

Netherton Hub

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 4

Technical Appendix 9.7 – Habitats

Regulations Appraisal Screening Report

September 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Screening Report has been prepared by WSP UK Limited (hereafter referred to as WSP) on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ("the Applicant") who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission ("SSEN Transmission"), own, operate and develop the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands. In this HRA Screening Report the Applicant and SSEN Transmission are used interchangeably unless the context requires otherwise. The HRA Screening Report has been prepared to accompany an application for planning permission in principle under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)¹.
- 1.1.2 The HRA Screening Report is required to assess potential impacts/effects to European sites from proposals to construct a strategic transmission hub, referred to as the Netherton Hub (and hereafter also referred to interchangeably as 'the Proposed Development'). This would be located on land (hereafter the 'Site') approximately 7.5 km to the west of Peterhead in Aberdeenshire, Scotland (National Grid Reference: NK052460). The location of the Site is shown in **Annex A, Figure 9.7.1: Relevant European Sites and Site Location**.

1.2 Description of the Proposed Development

- 1.2.1 The key elements of the Proposed Development subject to consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) would comprise the following:

- 400 kV Substation;
- 132 kV Substation;
- High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Switching Station;
- Spittal to Peterhead HVDC Converter Station;
- Eastern Green Link 3 HVDC Converter Station; and
- Operations Depot and Spares Buildings.

- 1.2.2 The Proposed Development would also include the following works: site clearance, temporary construction compounds and laydown areas, earthworks (including landscaping), permanent access from the public road network and relevant public road improvements, formation of internal access roads, underground cables connecting the components on the Site, drainage, permanent water supply, lighting, security fencing, biodiversity enhancement measures and the demolition of existing buildings within the Site.

Proposed Development Components

- 1.2.3 The substations, converter stations and switching station equipment would be housed indoors, with buildings likely to comprise a steel portal frame with metal cladding and roof and be designed to reduce visual and noise impact. The elements described below are to be included as part of the Proposed Development and their indicative locations are shown in **Annex A, Figure 9.7.2: Proposed Development**.

400 kV Substation and 132 kV Substation

- 1.2.4 A series of buildings that would be situated on a joint 400 kV/132 kV Substation platform. The platform footprint would be 322 m width by 380 m length. The buildings that would be situated on the platform include:
- 400 kV Substation, with dimensions: 20 m height, 151 m width at its widest point and 148 m length. This would house the gas insulated busbar (GIB), gas insulated switchgear (GIS) and the control building;

¹ Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/section/46> [Accessed: February 2024].

- 132 kV Substation building would provide 132 kV connections for existing and future third-party connection applications, it would connect directly into the proposed 400 kV Substation. Indicative building dimensions: 16 m height, 45 m width and 100 m length;
- two 400 kV/132 kV Super Grid Transformer (SGT) buildings, with dimensions: 21 m height, 45 m width and 81 m length; and
- 33 kV Switchroom Building with dimensions: 8 m height, 9 m width and 22 m length.

1.2.5 The 400 kV and 132 kV substations would both be GIS substations. Within a GIS substation, live electrical equipment uses a dense gas as the insulating medium, usually Sulphur Hexa-Fluoride (SF₆); however, SSEN Transmission would, where available, use an alternative SF₆ free technology solution in support of their commitments and responsibilities to the decarbonisation of the electricity network. GIS typically allows safe clearance distances between live conductors to be reduced. This results in a smaller footprint compared to the more traditional substations comprising Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS). There is a requirement for small sections of AIS equipment immediately to the south and west of the 400 kV building. The AIS would connect the proposed Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV overhead line (OHL) and the proposed Netherton/Peterhead 400 kV OHL Diversion and Repurposing circuits prior to the transition into GIB/GIS. The AIS equipment for each circuit would be in an area approximately 28 m width by 10 m length, with the majority of AIS equipment expected to be less than 10 m in height.

HVDC Switching Station

1.2.6 The transmission hall (expected to be a switching station) would be made up of multiple interlinked buildings, the specifics of which will be subject to detailed design and will not be confirmed until a supplier is appointed. Indicative combined building dimensions are as follows: height of up to 30 m, 245 m width, 319 m length. The footprint of the platform to support the buildings is expected to be approximately 395 m width by 370 m length.

Spittal to Peterhead HVDC Converter Station

1.2.7 A HVDC converter station is required to enable a proposed 2 GW 525 kV HVDC link to Spittal, Caithness, in the far north of Scotland. This would enable the efficient high volume power transmission from generators at Spittal to the network at the Netherton Hub for further transmission to demand centres as appropriate. The standard station would be composed of a series of buildings enclosing all apparatus and providing office, welfare and spare storage. The indicative combined building dimensions are as follows: height of 29 m, width 206 m and length 200 m, the alternating current halls would sit separate to, but aligned with, the arms of the u-shaped building and have indicative building dimensions as follows: height of 27 m, width 84 m and length 64 m. The footprint of the platform to support the buildings is expected to be approximately 288 m width by 358 m length. This arrangement is based on the standard HVDC converter station design and may differ dependent on the chosen supplier.

Eastern Green Link 3 HVDC Converter Station

1.2.8 A HVDC converter station would be required at the Proposed Development site to enable a proposed 2 GW, 525 kV HVDC link to South Humber, England. This would enable the efficient high volume power transmission from generators in the north-east of Scotland to demand centres in the south of England. The station would be composed of a series of buildings enclosing all apparatus and providing office, welfare, and spare storage (see a conceptual indicative design shown on Plate 3-2). The indicative combined building dimensions are as follows: height of 29 m, width 206 m and length 200 m, the alternating current halls would sit separate to, but aligned with, the arms of the u-shaped building and have indicative building dimensions as follows: height of 27 m, width 84 m and length 64 m. The footprint of the platform to support the buildings is expected to be approximately 288 m width by 358 m length. This arrangement is based on the standard HVDC converter station design and may differ dependent on the chosen supplier.

Operations Depot and Spares Buildings

- 1.2.9 The Operations Depot and Spares Buildings would consist of buildings for offices, training facilities, car parking and storage facilities for strategic spares. The Operations Depot indicative dimensions are a height of 8 m, width of 30 m and 42 m length, with an overall platform of 93 m width and 96 m length. Approximate dimensions for the spares building are a height of 24 m, 61 m width and 125 m length, on a platform of 125 m width and 250 m length.

Other Proposed Development Components

- 1.2.10 The other components that make up the Proposed Development are described below:

- Underground cabling – would be installed to connect the building components within the Site. These would consist of circuits of multiple feeder circuits at 132 kV and 400 kV AC, as well as 525 kV HVDC cables. All cables will be installed in troughs or trenches and will be connected (terminated) in the relevant substation or converter station. All cable will consist of cross-linked polyethylene (XLPE) XLPE insulation and would be type-tested and built to most recent industry standards. Where required, joint bays will be installed to facilitate connection of short lengths of cable.
- Drainage – the surface and foul water drainage strategy includes Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS). SuDS mimic natural drainage processes to reduce the effect on the quality and quantity of runoff from developments and provide benefit to amenity and biodiversity. The SuDS have been integrated within the landscape proposals to enhance amenity, biodiversity, and habitat, whilst protecting and/or enhancing water quality.
- Lighting – floodlights would be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness; during the over-run of planned works; or when sensor activated as security lighting for nighttime access. The access roads would not be lit under normal operation. A light would also be provided permanently at access gates.
- Security fencing – a 3 to 4 m high palisade fence would be installed around platforms. In addition, a standard post and wire perimeter fence would be installed around the site boundary, this would be a stock/deer proof fence to exclude grazing animals and allow establishment of landscaping and screen planting. Native hedgerows are present at the site perimeter with occasional tree groups, it is anticipated that the stock/deer proof fence would be installed on the inside of the existing hedgerows.
- Access – it is anticipated that a new permanent access would be created from the A950 to the north of the Site. A secondary site entrance/exit to the south is also proposed, primarily from a health and safety perspective to ensure the Site is not limited to a single access point. The on-site access track layout has been designed to connect the various Proposed Development elements, whilst minimising hardstanding and maximising available land for landscape landform and planting.
- Earthworks – the proposed earthworks will extend over most the Site. In general, unnecessary earthworks have been avoided so there is some land that will remain unworked mainly towards the southern boundary, west and northwest of the Site. The infrastructure has been designed to be as tightly configured as possible, while maintaining the required separation, to minimise the extent of the earthworks. All hardcore and earthworks materials for the construction of the Proposed Development would either be won on site, through cutting of the existing surface to construct the platforms or imported locally. The temporary construction compound and laydown areas will require cut, which would be reinstated in line with the landscaping strategy post construction. It is anticipated that surplus topsoil following the earthworks, would be used as part of the landscaping strategy.

Construction of the Proposed Development

Enabling Works

- 1.2.11 The enabling works would include (but not be limited to) existing utilities diversions, installation of new temporary and permanent water, electrical and telecommunication services, public road improvements and establishment of a temporary construction compound including welfare facilities.

Site Clearance and Demolitions

- 1.2.12 The following buildings have been identified for demolition:

- All buildings associated with Netherton Farm, including a derelict farmhouse and outbuildings, a derelict single story building and ruin.
- All buildings associated with Inverveddie House, including, one residential property and a commercial property.
- A residential property at Roer Teach.

- 1.2.13 Where required, vegetation would be carefully removed from within the Site, including trees and hedgerows subject to any ecological considerations relating to timing and method of working. Where possible, existing vegetation would be retained. The intention is to retain as much of the perimeter hedgerows as possible within the technical requirements of the Proposed Development.

Access during Construction

- 1.2.14 Vehicles would primarily access the Netherton Hub by a new entrance from the A950 to the north of the Site. It is anticipated that the majority of construction traffic will use the A950 to the east, when entering and leaving the Site. The A950 connects to the A90 using the Howe O'Buchan Roundabout, approximately 5 km to the east of the Netherton Hub. The A90 is part of the strategic road network, in addition to supporting access to the Port of Peterhead.

Temporary Construction Compound

- 1.2.15 A temporary construction compound would be required to provide welfare facilities for site staff, parking, temporary office cabins and a stores and maintenance area. An area for the compound has been identified in the southern area of the Site.

Delivery of Structures and Materials

- 1.2.16 All materials would be delivered to their allocated construction compound within the Site, and it is anticipated that concrete would be delivered to Site pre-mixed.

Construction Programme and Working Hours

- 1.2.17 It is anticipated that construction of the Proposed Development would take place over a five to eight year programme, subject to consents and resource availability.
- 1.2.18 Construction working is likely to be during daytime periods only. Working hours are anticipated seven days a week between approximately 07.00 to 19.00 March to September and 07.30 to 17.00 (or within daylight hours) October to February. Any out of hours working would be agreed in advance with Aberdeenshire Council

Reinstatement

- 1.2.19 Following commissioning of the Proposed Development, all temporary work areas would be reinstated. Reinstatement would form part of the contract obligations for the Principal Contractor and include the removal of all temporary works areas. Some temporary areas of hardstanding would be required, reinstatement would involve topsoil re-spread and the areas sown with suitable wildflower grass meadow with shrub and tree planting, where applicable.

Future Maintenance

- 1.2.20 It is expected that the Proposed Development would require approximately 20 permanent staff onsite during operation. These would be housed in the onsite Operations Depot building.
- 1.2.21 The Proposed Development plant requires maintenance and inspection at regular intervals. It is expected this would consist of a monthly inspection, whilst varying degrees of maintenance would be undertaken annually. There would be other visits as required for operational duties.
- 1.2.22 At detailed design, a comprehensive Landscape and Ecology Management Plan would be formulated working alongside the SSEN Estates Team to ensure the delivery of a range of natural habitats are achievable in the short term and long term meeting the objectives of the environmental mitigation in relation to landscape character, visual amenity, and BNG and protected species considerations.
- 1.2.23 A full SuDS maintenance plan would be produced as part of the detailed drainage design. The maintenance of the drainage network will be the responsibility of SSEN Transmission.

Decommissioning

- 1.2.24 Planning permission is being sought in perpetuity. Should the Proposed Development be decommissioned full details of the decommissioning plan would be agreed with the appropriate authorities and the landowners prior to any decommissioning works commencing.

1.3 Habitats Regulations Appraisal

- 1.3.1 The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended – the Habitats Regulations)² place a duty upon ‘Competent Authorities’, to consider the potential for Likely Significant Effects (LSE) upon European sites arising from projects or plans. European sites considered through HRA are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), as well as those currently proposed for designation. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also considered through HRA.
- 1.3.2 In accordance with guidance on the interpretation of the Habitats Directive³ there is four distinct stages of assessment, collectively known as HRA:
- Stage 1, Screening: the process which identifies whether effects upon a European site of a plan or project are possible, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and considers whether these effects are likely to be significant.
 - Stage 2, Appropriate Assessment: the detailed consideration of the effect on the integrity of the European site of the plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to the site’s conservation objectives and its structure and function.
 - Stage 3, Assessment of alternative solutions: the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the European site.
 - Stage 4, Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse effects remain: an assessment of whether the development is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) and, if so, of the compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the European site network.
- 1.3.3 This report represents Stage 1 of the above process: HRA Screening. For the Proposed Development the Competent Authority will be Aberdeenshire Council.

² The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1994/2716/contents/made> [Accessed: June 2024].

³ European Commission, (2000a). The Habitats Directive. [Online] Available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive_en [Accessed: June 2024].

1.4 Potential LSE and Defining Ecological Zone of Influence (EZol)

1.4.1 Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines⁴ define the Ecological Zone of Influence (EZol) as the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects due to the Proposed Development. This could extend beyond the footprint of the Proposed Development ('transboundary effects').

1.4.2 There are several EZols to consider depending on the potential LSEs in question:

- disturbance/displacement of qualifying species from the Site and adjacent areas – visual and acoustic disturbance from the movement of plant and equipment and operation of plant. The EZol for this LSE will be 1 km based on the predicted maximum disturbance/displacement distance⁵ for qualifying species from the relevant European sites relating to pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*;
- reduction in Functionally Linked Land (FLL) that supports qualifying species. The EZol for this LSE will be 20 km based on the predicted maximum foraging range of qualifying species for the relevant European sites⁶; and
- reduction in water and air quality – impacts on habitats through the release of sediment and hydrocarbons during work activities. The EZol for reduction in water quality is all water courses with hydrological connectivity to the Proposed Development and connectivity to the River Ugie Catchment, the catchment area relevant to the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust (foundation construction, passage of vehicles along access tracks) and construction plant and traffic exhaust emissions. The predicted EZol for air quality is 200 m based on guidance⁷ for the type of emissions predicted for the Proposed Development.

⁴ CIEEM, (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland, Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal. CIEEM, Winchester.

⁵ Goodship, N.M. and Furness, R.W. (MacArthur Green) Disturbance Distances Review: An updated literature review of disturbance distances of selected bird species. NatureScot Research Report 1283. <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1283-disturbance-distances-review-updated-literature-review-disturbance#Black-throated+diver,+Gavia+arctica>

⁶ Mitchell, C. (2012). Mapping the distribution of feeding Pink-footed and Iceland Greylag Geese in Scotland. Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust / SNH report, Slimbridge. 108pp.

⁷ Holman et al (2020). A guide to the assessment of air quality impacts on designated nature conservation sites – version 1.1, Institute of Air Quality Management, London.

2. RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES AND BASELINE INFORMATION

2.1 European Sites

2.1.1 A search for European sites based on the search parameters defined in Section 1.4 identified six European sites which are listed below:

- Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA (6.2 km southeast);
- Buchan to Collieston SAC (7.7 km southeast);
- Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA (10.5 km southeast);
- Loch of Strathbeg SPA; (10.6 km north);
- Loch of Strathbeg Ramsar (10.6 km north);
- Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar (14.9 km south).

2.1.2 Details of the European sites are provided **Table 2-1** below. The location of the European sites relative to the Site is shown in **Annex A, Figure 9.7.1: Relevant European Sites and Site Location**.

Table 2-1 European Site Information

Site and Description	Qualifying Interests	Conservation Objectives	Condition Assessment
<p>Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA</p> <p>A 15 km stretch of cliffs, formed of granite, quartzite, and other rocks, runs south of Peterhead, broken only by the sandy beach of Cruden Bay. The varied coastal vegetation on the ledges and the cliff tops includes maritime heath, grassland, and brackish flushes.</p>	<p>Qualifies under Article 4.2 by regularly supporting over 20,000 individual seabirds. It regularly supports 95,000 seabirds including nationally important populations of the following species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • black-legged kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> (30,452 pairs, 6.2% of the Great Britain (GB) population); • common guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i> (8,640 pairs, 1.2% of GB population); • herring gull <i>Larus argentatus</i> (4,292 pairs, 2.7% of the GB population); • European shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i> (1,045 pairs, 2.7% of the GB population); and • northern fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> (1,765 pairs, 0.3% of the GB population). 	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained, and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitat and species that the following are maintained in the longer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of the habitat and population of the species as a viable component on site; • distribution of the habitat and species within the site; • structure, function, and supporting processes of habitats and species; • distribution of typical species of the habitat; and • no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat. 	<p>Fulmar– Unfavourable declining.</p> <p>Guillemot – Favourable maintained.</p> <p>Herring gull – Unfavourable no change</p> <p>Kittiwake – Unfavourable no change</p> <p>Shag – Unfavourable no change</p>
<p>Buchan Ness to Collieston SAC</p> <p>Vegetated cliff slopes supporting a wide range of coastal vegetation types.</p>	<p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:</p> <p>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts. Notable flora includes Scots lovage <i>Ligusticum scoticum</i> and roseroot <i>Sedum rosea</i>.</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained, and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and to ensure for the qualifying habitat and species that the following are maintained in the longer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of the habitat and population of the species as a viable component on site; • distribution of the habitat and species within the site; • structure, function, and supporting processes of habitats and species; • distribution of typical species of the habitat; and 	<p>Favourable declining</p>

Site and Description	Qualifying Interests	Conservation Objectives	Condition Assessment
<p>Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA</p> <p>Covers a complex area in the northeast of Scotland that contains the long, narrow estuary of the River Ythan, the Sands of Forvie on the east bank of the estuary; the eutrophic Meikle Loch and a marine component covering the area between Aberdeen and Cruden Bay to the north.</p>	<p>Qualifies under Article 4.1 by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the Annex 1 species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> (1989 to 1991, up to 1125 pairs, up to 7% of the GB population); common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> (1989 to 1993, up to 265 pairs, up to 2% of the GB population); and little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> (1989 to 1993, up to 41 pairs, up to 2% of the GB population). <p>The marine component, immediately offshore of the terrestrial area forms the foraging zone for both Sandwich terns and little terns.</p> <p>Further qualifies under Article 4.2 by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the migratory species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pink-footed goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> (1988/89 to 1992/93 winter peak mean of 17,213 individuals, 9% of the Eastern Greenland/Iceland/UK biogeographic population). <p>Also qualifies under Article 4.2 by regularly supporting more than 20,000 individual waterfowl.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat. <p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained, and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and to ensure for the qualifying habitat and species that the following are maintained in the longer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extent of the habitat and population of the species as a viable component on site; distribution of the habitat and species within the site; structure, function, and supporting processes of habitats and species; distribution of typical species of the habitat; and no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat. 	<p>Sandwich tern – Favourable maintained Common tern – Unfavourable no change Little tern – Favourable maintained Pink-footed goose – Favourable maintained</p>
<p>Loch of Strathbeg SPA</p> <p>Composed of a shallow freshwater loch with surrounding wetland, dune, and grassland communities. It provides wintering habitat for several important wetland bird species, particularly wildfowl.</p>	<p>Qualifies under Article 4.1 by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the Annex 1 species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> (1985 to 1990 an average of 280 pairs, 2.0% of the GB population); whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> (a 5-year winter peak mean between 1986/87 and 1990/91 of 245 individuals, 4% of the GB population); and 	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained, and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitat and species that the following are maintained in the longer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extent of the habitat and population of the species as a viable component on site; 	<p>Sandwich tern – Unfavourable no change Whooper swan – Favourable maintained Svalbard barnacle goose – Unfavourable declining Pink-footed goose – Favourable maintained</p>

Site and Description	Qualifying Interests	Conservation Objectives	Condition Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Svalbard barnacle goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i> (a 5-year winter peak mean between 2005/06 and 2009/10 of 520 individuals, 1.6% of the GB population). <p>Further qualifies under Article 4.2 by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the migratory species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pink-footed goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> (1986/87 to 1990/91, average winter peak count of 27,500 individuals, 25% of the Eastern Greenland/Iceland/UK biogeographic population); and greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i> (1986/87 to 1990/91, average winter peak count of 5,565 individuals, 6% of the Iceland/UK/Ireland biogeographic population). <p>Also qualifies under Article 4.2 by regularly supporting more than 20,000 individual waterfowl.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> distribution of the habitat and species within the site; structure, function, and supporting processes of habitats and species; distribution of typical species of the habitat; and no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat. 	<p>Greylag goose – Unfavourable no change</p>
<p>Loch of Strathbeg Ramsar site Composed of a shallow freshwater loch with surrounding wetland, dune, and grassland communities. It provides wintering habitat for several important wetland bird species, particularly wildfowl.</p>	<p>The Loch of Strathbeg Ramsar site also qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 2 by supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> (1985 to 1990, an average of 280 pairs, 2.0% of the GB population). <p>The Loch of Strathbeg Ramsar site further qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 5 by regularly supporting waterbirds in numbers of 20,000 individuals or more. In the five-year period 1986/87 to 1990/91 the average peak count was 32,600 individual waterbirds.</p> <p>The site also qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 4 by supporting the following waterbird species at a critical stage in their life cycles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teal <i>Anas crecca</i> (1,270 individuals, 1% of the GB population), and goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> (150 individuals, 1% of the GB population). 	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained, and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitat and species that the following are maintained in the longer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extent of the habitat and population of the species as a viable component on site; distribution of the habitat and species within the site; structure, function, and supporting processes of habitats and species; distribution of typical species of the habitat; and no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat. 	<p>N/A</p>

Site and Description	Qualifying Interests	Conservation Objectives	Condition Assessment
	<p>The Loch of Strathbeg Ramsar site qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 6 by regularly supporting 1% or more of the individuals in a population of waterbirds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pink-footed goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> (1986/87 to 1990/91, average winter peak count of 27,500 individuals, 25% of the Eastern Greenland/Iceland/UK biogeographic population); • greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i> (1986/87 to 1990/91, average winter peak count of 5,565 individuals, 6% of the Iceland/UK/Ireland biogeographic population); • whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> (a 5-year winter peak mean between 1986/87 and 1990/91 of 245 individuals, 1.5% of the Iceland/UK & Ireland biogeographic population), and • Svalbard barnacle goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i> (a 5-year winter peak mean between 2005/06 and 2009/10 of 520 individuals, 1.6% of the Svalbard/southwest Scotland biogeographic population). 		
<p>Ythan Estuary, and Meikle Loch Ramsar</p> <p>The Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar site in the north-east of Scotland contains the long, narrow estuary of the River Ythan and Meikle Loch.</p>	<p>The Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar site qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 2 by supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common tern (1989 to 1993, up to 265 pairs, up to 2% of the GB population), and • little tern (1989 to 1993, up to 41 pairs, up to 2% of the GB population). <p>The Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar site also qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 5 by regularly supporting waterbirds in numbers of 20,000 individuals or more. In the five-year period 1988/89 to 1992/93 a winter peak mean of 26,400 individual waterbirds was recorded, comprising 8,000 waders and 18,400 wildfowl.</p> <p>The site also qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 4 by supporting the following waterbird species at a critical stage in their life cycles:</p>	<p>To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitat and species thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained, and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying habitat and species that the following are maintained in the longer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of the habitat and population of the species as a viable component on site; • distribution of the habitat and species within the site; • structure, function, and supporting processes of habitats and species; • distribution of typical species of the habitat; and 	<p>N/A</p>

Site and Description	Qualifying Interests	Conservation Objectives	Condition Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eider (winter peak mean of 1,860 individuals, 2% of the GB population). <p>In the five-year period 1991/92 to 1995/96, a winter peak mean of 51,265 individual waterbirds was recorded with the assemblage additionally including nationally important populations of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> redshank (1,149 individuals, 1% of the GB population), and lapwing. Greater than 2,000 individuals of lapwing (2,542 individuals, 0.2% of the GB population). <p>Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar site further qualifies under Ramsar Criterion 6 by regularly supporting 1% or more of the individuals in a population of waterbirds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sandwich tern (1989 to 1991, up to 1,125 pairs, up to 2% of the Western Europe biogeographic population), and pink-footed goose (1988/89 to 1992/93 winter peak mean of 17,213 individuals, 9% of the Eastern Greenland/Iceland/UK biogeographic population). <p>Pink-footed goose is also a component of the waterbird assemblage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat. 	

2.2 Relevant Field Surveys and Desk Study Information

- 2.2.1 Extensive data is available for goose species forming qualifying interests for the relevant European sites as these species have been well studied and due to surveys for other SSEN Transmission network projects that are proposed to connect to the Netherton Hub. The Site is comprised of grazing pasture and arable farmland which is potentially suitable foraging habitat for these species. Other bird species forming qualifying interests of the European sites are less well studied and less meaningful data is available relevant to the Proposed Developments EZoI. However, a robust screening of those species has been made in **Section 3** based on United Kingdom (UK) wide studies of those species' ecology and using professional judgement.
- 2.2.2 Goose field use surveys commenced in 2023 for three SSEN Transmission network projects:
- Proposed underground cable (UGC) routes: Spittal to Peterhead HVDC UGC and Eastern Green Link 3 HVDC UGC. Surveys began in October 2023.
 - Proposed Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL). Surveys began in September 2023.
- 2.2.3 The combined survey area⁸ for the three projects has complete overlap with a relevant EZoI of 1 km for disturbance and displacement with the Proposed Development.
- 2.2.4 Survey data is available for September, October, November, December 2023, and January 2024. Three flocks of foraging geese were recorded within the maximum predicted EZoI for disturbance and displacement from the Proposed Development (1 km) during November and December 2023:
- 38 Pink-footed geese foraging in a field approximately 430 m south of the Site boundary in November 2023.
 - Greylag geese present at a small pond just south of Longside in November and December 2023, 46 and 320 birds respectively. Approximately 900 m northwest of the Site boundary.
- 2.2.5 The main source of desk study data for assessing the distribution of foraging geese relevant to the footprint of the Proposed Development is Mitchell (2012)⁹ and Littlewood and Sideris (2016)¹⁰. The latter study provides detailed information on the distribution of foraging geese from Loch of Strathbeg SPA/Ramsar. A summary of indicative goose foraging distribution for the relevant European sites based on these studies is provided below.

Loch of Strathbeg SPA/Ramsar

- 2.2.6 Mitchell notes that the European site no longer supports internationally important numbers of Icelandic greylag geese with numbers falling from several thousand birds in the 1970's and 1980's to a few hundred birds in the early 1990's. The distribution map for foraging flocks within 20 km of the European site (**Plate 1**) shows that birds more typically foraged >3 km to the northwest and north of the Site. For Pink-footed-geese, the European site remains one of the main roost sites in the UK and has supported over 60,000 geese. The distribution map in Mitchell (**Plate 1**) for foraging pink-footed geese within 20 km of the European site shows there is some limited potential for foraging pink-footed geese from the European site to use the Site and surrounding area. However, far more dense clusters of foraging activity are indicated to the north of the Site. This is further supported by the Littlewood and Sideris study which notes favoured areas for foraging geese north and south of St Fergus Gas Terminal, >6 km from the Site boundary and therefore outwith the predicted maximum EZoI for disturbance of 1 km. Ongoing field use surveys for one of the related projects, Spittal to Peterhead HVDC UGC, also support this distribution for pink-footed goose. Eight out of nine observations of foraging pink-footed geese

⁸ Ongoing survey coverage for the three related SSEN Transmission network projects overlaps the Site and extends >1km north, south, east and west of the Site.

⁹ Mitchell, C. (2012). Mapping the distribution of feeding Pink-footed and Iceland Greylag Geese in Scotland. Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust / Scottish Natural Heritage Report, Slimbridge. 108pp.

¹⁰ Littlewood, N.A. & Sideris, K. 2016. A survey of the feeding distribution of geese around the Loch of Strathbeg. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 937. <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/Publication%202016%20-%20SNH%20Commissioned%20Report%20937%20-%20A%20survey%20of%20the%20feeding%20distribution%20of%20geese%20around%20the%20Loch%20of%20Strathbeg.pdf>.

during November 2023-January 2024 were beyond the predicted EZol from the Proposed Development, and all eight were located within the area of dense clusters of activity identified in the Littlewood and Sideris study. The observations from this area suggested a regular foraging flock of up to 2,300 birds.

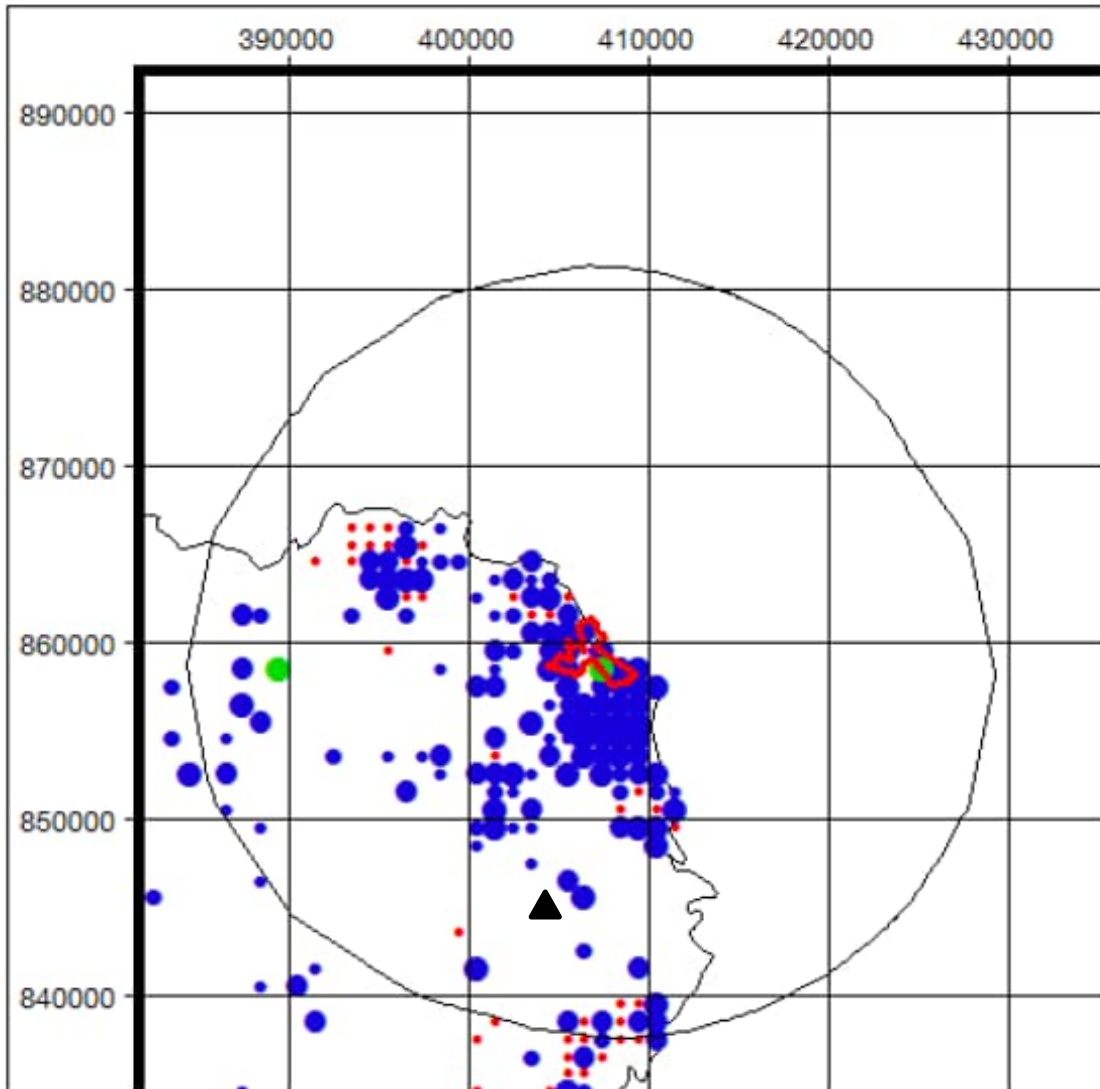


Plate 1: Feeding distribution within 20 km of Loch of Strathbeg SPA (1986/87 to 2011/12) of Pink-footed Geese. Black line: 20 km buffer. Red line: SPA boundary. Black triangle: approximate location of the Site. Green dots: principal roost sites holding more than 1.0% of the population (based on count data from 2010/11). Blue dots: sensitivity index represented by four graduated dots. Red dots: 1 km squares for which no quantitative data exists but geese were known to be present. Taken from Mitchell (2012)⁸.

Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA/Ramsar

2.2.7 The distribution map in Mitchell (**Plate 2**) below shows that there is some limited potential for foraging pink-footed geese from the European site to use the Site and surrounding area. However, far more dense clusters of foraging activity are indicated to the southwest of the Proposed Development, outwith a EZol for disturbance.

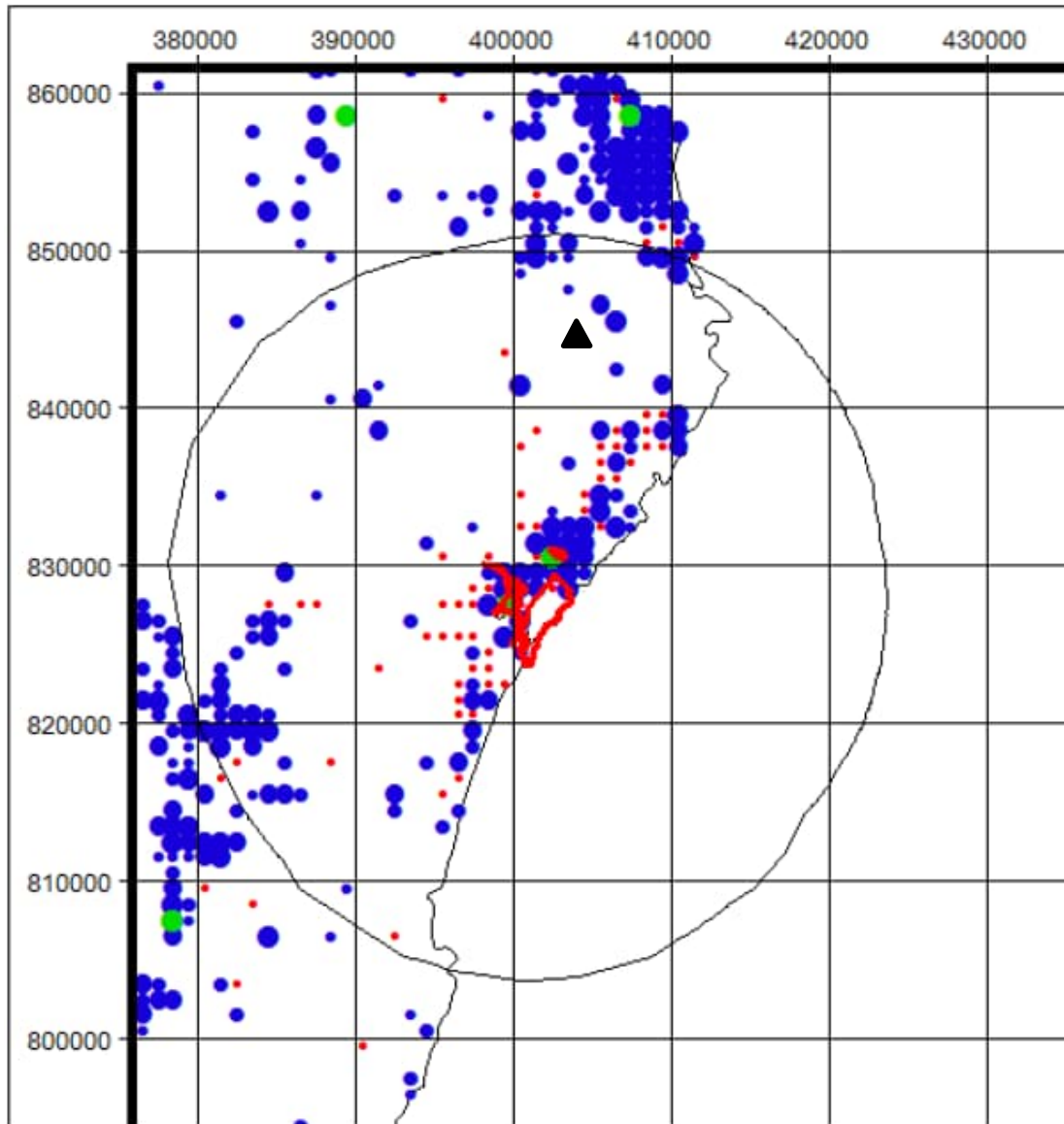


Plate 2: Feeding distribution within 20 km of Loch of Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA¹¹ (1986/87 to 2011/12) of Pink-footed Geese. Black line: 20 km buffer. Red line: SPA boundary. Black triangle: approximate location of the Site. Green dots: principal roost sites holding more than 1.0% of the population (based on count data from 2010/11). Blue dots: sensitivity index represented by four graduated dots. Red dots: 1 km squares for which no quantitative data exists but geese were known to be present. Taken from Mitchell (2012)⁸.

2.2.8 The mapping used to show goose foraging distribution in Mitchell suggests occasional use of the Site. The granularity of the mapping is such that use of the Site is indicative and not conclusive. However, densities of foraging shown are considerably lower in the broad area of the Proposed Development compared to beyond a EZol of the Proposed Development for both the Loch of Strathbeg SPA/Ramsar site and Ythan Estuary, Sands

¹¹ The extent of the SPA has increased since the publication of this map. However, the areas shown here (Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch) remain the key areas for the qualifying interest under discussion: Pink-footed Goose. Additional areas within the updated European site boundary are coastal/marine habitat, suboptimal habitat for pink-footed goose.

of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA. Further to this, ongoing goose field use surveys for related projects have found low activity from foraging geese within a EZoI, just three observations across a five-month period, the nearest approximately 430 m from the Site. Specifically for goose foraging distribution in relation to Loch of Strathbeg SPA/Ramsar, the Littlewood and Sideris study found that foraging geese concentrated in areas >6 km from the Proposed Development.

- 2.2.9 Considering the above, the footprint of the Proposed Development and the predicted maximum EZoI for disturbance/displacement of 1 km are considered highly unlikely to form FLL which is important to populations of foraging geese from the relevant European sites. There is occasional use of the EZoI by geese but not frequently enough to classify as FLL.
- 2.2.10 UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) surveys and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys were undertaken to inform the EIA for the Proposed Development. Generally, the Site and surrounding area comprised modified grassland and cropland, with built features/developed land associated with Nethererton Farm and Inverveddie Farm. No Annex 1 habitat types, important peat-forming habitats, or irreplaceable habitats were identified. No habitat types within a EZoI of the Proposed Development classify as FLL with respect to qualifying habitats of the Buchan Ness to Collieston SAC i.e., vegetated cliff slopes supporting a wide range of coastal vegetation types.

3. HRA SCREENING

3.1.1 The potential impacts from the Proposed Development and their potential effect on the European sites are detailed in **Table 3-1 to 3-4** below. Loch of Strathbeg SPA/Ramsar site and Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA/Ramsar site are assessed together given the overlap in qualifying species and footprint of these designations. There is no potential for direct land take of the European sites as the Site does not overlap with them.

Table 3-1 Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA Screening Assessment

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
Disturbance/displacement of qualifying species from the footprint of the Proposed Development and adjacent areas forming FLL – visual and acoustic disturbance from the movement of plant and equipment and operation of plant.	<p>Qualifying interest: black-legged kittiwake, common guillemot, European shag and Northern fulmar.</p> <p>These qualifying species of the European site are specialist marine species nesting on cliffs and foraging at sea. Disturbance to cliff nesting seabirds would not occur due to the distance of approximately 6.2 km from the Site to the European site. Potential displacement from FLL would not occur for these species due to their specialist marine ecology, the Site and a relevant EZoI is wholly unsuitable for these species.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
	<p>Qualifying interest: herring gull.</p> <p>This species could potentially forage on arable farmland within the Site or a relevant EZoI. However, works to facilitate the Proposed Development are relatively localised in comparison to the availability of farmland in the wider surrounding area which is very extensive. Further to this, gulls are relatively tolerant of human activities, e.g. they will follow ploughing operations and scavenge discarded food items in towns and cities.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
Reduction in water and air quality – impacts on habitats through the release of sediment and hydrocarbons during work activities.	<p>All qualifying interests</p> <p>Small, unnamed watercourses and drainage channels within the Site form part of the River Ugie Catchment. The River Ugie is approximately 750 m north of the Site, the River Ugie flows in an easterly direction before discharging into the Ugie Estuary coastal water body at Peterhead. Potential pollution events entering the River Catchment from the Site would have to travel approximately 12 km before point of discharge into the sea. Further to this, at the point of discharge into the sea these pollutants would have to travel approximately 6 km further to reach coastal areas within the boundary of the European site. Considering the types of pollution events that could occur because of works to facilitate the Proposed Development e.g., vehicle fuel spillages, sediment release, it is anticipated that any such events would be dissipated over these significant distances. The assessment of pollution events is a worst-case scenario as standard pollution prevention measures cannot be considered at Stage 1 HRA.</p> <p>No air quality impacts would occur considering the distance of approximately 6.2 km from the Site to the European site, the predicted EZoI for air quality is 200 m⁷. The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust (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 in nature.</p>

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
	<p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>

Table 3-2 Buchan Ness to Collieston SAC Screening Assessment

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
Disturbance/displacement of qualifying species from the Proposed Developments EZoI – visual and acoustic disturbance from the movement of plant and equipment and operation of plant.	<p>All qualifying interests</p> <p>The European sites qualifying interests relate to habitats rather than mobile species that might use FLL within or near the Site and therefore be subject to disturbance and displacement.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
Reduction in water and air quality – impacts on habitats through the release of sediment and hydrocarbons during work activities.	<p>All qualifying interests</p> <p>Small, unnamed watercourses and drainage channels within the Site form part of the River Ugie Catchment. The River Ugie is approximately 750 m north of the Site, the River Ugie flows in an easterly direction before discharging into the Ugie Estuary coastal water body at Peterhead. Potential pollution events entering the River Catchment from the Site would have to travel approximately 12 km before point of discharge into the sea. Further to this, at the point of discharge into the sea these pollutants would have to travel approximately 6 km further to reach coastal areas within the boundary of the European site. Considering the types of pollution events that could occur because of works to facilitate the Proposed Development e.g., vehicle fuel spillages, sediment release, it is anticipated that any such events would be dissipated over these significant distances.</p> <p>No air quality impacts would occur considering the distance of approximately 7.6 km from the Site to the European site, the predicted EZoI for air quality is 200 m based on guidance⁷. The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust (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 in nature.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>

Table 3-3 Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA/ Ythan Estuary, and Meikle Loch Ramsar

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
Disturbance/displacement of qualifying species from the footprint of the Proposed Development and adjacent areas forming FLL – visual and acoustic disturbance from the movement of plant and equipment and operation of plant.	<p>Qualifying interest: pink-footed goose</p> <p>The Site occupies a footprint dominated by arable farmland which is potentially suitable for this qualifying species and is within the foraging range of the qualifying population of the European site. Historical data discussed in Section 2.2 also indicates use of the Proposed Works footprint and immediate surrounding area by geese. Based on guidance, the potential maximum EZoI from the Site for disturbance and displacement to geese (based on data quoted for pink-footed goose) could be in the range of 500 m to 1 km. Even allowing for the maximum predicted disturbance range, suitable foraging habitat is very extensive beyond this range, extending >2 km in all directions from the Site boundary.</p> <p>The historic data discussed in Section 2.2 indicates that foraging areas several kilometres away from the Site have been favoured over those within the Site or immediately surrounding. This is supported by the results of ongoing surveys, data</p>

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
	<p>available from September 2023-January 2024 discussed in Section 2.2 indicates low numbers of foraging geese within a EZol of the Proposed Development. Based on this data, the Proposed Development and the predicted maximum EZol for disturbance/displacement of 1 km are considered highly unlikely to form FLL which is important to populations of foraging geese from the relevant European sites. There is occasional use of the EZol by geese but not frequently enough to classify as FLL.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p> <hr/> <p>Qualifying interests: sandwich tern, little tern, common tern, and eider</p> <p>These qualifying species of the European site are specialist marine/estuarine species, the habitat within and immediately surrounding the Site is wholly unsuitable.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p> <hr/> <p>Qualifying interests: redshank and lapwing</p> <p>These qualifying species are mainly associated with the estuarine environment in the non-breeding season and freshwater marshes in the breeding season. These species will also forage on farmland like that found within the Site and immediately surrounding. However, foraging on farmland for these species typically occurs relatively close to estuarine foraging and roost sites. In the case of lapwing, this species may range further with studies indicating foraging ranges of up to 12 km¹². Even allowing for this foraging range, the Site is approximately 14.9 km away from the European site making it unlikely that habitat within the Site or immediately surrounding would be FLL for qualifying populations of the European site.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
<p>Reduction in water and air quality – impacts on habitats through the release of sediment and hydrocarbons during work activities.</p>	<p>All qualifying interests</p> <p>Small, unnamed watercourses and drainage channels within the Site form part of the River Ugie Catchment. The River Ugie is located approximately 750 m north of the Site and flows in an easterly direction before discharging into the Ugie Estuary coastal water body at Peterhead. Potential pollution events entering the River Catchment from the Site would have to travel approximately 12 km before point of discharge into the sea. Further to this, at the point of discharge into the sea these pollutants would have to travel approximately 16 km further to reach coastal areas within the boundary of the European site. Considering the types of pollution events that could occur because of works to facilitate the Proposed Development e.g., vehicle fuel spillages, sediment release, it is anticipated that any such events would be dissipated over these significant distances.</p> <p>No air quality impacts would occur considering the distance of approximately 10.5 km from the Site to the European site, the predicted EZol for air quality is 200 m based on guidance². The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust (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 in nature.</p>

¹² Gillings, S., Fuller, R.J. (1999). BTO Research Report No. 224 Winter Ecology of Golden Plovers and Lapwings: A Review and Consideration of Extensive Survey Methods

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
	<p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>

Table 3-4 Loch of Strathbeg SPA and Ramsar

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
Disturbance/displacement of qualifying species from the footprint of the Proposed Development and adjacent areas forming FLL – visual and acoustic disturbance from the movement of plant and equipment and operation of plant.	<p>Qualifying interests: pink-footed goose, greylag goose, and barnacle goose.</p> <p>The Proposed Works occupy a footprint dominated by arable farmland which is potentially suitable foraging habitat for these qualifying species and is within the foraging range of the qualifying populations of the European site. Historical data discussed in Section 2.2 also indicates use of the Proposed Development footprint and immediate surrounding area by geese. Based on guidance, the potential maximum EZol from the Proposed Works for disturbance and displacement to geese (based on data quoted for pink-footed goose) could be in the range of 500 m to 1 km. Based on the same guidance, this EZol would be the same or lower for other qualifying species of the European site, whooper swan, barnacle goose and greylag goose. Even allowing for the maximum predicted disturbance range, suitable foraging habitat is very extensive beyond this range, extending >2 km in all directions from the Site boundary.</p> <p>The historic data discussed in Section 2.2 indicates that goose foraging areas several kilometres away from the Site have been favoured over those within the Site or immediately surrounding. This is supported by the results of ongoing surveys, data available from October-November 2023 discussed in Section 2.2 indicates low numbers of foraging geese within a EZol of the Proposed Development. Based on this data, the Proposed Development and the predicted maximum EZol for disturbance/displacement of 1 km are considered highly unlikely to form FLL which is important to populations of foraging geese from the relevant European sites. There is occasional use of the EZol by geese but not frequently enough to classify as FLL.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
	<p>Qualifying interest: whooper swan.</p> <p>The Site and surrounding area are dominated by arable farmland which is potentially suitable foraging habitat for this qualifying species. However, the Site is beyond the foraging range for the qualifying population of the European site which is predicted to be a maximum of 5 km <small>Error! Bookmark not defined.</small>.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
	<p>Qualifying interests: sandwich tern, teal and goldeneye</p> <p>These qualifying species are specialist freshwater or marine species and the habitats within and immediately surrounding the Site are wholly unsuitable for these species.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>
Reduction in water and air quality – impacts on habitats through the release of sediment and	<p>All qualifying interests</p> <p>Small, unnamed watercourses and drainage channels within the Site form part of the River Ugie Catchment. The River Ugie is located approximately 750 m north of the Site and flows in an easterly direction before discharging into the Ugie Estuary</p>

Potential Impact/Effect	Screening Assessment
<p>hydrocarbons during work activities.</p>	<p>coastal water body at Peterhead. Potential pollution events entering the River Catchment from the Site would have to travel approximately 12 km before point of discharge into the sea. Further to this, at the point of discharge into the sea these pollutants would have to travel approximately 16 km further to reach coastal areas within the boundary of the European site. Considering the types of pollution events that could occur because of works to facilitate the Proposed Development e.g., vehicle fuel spillages, sediment release, it is anticipated that any such events would be dissipated over these significant distances.</p> <p>No air quality impacts would occur considering the distance of approximately 10.5 km from the Site to the European site, the predicted EZoI for air quality is 200 m based on guidance. The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust (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 in nature.</p> <p>Taking account of all the above, no effect pathways resulting in LSE to qualifying interests of the European site are predicted.</p> <p>No Likely Significant Effects</p>

4. IN-COMBINATION ASSESSMENT

- 4.1.1 No LSE are predicted from the Proposed Development alone; therefore, an in-combination assessment is not required. Land within and surrounding the Proposed Development is not considered FLL for qualifying interests of the relevant European sites. There is no pathway for LSE from the Proposed Development alone or for the Proposed Development to act in-combination with other projects.
- 4.1.2 The related projects connecting to the Proposed Development will be subject to separate HRA screening.

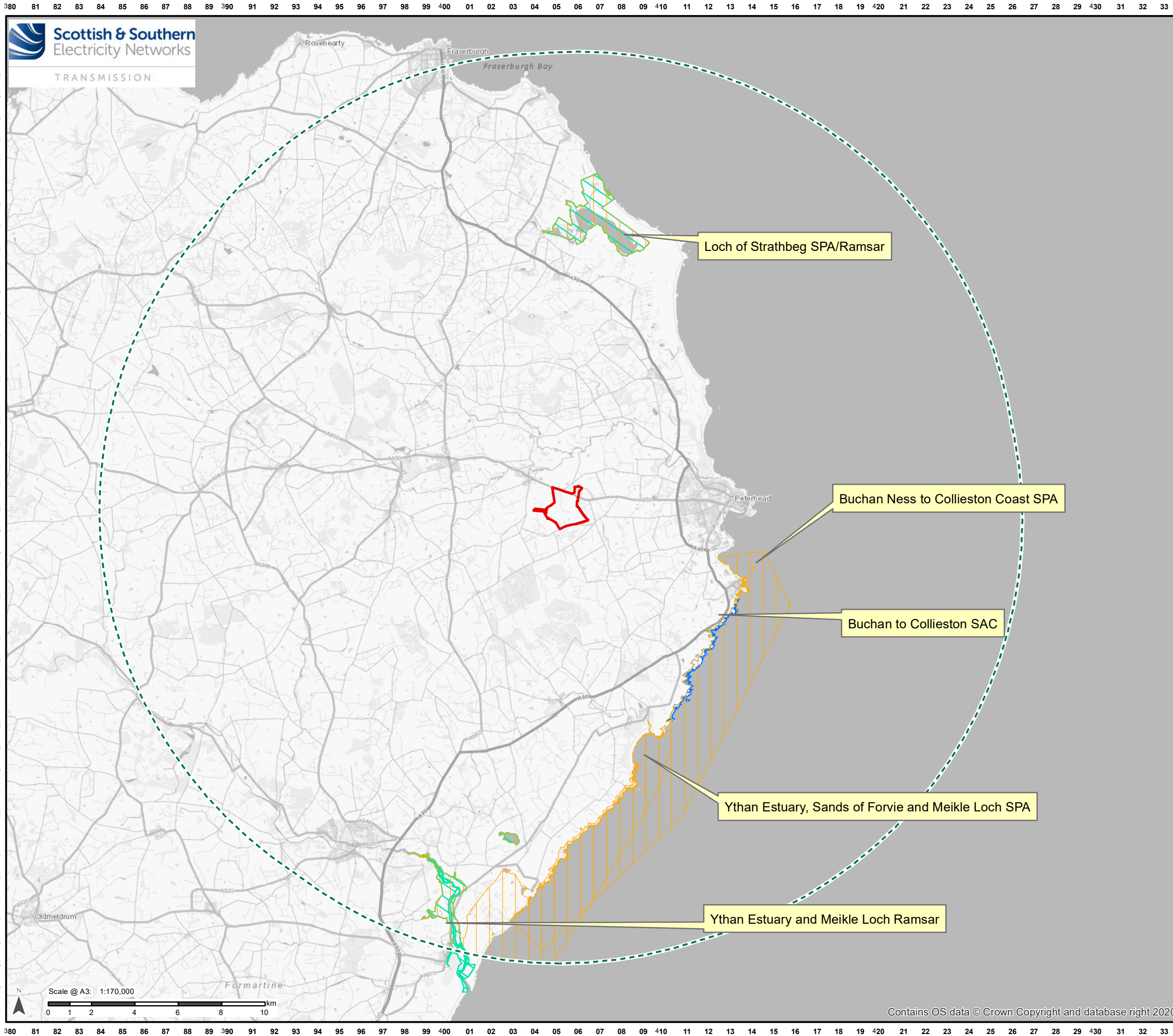
5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 This report provides the requisite information to enable the Competent Authority to undertake a HRA Screening in relation to the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the relevant European sites identified above. The assessment undertaken in this Report is advisory only.
- 5.1.2 No Likely Significant Effects (LSE) were identified from the Proposed Development alone and no in-combination assessment is necessary.

ANNEX A

Figure 9.7.1 – Relevant European Sites and Site Location

Figure 9.7.2 – Proposed Development



Legend

- Site Boundary
- 20 km Study Area: The maximum predicted foraging range for geese from relevant European sites.
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Ramsar

Loch of Strathbeg SPA/Ramsar

Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA

Buchan to Collieston SAC

Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA

Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar

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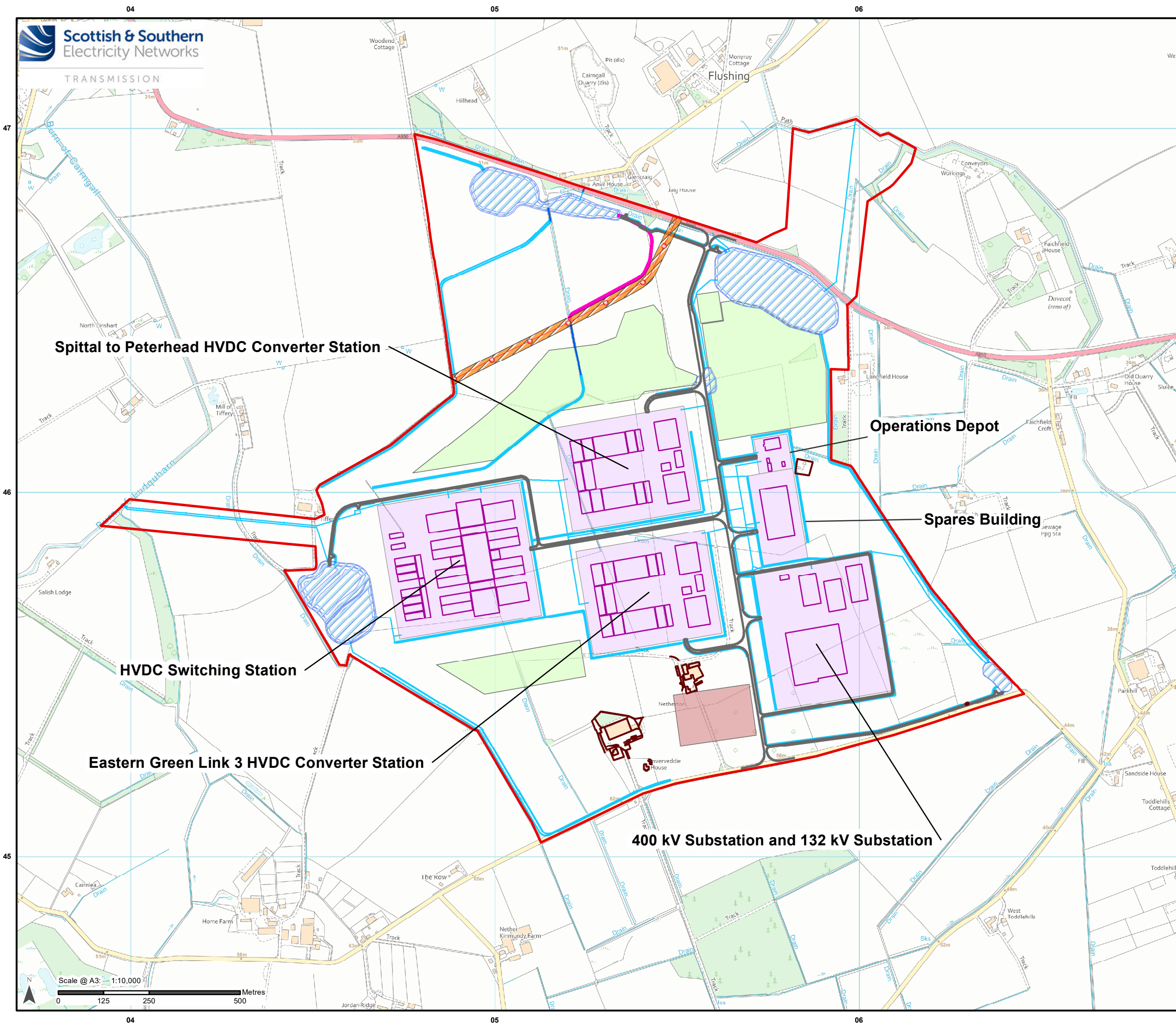
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Figure 9.7.1 - Relevant European Sites and Site Location

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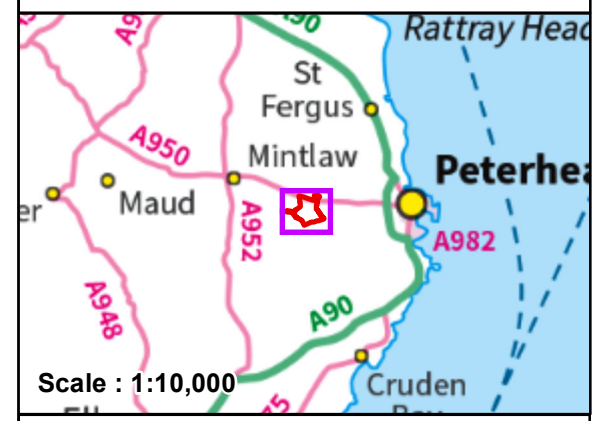
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Legend

- Site Boundary
- Existing Features**
- Existing Gas Pipeline
- Existing Gas Pipeline Corridor
- Existing Watercourse to be Retained
- Structure to be Demolished
- Proposed Permanent Infrastructure**
- Vehicle Access Roads
- Building Platform
- Buildings within Platform
- Detention Basins
- Watercourse Realignment
- Drainage Features
- Temporary Construction Areas**
- Laydown Areas
- Temporary Construction Compound

Note : All infrastructure is indicative and subject to detailed design.



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Title:
Figure 9.7.2 - Proposed Development

Drawn by: MAL Date: 06/09/2024

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