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6. SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Scoping of potential likely significant effects having regard to the impacts of a proposed development provides a basis for ensuring that the assessment of environmental effects is appropriately limited to issues of genuine potential significance. This ensures a proportionate approach to EIA that is focused on likely significant effects to be considered and assessed. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders early in the process, with advice and input from key consultees being sought at the early stages of a project, helps greatly to inform decisions about the design and EIA work for a proposed development.

6.1.2 This chapter describes the pre-application consultation, the Scoping process and further consultation that was undertaken to determine the scope of the EIA Report, and the consultations that were undertaken with the local community. This chapter also includes a brief description of the environmental receptors of potential significance associated with the Proposed Development which are addressed in detail in the EIA Report, as well as the issues that have been scoped out.

6.2 Consultation

6.2.1 SSEN Transmission has sought to maintain an open dialogue with local communities within the vicinity of the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. This has included carrying out consultation events during the site selection and consenting stages, engaging with statutory consultees, non-statutory consultees, community members and local organisations including local elected members and engaging with landowners, residents and businesses that may be affected by the Proposed Development.

6.2.2 The consultation events were advertised extensively using the following methods:

- Adverts in the Press & Journal newspaper.
- Through the Applicant's social media channels and dedicated project webpage.
- Community Councillors and Local Elected Members were emailed in advance with information they could share within their local area.
- Postcards advertising the dates, times and locations of the consultation events were sent to 1,064 homes and businesses for Stage 1 consultation. For Stage 2 the distribution increased to 3,625 homes and businesses due to also consulting on the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV overhead line. The distribution radius was increased out to 10 km for two Pre-application Consultation (PAC) events, which resulted in postcards being issued to 17,537 homes and businesses (for each PAC event).
- An email notification was sent to individuals who signed up for project updates.
- Emails were sent to statutory consultees.

6.2.3 A Pre-application Consultation Report submitted alongside this EIA Report as part of the planning application provides full details of the consultation events and engagement that has been undertaken. This is summarised below.

6.2.4 During the Stage 1 Initial Site Screening, an in-person public consultation event was held in January 2023 at Peterhead Football Club, following the publication of a Consultation Booklet²³.

6.2.5 During the Stage 2 Detailed Site Selection, an in-person public consultation event was held in April 2023 at Peterhead Football Club, following the publication of a Consultation Booklet²⁴. Statutory consultees were provided with a Consultation Document²⁵ and a Digital Consultation Document, which was presented to them during virtual meetings in

²³ Peterhead Net Zero 2030 Developments: Consultation Booklet, (January 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/netherton-hub/>.

²⁴ Peterhead Net Zero 2030 Developments: Public Consultation Event, (April 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/netherton-hub/>.

²⁵ Peterhead Hub: Consultation Document (April 2023), prepared by WSP UK Ltd. on behalf of SSEN Transmission.

April and May 2023. Where possible, landowners who were potentially affected by the proposal were contacted to discuss land related considerations.

- 6.2.6 Formal feedback received from stakeholders during the Stage 1 and Stage 2 consultation periods were documented in a Report on Consultation²⁶.
- 6.2.7 Following confirmation of a Proposed Site at the completion of Stage 2 Detailed Site Selection, the project moved forward into the Consenting Process stage. Further consultation was undertaken with the local community through two PAC events held at Longside Parish Church Hall during February and May 2024. These events presented the Proposed Site, as well as further information on the environmental, planning and technical considerations. 3D modelling of the Proposed Site was presented at both events. The events were open to members of the local community and any interested parties, with the aim to gather views and feedback on the Proposed Development.
- 6.2.8 SSEN Transmission has maintained dialogue with all community and ward councils and has sought to keep members up to date on project progress, and any upcoming consultation events. A list of the key consultation meeting is provided below:
- 12 April 2023, Statutory Consultees Aberdeenshire Council, NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland – Virtual Statutory Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 14 April 2023, Pre-Consultation Information Sharing Meeting (Microsoft Teams) – Community Councils, local Councillors and residents, Statutory Consultees (Longside Community Council).
 - 3 May 2023, Statutory Consultee Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) – Virtual Statutory Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 27 June 2023, Longside Community Council – public meeting in Longside, including community members and local organisations.
 - 4 December 2023, Community Councils – virtual briefing on the Report on Consultation for Community Councils (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 22 February 2024, Community Councils – virtual pre-PAC event briefing held for Community Councils (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 26 February 2024, Statutory Consultees NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland – Virtual Statutory Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 28 February 2024, PAC event , Longside Parish Church Hall, open to members of the local community and all interested parties to attend.
 - 3 May 2024, Ugie District Salmon Fishery Board and Ugie Angling Association – Virtual Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 21 May 2024, Buchan Area Committee – Briefed Buchan Area Committee members on upcoming PAC 2 event (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
 - 22 May 2024, PAC event, Longside Parish Church Hall, open to members of the local community and all interested parties to attend.
 - 29 July 2024, Longside Football Club and Longside Golf Club – virtual briefing on drainage strategy (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
- 6.2.9 As well as the key consultation meeting listed above, SSEN Transmission held several in person and virtual meetings with local residents within the vicinity of the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project.

6.3 Pre-application Consultation and Further Consultee Engagement

- 6.3.1 Pre-application consultation was undertaken at various stages throughout the project, including the formal Scoping exercise, PAC events, and consultation with community councils, statutory consultees and non-statutory consultees.

²⁶ Netherton Hub: Report on Consultation (November 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/netherton-hub/>.

6.3.2 Pre-application advice was sought from Aberdeenshire Council in March 2023. The Council provided a formal pre-application response (ENQ/2023/0426) in May 2023. The key environmental issues identified within the Council's response are discussed in the individual topic based technical chapters within **Volume 2** of this EIA Report (**Chapters 8 to 14**). The Council also identified an indicative list of planning policies to consider. These have been considered within **Volume 2, Chapter 7: Planning and Energy Policy Context**.

6.4 EIA Scoping

6.4.1 An EIA Scoping Report was issued to Aberdeenshire Council in October 2023 (see **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 6.1: EIA Scoping Report**). A Scoping Opinion (ENQ/2023/1465) was provided by Aberdeenshire Council on 21 December 2023 (see **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion**).

6.4.2 The responses, contained within the Scoping Opinion, were considered in detail during the EIA process. **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 6.3: Scoping Matrix** of this EIA Report includes a matrix detailing the key issues that were raised in the Scoping Opinion and how and where they are addressed in the EIA Report.

6.4.3 The Scoping Opinion makes reference to site specific issues of interest to Aberdeenshire Council, to be considered and addressed in addition to those laid out in responses from consultees. The issues raised are reported in the individual topic based technical chapters within **Volume 2** of this EIA Report (**Chapters 8 to 14**).

6.5 Issues Scoped out of Assessment

6.5.1 It is considered that the following topics do not require to be the subject of detailed EIA work as it is considered that they are not likely to give rise to significant effects. They were referred to in the EIA Scoping Report (see **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 6.1: EIA Scoping Report**) as topics to be scoped out from further consideration within the EIA Report. There was general agreement amongst consultees, as detailed within the Scoping Opinion (see **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion**), as to the proposed scope of the EIA Report.

6.5.2 The individual elements scoped out of the individual topics considered within the EIA, are discussed in the individual technical chapters within **Volume 2** of this EIA Report (**Chapters 8 to 14**).

Forestry

6.5.3 Forestry typically involves extended areas of trees, grown as a crop and in third party ownership and impacts are typically assessed against the following criteria:

- affects commercial viability;
- comprises financial returns; or
- does not affect forestry.

6.5.4 Within the Site woodland accounts for a small area of land cover, with a few broadleaved and mixed woodlands which are mostly native species. Some of the field margins are planted with hedgerows and treelines. There are no forestry designations, Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) or commercially viable forestry within the Site. Therefore, due to the likely minimal impact on forestry it has been scoped out of further assessment in the EIA.

Population and Human Health

6.5.5 The Population and Human Health topic (including potential impacts to socioeconomics, tourism and recreation) has been scoped out of the EIA for the reasons set out in this section.

6.5.6 The Proposed Development is located in a rural area with relatively few nearby sensitive receptors. The nearest settlement to the Proposed Development containing multiple businesses is Longside approximately 1 km to the northwest. A small number of businesses including local shops are located in Longside and there are no tourist businesses in the immediate area of the Proposed Development.

6.5.7 Due to its location, nature, and scale, there may be temporary disruption to residents and businesses using the A950 during the construction period, however, this will be managed by the Principal Contractor through the implementation of

a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which will be agreed in advance of construction with Aberdeenshire Council.

- 6.5.8 The electric and magnetic fields in the vicinity of substations are well below the levels associated with established health effects²⁷. The Applicant will comply with the level of exposure limits set within the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002²⁸, and within the exposure guidelines as specified in the Code of Practice on compliance. Therefore, the environmental effects of electric and magnetic fields (EMF) exposure are not considered to be significant and are scoped out of assessment within this EIA Report.
- 6.5.9 In relation to recreation, there are no core paths designated across the Site or any records of rights of way, although the record of rights of way is not definitive. Outwith the Site, it is not expected that any core paths would be directly affected by the Proposed Development. Visual effects to users of public roads and recreational routes have been considered in **Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact**. Traffic and transport effects to users of public roads and recreational routes have been considered in **Volume 2, Chapter 11: Traffic and Transport**. Where there may be interactions with recreational users during the construction of the Proposed Development, an Outdoor Access Management Plan would be prepared as part of the Principal Contractor's CEMP, and signage would be erected at suitable locations to warn of construction traffic. Any disturbance during construction would be temporary in nature.
- 6.5.10 The potential impacts on human health for a development of this nature and scale are limited to increased exposure to noise and changes in amenity value of residential or recreational resources. These have been considered in the **Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact** and **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration** and therefore a specific Human Health assessment has been scoped out of the EIA.

Major Accidents and Disasters

- 6.5.11 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential for effects related to the vulnerability to major accidents and disasters are likely to be limited to those associated with unplanned power outages, due to extreme weather or structural damage. Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed. Potential significant effects on the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to major accidents and disasters has therefore been scoped out of the EIA Report.

Air Quality and Climate

- 6.5.12 Local air quality is a combination of background air quality, representative of general levels of pollution away from busy roads and industrial activity and added emissions from local emission sources such as road traffic.
- 6.5.13 Due to the generally rural nature of the Proposed Development, and sparse distribution of sensitive receptors, impacts of pollution from road traffic and other industrial sources are minimal. The Proposed Development is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), with the closest AQMA located approximately 34 km southwest at Aberdeen, which has been declared for exceedances of Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) air quality standard limits.
- 6.5.14 The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust (earthworks, foundation construction, passage of vehicles along access tracks) and construction plant and traffic exhaust emissions. However, the nature of the construction activities is that these would be localised, short term for individual activities and intermittent. Any potential for nuisance effects on residential or recreational amenity during construction would be strictly controlled in accordance with a CEMP and relevant GEMPs. Measures for the management of dust during construction are set on in a Dust Management GEMP (see **Volume 4, Technical Appendix 3.2: General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs)**).

²⁷ Electricity substations and health: 2011. [Online] Available at <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06151/SN06151.pdf>.

²⁸ The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents/made>.

- 6.5.15 During operation, due to the nature of the Proposed Development as a strategic transmission hub there is limited potential for emissions to air from the Site components, and it is expected that a relatively small number (approximately 20) permanent staff would be based at the Site, which would not generate a significant amount of traffic emissions.
- 6.5.16 In regard to climate, in the context of the EIA process, climate is assessed both in relation to the contribution of the Proposed Development to increasing or decreasing the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions, and the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to climate change.
- 6.5.17 In relation to an assessment of the contribution to climate change, an assessment is scoped out of this EIA Report. The integrated impact assessment produced for NPF4, led to the following conclusion within NPF4:
- “the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions assessment concludes this development [Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission] will likely have an overall net positive impact on achieving national greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets”²⁹.*
- 6.5.18 This is because of the role that renewable energy, and the necessary transmission infrastructure, provides in meeting the national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.
- 6.5.19 In relation to climate adaptation, the design and location of the Proposed Development has considered the potential risk posed by increased flood risk (further details provided in **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils**). The Proposed Development has been designed to provide adequate capacity to contain flooding within the drainage network for a critical 1 in 30 year storm event, and flood water generated for up to a 1 in 200 year (plus climate change allowance of 37%) storm event. The intention is to reduce potential risks to the electricity assets so that repairs and upgrades are less frequent. The 400 kV and 132 kV substations and converter stations have been designed to be GIS, which allows them to be enclosed to protect from the adverse weather. Therefore, likely significant effects are not anticipated.
- 6.5.20 Based on the above, air quality and climate has been scoped out of the EIA Report. Where relevant, consideration of the implications of climate change is however considered in technical chapters of this EIA Report.

Material Assets and Waste

- 6.5.21 The materials and waste associated with construction activities will be captured and addressed within a Materials Management Plan and Site Waste Management Plan which will form part of the Principal Contractor’s CEMP. This will include use of recycled material, efficient use of material to minimise waste, and other waste management measures.
- 6.5.22 To minimise the generation of waste, material excavated to create the platforms for the proposed buildings as far as is practicable will be reused on-site to minimise the off-site deposition of material. The Site has been designed to have a cut and fill balance, to minimise the amount of imported material required and in turn minimise the construction traffic. It is anticipated that surplus topsoil following the earthworks, would be used as part of the landscaping strategy.
- 6.5.23 Considering the nature and scale of the Proposed Development, significant effects on material assets and waste are not anticipated. Materials and waste have therefore been scoped out of EIA Report.

6.6 Other Issues

- 6.6.1 The EIA Regulations introduced a number of factors to be considered within an EIA Report; specifically, those factors listed under Regulations 4(3) and 4(4), and Schedule 4. **Table 6-1** describes where this EIA Report has addressed these factors, relevant to the Proposed Development.

²⁹ The Scottish Government, (2023). National Planning Framework 4. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>.

Table 6-1 Assessment of Relevant Factors Identified in Regulations 4(3), 4(4) and Schedule 4

Topic	Potential for Significant Effects
Population and Human Health	This chapter considers potential effects relating to population and human health in Section 6.5 Issues Scoped out of the Assessment .
Biodiversity (in particular species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)	The potential effects on biodiversity, including species and habitats are considered in Volume 2, Chapter 9: Ecology, Nature Conservation and Ornithology .
Land and Soil (and natural resources availability)	The potential effects on geological receptors and groundwater resources are considered in Volume 2, Chapter 12: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils . Potential effects to agricultural land are considered in Volume 2, Chapter 14: Land Use and Agriculture .
Noise and Vibration	The potential effects of noise and vibration on sensitive receptors associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development are considered in Volume 2, Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration .
Water (and natural resource availability)	The potential effects on the water environment are considered in Volume 2, Chapter 12: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils .
Air and Climate	This chapter considers potential effects relating to air and climate in Section 6.5 Issues Scoped out of the Assessment .
Material Assets	This chapter considers potential effects relating to material assets in Section 6.5 Issues Scoped out of the Assessment .
Cultural Heritage	Volume 2, Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage , includes an assessment of the potential for significant effects on cultural heritage including archaeological assets and historic landscapes.
Landscape	Volume 2, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impacts , considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape.
Major Accidents and Disasters	This chapter considers potential effects relating to major accidents and disasters in Section 6.5 Issues Scoped out of the Assessment .
Interaction Between Factors (cumulative effects)	The approach to cumulative effects is outlined within Volume 2, Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology . The assessment of potential in-combination cumulative effects is considered within each of the technical chapters (Volume 2, Chapters 8 to 14), where appropriate. Effect interaction cumulative effects are considered in Volume 2, Chapter 15: Cumulative Effects (Effect Interactions) .