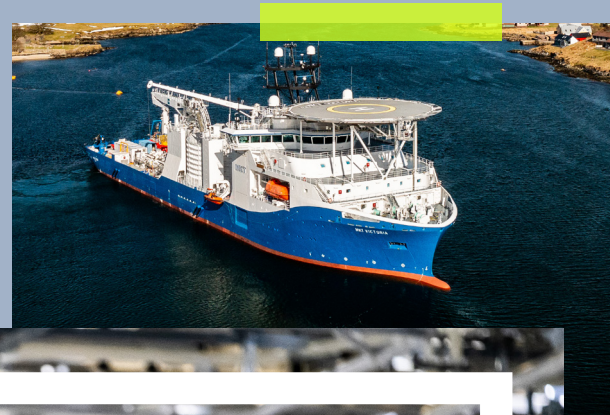
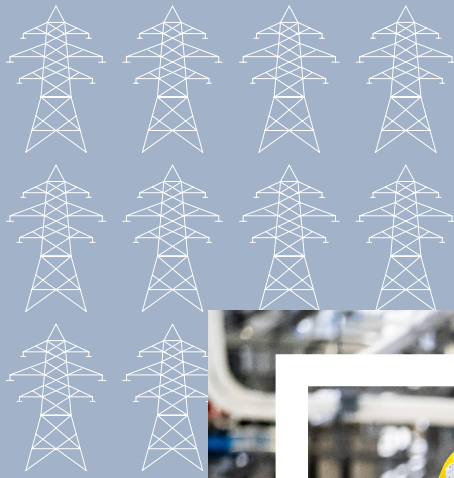
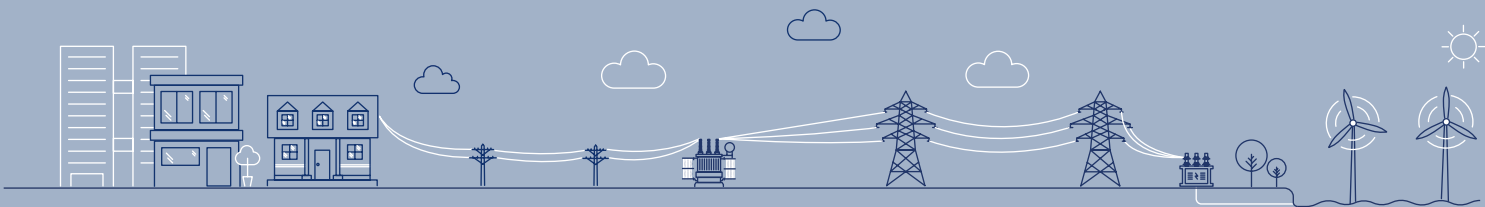


# How stakeholder feedback influences our proposals

May 2024





## How stakeholder feedback influences our decisions

As a licensed electricity Transmission Operator, we have a legal duty to operate, maintain, and improve the high voltage electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland.

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 can help inform the development and design of our project proposals.

We listen 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 consultation events are carried out in line with pre-application planning requirements.

A list of some of the core stakeholder groups we engage with, alongside the typical methods of engagement can be found below:

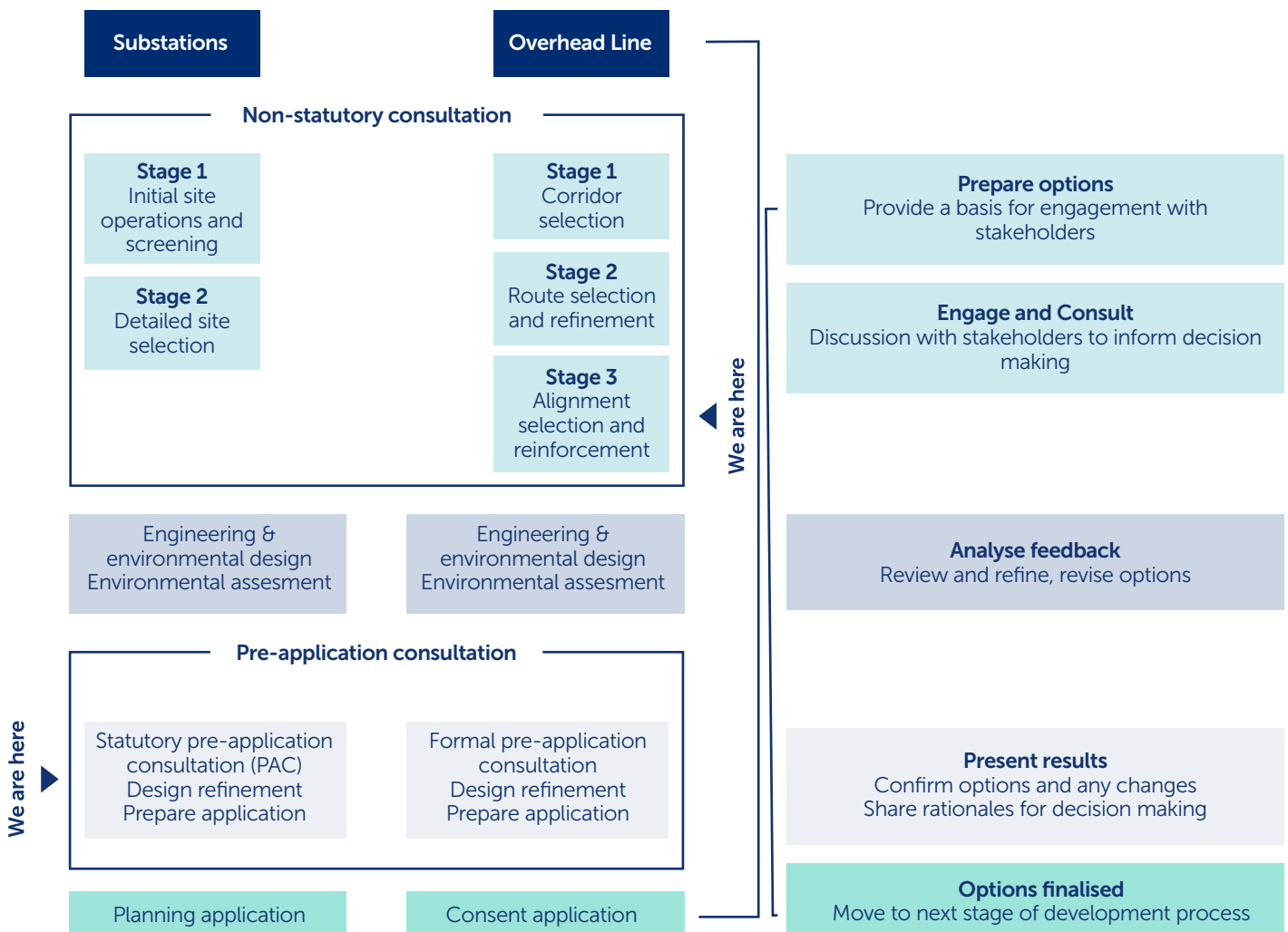
Stakeholder group	Examples	Type of engagement undertaken
Statutory consultees	Local Authorities, Community Councils, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (HES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project overviews, regional briefings, progress updates</li> <li>Meetings to identify opportunities to create community legacy through projects</li> <li>Discuss constraints and how we can avoid them (e.g. through consideration of design options or different technology choices).</li> <li>Request consultation feedback when undertaking voluntary and statutory consultation.</li> <li>Undertake meetings to agree mitigation and approaches to construction and operation such that we can develop projects that avoid and reduce impacts to the environment.</li> </ul>
Non-statutory consultees	Scottish Water, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Scottish Rights of Way and Access (Scotways), Scottish Wild Land Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings to provide relevant project updates, discuss concerns, ideas and feedback</li> </ul>
Community members, local organisations, and elected members'	Homeowners, local businesses, resident's associations, elected members, recreational organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public consultation events where we discuss our proposed infrastructure and invite feedback verbally, through formal forms, letters or emails to help inform our decision making</li> <li>Statutory consultation events as part of our pre-application process</li> <li>Webinars to provide project updates and overall programme</li> <li>Community Liaison Group meetings to provide updates and discuss development of proposals</li> <li>Attendance at local Community Council meetings to share updates and receive feedback</li> <li>Phone calls, emails and visits with community members and residents associations</li> <li>Meetings with elected members to provide project updates, discuss community concerns and feedback</li> </ul>
Landowners & occupiers	Crofters, tenant farmers, occupiers of properties, land managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings with landowners and occupiers to gain their feedback and discuss project progress with regards to substation locations, overhead line routes, alignment options and access requirements.</li> <li>Webinars with land management organisations to provide project information and updates</li> <li>Arranging survey access with landowners for contractors to undertake specialist surveys to further project design and development of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).</li> <li>Work with landowners and managers to develop access protocols covering biosecurity.</li> </ul>

## Pathway to 2030 case studies

In direct response to stakeholder feedback received during engagement undertaken as part of our overhead line routing and substation site process, we announced the following changes in December 2023:

- On the **Beauly to Peterhead, via New Deer and Blackhillock overhead line**, at Blackhillock, south-east of Keith, the proposed new substation site changed from that consulted on earlier in 2023 to the east of Keith, to one of the other shortlisted sites to the south-east of the existing Blackhillock substation.
- On the **Fiddes 400kV Substation project**, in response to significant community concerns raised regarding the previously proposed new substation at Fiddes in the Howe of the Mearns, a new proposed site in Fetteresso Forest was identified and has now been progressed as our proposed site (Hurlie Substation).
- On the **Spittal - Loch Buidhe - Beauly overhead line**, additional options suggested during feedback from landowners and local communities are being assessed and will be consulted on where these are considered viable options from an engineering and environmental perspective.
- On the **Kintore - Tealing 400kV project**, additional alignment options are being considered following consultation feedback. These alignments - which will be assessed in parallel with other alignment options within the refined routes SSEN Transmission recently consulted on - are around Careston, Drumoak and Echt.

## How you can influence the current stage of our projects



As we approach the final stages of our engagement process for our substation projects, these second formal pre-application consultation events are organised to update you on how feedback received during the first consultation period has been considered and where any changes have been made. We are requesting any final comments you have on the proposals in advance of submitting our planning applications in Autumn 2024.

For our overhead lines, we are sharing and seeking feedback on potential alignments for the proposed new Spittal – Beaully and Beaully – Peterhead 400kV overhead lines following recent engagement regarding our refined routes. We will carry out a final set of public engagement events in Autumn this year on the final alignment, prior to submitting section 37 applications in Winter 2024.

We are also holding a second round of consultation on the proposals for the upgrade of the existing Alyth – Tealing and Tealing – Westfield overhead lines from 275kV to 400kV with section 37 applications due in Autumn 2024.

Across all of these projects we also want you to share your thoughts and opinions on the detail of our plans, where you think we can make improvements, concerns about the impact of our work and what you think of the refinements or changes we have made.

The independent Electricity System Operator, National Grid ESO, has identified the upgrades and proposed technology choices that are necessary to help meet UK and Scottish Government climate change and energy security targets. Ofgem's approval of the need for these upgrades was based on these recommendations from National Grid ESO. We don't decide on the overall need for the Pathway to 2030 projects; that's National Grid ESO's and Ofgem's role. Therefore, we can't consult on the core necessity of these 2030 plans.

In our consultations, we focus on SSEN Transmission projects and any feedback related to other local developments should be directed to the relevant consultations for those projects. We know that stakeholders are keen to understand the full extent of any energy developments in their area. Applications to connect to the transmission network are made to National Grid ESO and undergo a lengthy process of assessment before we begin to develop a network connection for them. We aim to be transparent about projects looking to connect to our network but are not permitted to disclose any details until they are in the public domain. A list of projects that hold contracts for Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) with National Grid ESO is available from their website.

Below are some examples of the types of specific feedback that would really help to inform our decision making at this stage.

## Overhead lines

At this point in the process, advanced design plans have been created with input from stakeholders. Any additional modifications will also be subject to approval by the planning authority.

We are seeking feedback on the following:

- Alignment options presented and whether there are any specific concerns regarding the potential alignment(s).
- Suggestions to minimise impacts and feedback on local constraints in areas such as land use, cultural heritage, natural heritage, properties, local residents, local landscape and visual considerations.
- Identification of existing access tracks which may be utilised or access issues which may affect residents.



## Substations

At this point in the process, sites have been selected and detailed design plans have been produced with input from stakeholders. Any changes will also be subject to approval by the planning authority.

We are seeking feedback on the following:

- Changes to suggested temporary compounds at substation sites.
- Feedback on screening and landscape mitigation - suggestions around tree and shrub species to be planted can be taken on board in the landscape design plan (please note that with the land being developed in private ownership there may be limited influence to be had with this element. We are seeking to balance landowner requirements for the sites against landscape mitigation requirements from the planning authority.
- Identification of existing access tracks which may be utilised or access issues which may affect residents.
- For some of our substations a number of colour options are available, and we can look to agree recommendations (based on community feedback) subject to advice from our landscape advisors and approval from the planning authority.

## General Feedback

- If you live in close proximity to a proposed substation or adjacent to a potential overhead line alignment, we particularly want to work with you to discuss potential impacts and mitigation.
- Ideas for opportunities to deliver local improvements and legacy benefits through our Pathway to 2030 Projects. For example, delivering biodiversity net gain, enhancing recreation opportunities, making road improvements, etc.
- Suggested improvements accessibility of consultation materials, project information or website to support your feedback.

## Next Steps

Following the completion of our second pre-application consultation events for substations and the alignment consultation for the overhead lines, our feedback window will remain open for 6 weeks. Once this period has closed, we will review all of the feedback received, make any final amendments or note any additional considerations before compiling a Pre-Application Consultation Report which we will submit alongside our planning application and section 37 applications. We anticipate that we will submit our planning applications later in 2024.

