

Hurlie 400kV Substation Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Volume 4 | Appendix 7.1

Compensatory Planting Strategy

November 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This Appendix presents information relevant to the proposed Hurlie 400 kV substation (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). It should be read in conjunction with Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development and **Chapter 7: Forestry** of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. The location and layout of the Proposed Development are shown in **Figure 1.1 Site Location** and **Figure 3.1 General Arrangement** in **Volume 3** of the EIA Report.
- 1.1.2 As detailed in **Chapter 7: Forestry**, the Proposed Development impacts a total area of 87.07 ha of forestry and woodland. This area has been identified as the maximum area for woodland removal for the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with the Applicant's commitment to achieve no net loss of woodland for new Development Projects, the area of woodland removal for the Proposed Development will be replanted through the application of this Compensatory Planting Management Strategy.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1.1 This report explains the management strategy that will be undertaken by the Applicant prior to and during the Proposed Development's construction phase, to implement the replanting of the total area of woodland removed.

3. WOODLAND PLANTING MANGEMENT PLAN

- 3.1.1 The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (ESQCR, 2002)¹ specify safety standards to protect the general public and consumers from danger of overhead electricity powerlines and infrastructure. These standards outline minimum safety clearances and the Transmission Network Operator's (TNO's) duty to maintain these safety clearances.
- 3.1.2 The regulations also contain requirements on quality and continuity of electricity supply to ensure an efficient and economic service to customers and consumers.
- 3.1.3 Further legislation arrived in 2006 with the ESQCR, 2006; Amendment 2, which extended the above duties of the TNO to make their overhead powerlines resilient to the effect of major storms. This includes reducing the risk of trees and branches hitting the electricity network.
- 3.1.4 The result of this legislation is that the TNOs in addition to maintaining the vegetation to minimum safety clearances, now must seek to achieve further clearances for trees which may be affected by storm weather conditions.
- 3.1.5 Due to the requirements of the ESQCR it is generally not feasible to replant woodland within the operational areas of the Proposed Development. Therefore, in order to replant the woodland removal area of the Proposed Development, 'off-site' 3 woodland planting must be achieved. Some limited woodland may be developed on site as part of landscaping proposals. The Applicant has used Scottish Forestry guidance for new woodland creation to define what may be considered woodland within the Landscape Design (See Figure 3.3) and may count towards compensatory planting / restocking. For broadleaved planting areas, blocks of less than 0.25ha would not be considered as woodland. For conifer, a woodland block of less than 2ha would not be considered as woodland

4. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 4.1.1 The Applicant will create 87.07 ha of new woodland planting, or such area as of final felling as matches that lost, through the management of a Compensatory Planting Scheme. This management process is based on liaising and securing agreements with landowners that are located within the Aberdeenshire Council, or as agreed with respective stakeholders, for woodland planting of suitable bare land by the Applicant.
- 4.1.2 The Applicant is in discussion with and will continue to undertake liaison with
- Landowners who are impacted by woodland removal as result of the Proposed Development and who wish to develop 'replacement' woodland on their land.
 - 'Not for Profit' Organisations e.g. Community Trusts, who own or have rights to areas of land and wish to plant woodland.
 - Landowners within Aberdeenshire, who wish to plant woodland.
- 4.1.3 Through liaison with these landowners, areas of bare land suitable for woodland planting will be identified and whereby they would enter into a Compensatory Planting Scheme agreement with the Applicant. Such agreements will be to establish, manage and maintain the Compensatory Planting Scheme(s) for 20 years beyond which time woodlands shall be sufficiently established to have protection from provisions of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 Part 4.
- 4.1.4 The total area of bare land secured for woodland planting would as a minimum meet the total area of woodland removal of the Proposed Development.
- 4.1.5 Replacement woodland shall in most cases be of a similar type to that removed.
- Replacing productive or Native woodland with similar (subject to compliance with UKFS design standards)
 - Alternative proposals may be offered where those proposals can deliver additional public benefit for example
 - Developing community woodlands
 - Protecting/ expanding ancient woodland
 - Delivering environmental benefit eg riparian planting for water quality or species habitat enhancement withing designated areas (SAC/SSSI etc)
- 4.1.6 On agreement with the landowner formal woodland planting scheme designs will be produced and submitted to Scottish Forestry and Aberdeenshire Council for consultation and approval.
- 4.1.7 (1) The Compensatory Planting shall comply with the requirements set out in the UK Forestry Standard and the guidelines to which it refers, or such other replacement standard agreed by Aberdeenshire Council. All compensatory planting schemes proposals shall be subject to EIA screening by Scottish Forestry (or Full Environmental Impact Assessment if screening determines this is required). A detailed compensatory planting and management plan to be submitted to Scottish Forestry and Aberdeenshire Council shall include:
- A) details of the location(s) of the area(s) to be planted;
 - B) the nature, design and specification of the proposed woodland(s) to be planted;
 - C) the phasing and associated timescales for implementing the Replanting Scheme;
 - D) proposals for the maintenance of the Replanting Scheme, including annual checks, replacement planting, fencing, ground preparation and drainage; and
 - E) proposals for reporting to Aberdeenshire Council on compliance with timescales for obtaining the Necessary Consents and implementation of the Replanting Scheme.
- 4.1.8 (2) The approved Compensatory Planting (or, as the case may be, an approved amended Replanting Scheme) shall be implemented in full, unless otherwise agreed in writing by Aberdeenshire Council Following completion of the approval process, the Applicant will undertake the woodland planting as per the approved Compensatory Planting Plan

with all initial establishment planting to be completed before completion and operation of the Proposed Development. The Applicant will maintain the newly planted area for a minimum the 20 years line to ensure successful woodland establishment is achieved.

5. REPORTING

- 5.1.1 After the planting scheme approval is received from Scottish Forestry, the Applicant will formally report to Aberdeenshire Council that the required woodland planting area has been achieved to meet the total woodland removal area of the Proposed Development and has secured no net loss of woodland.