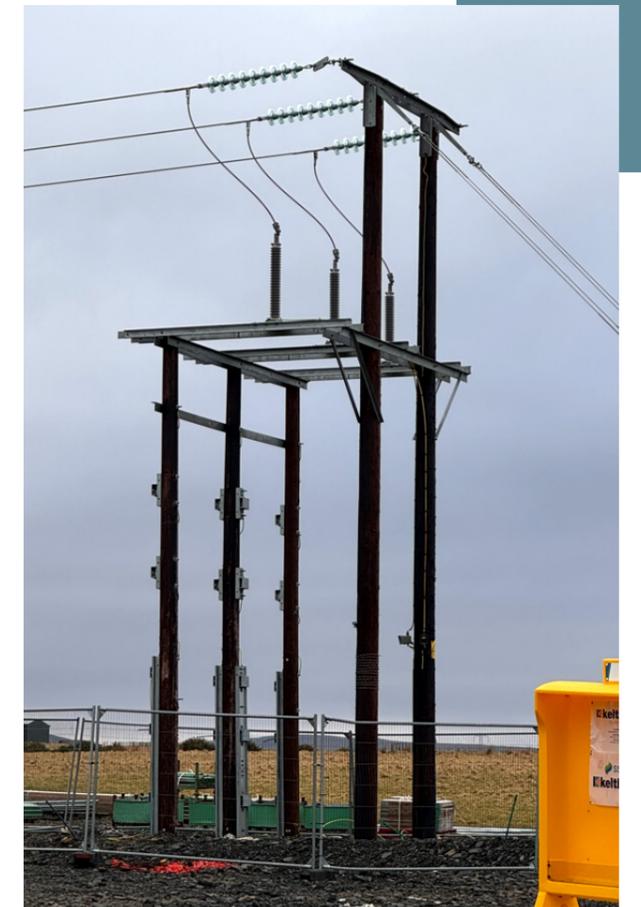
Table 1 - Red, Amber, Green (RAG ratings)

	Category	Sub-topic	Route options					
			1	1a	1b	2	3	Deviation
Environmental	Natural heritage	Designations	G	G	G	G	G	G
		Protected species	A	A	A	G	G	A
		Habitats	R	R	R	R	R	R
		Biodiversity net gain (BNG)	R	R	R	R	R	R
		Ornithology	A	A	A	A	A	A
		Geology, Hydrology, and Hydrogeology	A	A	A	A	A	A
	Cultural heritage	Designations	A	A	G	A	A	G
		Cultural heritage assets	G	G	G	G	A	G
	Landscape and visual	Designations	A	A	A	A	A	A
		Landscape character	A	A	R	R	A	R
		Visual	R	R	R	R	A	R
	Land use	Agriculture	G	G	G	G	G	G
		Forestry	A	A	A	A	A	A
		Recreation	A	A	A	A	A	A
Planning	Policy	A	A	A	A	A	A	
	Proposals	G	G	G	G	G	G	
Engineering	Infrastructure	Major crossing	G	G	G	G	G	G
		Road crossing	R	R	A	A	R	G
	Topography	Elevation	R	R	R	R	R	R
		Atmospheric pollution	G	G	G	G	G	G
		Contaminated land	G	G	G	G	G	G
		Flooding	R	R	R	G	G	G
	Ground conditions	Terrain	R	R	R	A	A	A
		Peatland	R	R	R	R	R	R
	Construction/Maintenance	Access	A	A	R	R	R	R
		Angle towers	R	R	R	R	R	R
	Proximity	Clearance distance to buildings	R	R	A	G	R	G
		Wind farms	G	G	G	R	R	G
		Communication masts	G	G	G	G	G	G
		Urban environments	G	G	G	G	G	G
Metallic pipelines		G	G	G	G	G	G	

Underground cables

A segment of the overall connection route, approximately 3km in total (1.5km either side of the OHL connection); from the Highland Wind Farm substation and the north connection end into Tomatin substation (rising from the River Findhorn).

- The cable at the wind farm end is required to mitigate the wind turbine wake effect area causing disruption to the overhead line.
- A solution is currently being worked through to combine the surrounding proposed wind farm connections to mitigate multiple connections into Tomatin Substation.



Construction of an overhead steel pole line

The preferred technology for connecting Highland Wind Farm to Tomatin Substation will be steel trident poles.

Wooden poles are unable to carry large electrical capacity or function optimally at high altitudes, with the only suitable alternative to meet these demands being large steel structures such as lattice towers or NeSTS steel poles. These alternatives can be costly with landscape and visual implications and often have time constraints associated with their construction programmes.

Our Innovation team and Overhead Line team have been working alongside project contractors to develop a steel pole prototype that is similar in design to wooden overhead lines, with as limited a visual impact on the landscape as possible. While similar in design, the new steel poles will be more resilient in adverse weather conditions, they'll provide an environmentally-friendly alternative to large structures, and will have a reduced construction programme.

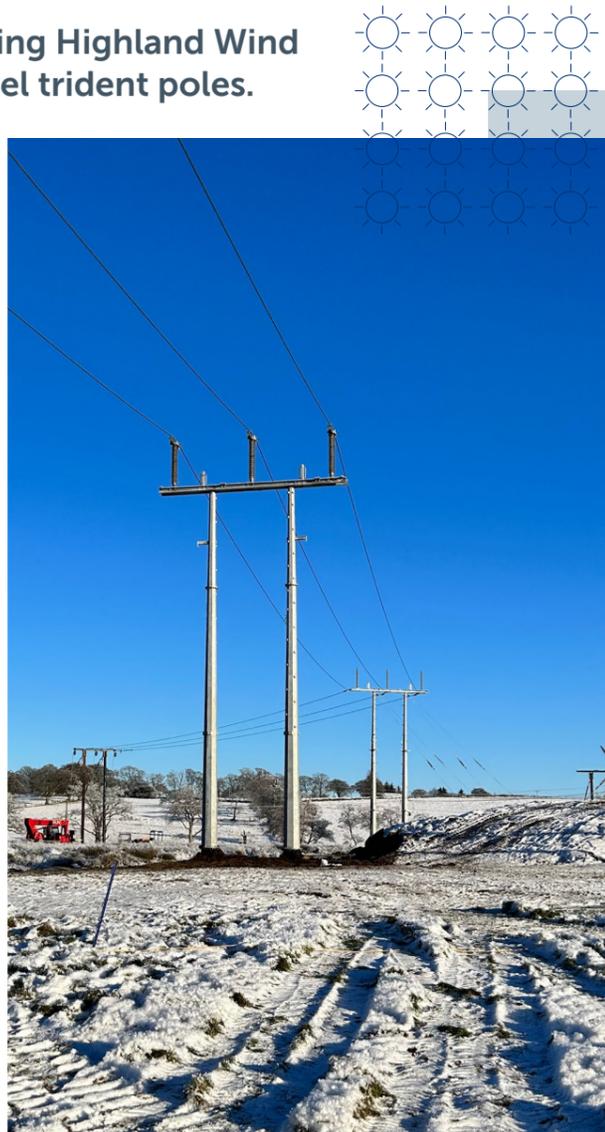
Over the last year, significant progress has been made in the research, design methodology and development of the prototype steel poles. The design minimises the amount of steel required to construct poles, compared to other large structures, improves safety inputs for operatives, and completely removes the need for concrete and access tracks during construction, as foundations are buried directly in the soil.

The average height of the trident pole is 13 metres, with an average span of approximately 100 metres. Traffic management will be required during construction and consultation will be undertaken on this in due course.

Construction activities

To facilitate the connection, the main construction elements of any OHL are as follows:

- Establishment of suitable laydown areas for material and installation of temporary track solutions as necessary
- Upgrades to existing tracks and potentially new tracks where required
- Delivery of structures and materials to site
- Assembly and erection of low profile pole structures and stays
- Stringing of conductors using hauling ropes and winches
- Inspection and OHL commissioning
- Removal of temporary works and site reinstatement.



Other potential technologies:

- Wood poles – average height is between 13 and 16 metres (m), but up to 18m, with an average span of between 70 and 100m.
- Steel lattice towers 132kV - average height is between 27 and 33m, but up to 40m and with an average span of 250m.

Next steps

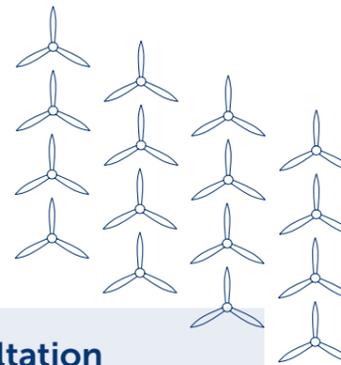
All feedback and comments on the route selection process are requested by Friday 13 December 2024.

Following consultation events and a review of consultation responses, a Report on Consultation will be produced which will document the feedback/comments received, and the decisions made in light of these responses to inform the selection of a proposed route.

Following the identification and confirmation of a proposed route, the route will be taken forward into Stage 4: Alignment Selection, followed by the submission of a Section 37 application. However, should further site and desk-based analysis at the EA/EIA and Consenting stage identify a particular constraint, a further review of the proposed alignments may be required.

Further consultation

As designs progress for Highland Wind Farm Connection, we will undertake further consultation in 2025 to present our alignment options for your consideration and feedback. This will also provide an opportunity for us to present the results of any feedback from this event that we have been able to accommodate into our designs.



Have your say

We understand and recognise the value of feedback provided by the community and stakeholders. Without this valuable feedback, we would be unable to progress projects and reach a balanced proposal.

The feedback period

We will accept feedback from now until **Friday 13 December 2024.**

How to provide feedback:

- Submit your feedback online by scanning the QR code on this page or via the form on our project webpage: sseo-transmission.co.uk/highland
- Email the feedback form to our Community Liaison Manager, or write to us enclosing the feedback form at the back of this booklet.

What we're seeking views on

We are seeking your thoughts on the proposed routes for the connection of Highland Wind Farm to Tomatin Substation. We'll be actively looking to mitigate the impacts of the site as much as possible over the coming months, but it would be helpful to understand what you believe we should be doing to help minimise these impacts and if there are any opportunities to deliver a local community benefit you would like us to consider. We encourage all interested community members to fill in a feedback form when submitting feedback, however if you prefer, you can email us to provide your feedback or ask any questions.

Our Community Liaison team

Each project has a dedicated Community Liaison Manager who works closely with community members to make sure they are well informed of our proposals and that their views, concerns, questions or suggestions are put to our project teams.

Throughout the life of our projects, you will hear from us regularly. We aim to establish strong working relationships by being accessible to key local stakeholders such as community councils, residents' associations and development trusts, and regularly engage with interested individuals.



To support everyone online, we provide accessibility and language options on our website through 'Recite Me'. The accessibility and language support options provided by 'Recite Me' include text-to-speech functionality, fully customisable styling features, reading aids, and a translation tool with over 100 languages, including 35 text-to-speech.

Please select "Accessibility" on our website to try out our inclusive toolbar."

Community Liaison Manager

Kirsty McNamara

 SSEN Transmission, 10 Henderson Road, Inverness, IV1 1SN

 kirsty.mcnamara@sse.com

 +44 7586 295 274

Additional information:



The best way to keep up to date is to sign up to project updates via the project webpage:

sseo-transmission.co.uk/highland

You can also follow us on social media:

 @sentransmission  @SSETransmission

Your feedback

Thank you for taking the time to read this consultation booklet. In order to record your views and improve the effectiveness of our consultation, please complete this short feedback form.

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS. (Please tick one box per question only)

Q1. Have we adequately explained the need for the connection of Highland Wind Farm?

Yes No Unsure

Comments:

Q2. Do you feel sufficient information has been provided to enable you to understand what is being proposed and why?

Yes No Unsure

Comments:

Q3. Are there any additional factors, or environmental features, that you consider important and should be brought to the attention of the project team?

Comments:



Q4. Do you agree with our preferred route (OHL deviation), if not, why?

Yes No Unsure

Comments:

Q5. Do you have any other comments (positive or negative) or concerns in relation to the need for the project, the transmission infrastructure requirements or about the preferred route?

Comments:

Full name:

Telephone: **Address:**

We would like to send you relevant communications via email such as invitations to stakeholder events, surveys, updates on projects, services and future developments from the Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks group listed below. If you are happy to receive email updates please opt in by ticking the box below. You can unsubscribe at any time by contacting us at stakeholder.admin@sse.com or by clicking on the unsubscribe link that will be at the end of each of our emails.

If you would like to be kept informed of progress on the project, please tick this box

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form. Please submit your completed form by one of the methods below:

Post: 10 Henderson Road, Inverness, IV1 1SN **Email:** kirsty.mcnamara@sse.com **Online:** ssen-transmission.co.uk/highland

For information on how we collect and process your data please see our privacy notice available at today's event. This can also be obtained online at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/privacy. Comments forms and all the information from today's event will also be available to download from the project website.

We intend to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist our experienced teams in the analysis of your feedback, so we can categorise key points raised more quickly. You can learn more about how we're utilising AI at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/AIFAQ. Any information given on the feedback form can be used and published anonymously as part of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks consultation report. By completing this feedback form you consent to Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks using feedback for this purpose.

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks is a trading name of: Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution Limited Registered in Scotland No. SC213459; Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc Registered in Scotland No. SC213461; Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution plc Registered in Scotland No. SC213460; (all having their Registered Offices at Inveralmond House 200 Dunkeld Road Perth PH1 3AQ); and Southern Electric Power Distribution plc Registered in England & Wales No. 04094290 having its Registered Office at Number One Forbury Place, 43 Forbury Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3JH which are members of the SSE Group.