

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1-1
1.1	Overview	1-1
1.2	Background	1-1
1.3	Legislative and Statutory Context	1-2
1.4	The Need for EIA	1-2
1.5	EIA Report Structure	1-3
1.6	Notifications	1-4

Volume 3, Figures

Figure 1.1: Site Boundary

Figure 1.2: Proposed Development

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA 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 EIA Report the terms "Applicant" and "SSEN Transmission" are used interchangeably unless the context requires otherwise. The EIA Report has been prepared to accompany an application for consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)¹.
- 1.1.2 The Applicant has submitted an application for full planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) for consent to construct and operate a new 400 kV substation, to be known as 'Greens substation', in the vicinity of the existing New Deer substation near Cuminstown in Aberdeenshire, hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'. The new substation is required to provide a point of connection for new renewable energy generation projects from the north of Scotland (including offshore wind) into both existing and new transmission network via the Beaulieu to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead (BBNP) 400 kV overhead line (OHL) (referred to as the BBNP 400 kV OHL). The location of the land required to construct and operate the Proposed Development (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') is shown on **Volume 3, Figure 1.1 – Site Boundary** and an overview of the Proposed Development is shown on **Volume 3, Figure 1.2 – Proposed Development**.
- 1.1.3 The Proposed Development is part of SSEN Transmission's Pathway to 2030 projects. The Pathway to 2030, was published by National Grid in their role as the electricity system operator (ESO)² and sets the blueprint for the electricity transmission network infrastructure required to enable the forecasted growth in renewable electricity across Great Britain. These projects are part of a proposed major upgrade of the electricity transmission network across Great Britain to help deliver United Kingdom (UK) and Scottish Government climate change and energy security targets. They would connect UK based low carbon renewable electricity generation to areas of demand across the country, with the aim of building a cleaner, more secure and affordable energy system for homes and businesses across Great Britain.
- 1.1.4 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017³ (hereafter referred to as 'the EIA Regulations') to assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development. The findings of the EIA are presented in this EIA Report, including the measures which will be taken to prevent, reduce and, where possible, offset predicted likely significant adverse effects.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The Applicant owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a transmission licence under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (the 1989 Act)⁴. In terms of section 9(2) the 1989 Act, the Applicant has a statutory duty to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated, and economical system of electrical transmission, and a separate duty to facilitate competition between current and new generators of electricity. Where there is a requirement to extend, upgrade or reinforce its transmission network, the Applicant's aim is to achieve an environmentally aware, technically feasible and economically viable option which would cause the least disturbance to the environment and the people who use the area.

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

² The ESO was replaced by the National Energy System Operator in 2024.

³ Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/102/contents/made> [Accessed: June 2024].

⁴ Electricity Act 1989. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/contents> [Accessed: June 2024].

- 1.2.2 By 2030, both the UK and Scottish governments are targeting a big expansion in offshore wind generation of 50 gigawatt (GW) and 11 GW⁵ respectively. The Scottish Government has also set ambitious targets for an additional 12 GW of onshore wind by 2030⁵. Across Great Britain, including the north of Scotland, there needs to be a significant increase in the capacity of the onshore electricity transmission infrastructure to deliver these 2030 targets and a pathway to net zero.
- 1.2.3 As a result, SSEN Transmission has analysed the needs case and system planning requirements for the Proposed Development to ensure the approach for upgrading the transmission network ensures that the best sustainable long-term solutions are identified. A more detailed explanation of project need is set out in **Volume 2, Chapter 2 – Project Need and Strategy**.
- 1.2.4 As part of that process, SSEN Transmission has undertaken studies during the various stages of identifying the site options and the proposed design solution for the Proposed Development that involved consideration of environmental, technical and cost factors. This work was carried out prior to selecting a proposed site and finalising the design solution for the Proposed Development. Consultation has been undertaken during all stages of the site selection process to seek comments from stakeholders, including members of the public, on the options put forward prior to finalising the design of the Proposed Development as described in this EIA Report. Further detail on the site selection stages of the Proposed Development is contained within **Volume 2, Chapter 4 – Site Selection Process and Alternatives**.

1.3 Legislative and Statutory Context

- 1.3.1 The Applicant, as a transmission licence holder under the Electricity Act 1989⁴, has a statutory duty under paragraph 3 of Schedule 9 of the 1989 Act⁴ 'when formulating proposals to generate, transmit, distribute or supply electricity' to:
- "have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest"; and
 - "do what [it] reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects".
- 1.3.2 Consent for the Proposed Development is sought from the Council under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)¹.
- 1.3.3 The requirement to undertake an EIA for developments requiring consent under the Town and Country Planning Act 1997¹ is set out in the EIA Regulations. This is discussed further in **Section 1.4** of this Chapter.
- 1.3.4 Information is provided in this EIA Report to assist the competent authority's appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on European sites through the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process, in line with The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and transposing Scotland Regulations (The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019).

1.4 The Need for EIA

- 1.4.1 The EIA Regulations contain two schedules; Schedule 1 lists developments where EIA is mandatory. Schedule 2 lists developments where EIA may be required 'where proposed development is considered likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location'.
- 1.4.2 The Proposed Development is not covered under the developments listed within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. The Proposed Development is also not directly identified within Schedule 2 of the relevant EIA Regulations; however, the Applicant has decided to undertake an EIA for the Proposed Development given its

⁵ Scottish Government (2023) Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-energy-strategy-transition-plan/pages/5/> [Accessed June 2024]

size and nature, and its close association with other SSEN Transmission network projects, including the BBNP 400 kV OHL.

- 1.4.3 The Proposed Development is classified as a National Development under the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) Regulations 2009 (as amended)⁶ as the development is of a type that would fall within National Development 3 – Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)⁷ and the proposed site is greater than 2 hectares (ha).
- 1.4.4 A request for a Scoping Opinion was made to the Council under the EIA Regulations in June 2024. A Scoping Report was submitted to support the request, which sought input from statutory and non-statutory consultees regarding the information to be provided within this EIA Report.
- 1.4.5 The Scoping Opinion from the Council was issued on 30 September 2024 confirming the scope of the EIA. Further details are contained in **Volume 2, Chapter 6 – Scope and Consultation**, and associated appendices.

1.5 EIA Report Structure

- 1.5.1 This EIA Report contains the environmental information required by the EIA Regulations and comprises a number of volumes as detailed below:
- **Volume 1:** Non-Technical Summary (NTS);
 - **Volume 2:** Main Report;
 - **Volume 3:** Figures;
 - **Volume 4:** Appendices; and
 - **Volume 5:** Confidential Appendices.
- 1.5.2 **Volume 1** includes a standalone NTS which describes the Proposed Development and the likely significant effects predicted in a concise, non-technical manner.
- 1.5.3 **Volume 2** of the EIA Report provides an introduction to the Proposed Development and sets out the project need and the strategic system planning considerations for requiring the delivery of the project. The Volume also provides a description of the key components of the Proposed Development, including construction, operational and dismantling access requirements, and the main alternatives considered during the development of the Proposed Development. This volume also contains detail on the approach to the EIA Report and the consultations that have been undertaken to define the scope of the EIA. The volume also includes a summary of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development, with reference to the detailed assessments. This is followed by a series of technical topic-based reports that each include an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the particular receptors of relevance to each of the topic based assessments, a description of the proposed mitigation measures relevant to those assessments, and confirmation of the predicted residual effects. Cumulative effects are also discussed where relevant in each specialist topic.
- 1.5.4 **Volume 3** contains supporting figures referred to in **Volume 2** of the EIA Report. It also comprises photomontage visualisations of the Proposed Development from a series of viewpoints that have been agreed with Aberdeenshire Council and NatureScot in accordance with the requirements of the Scoping Opinion.
- 1.5.5 **Volume 4** comprises supporting appendices for **Volume 2** of the EIA Report. Appendices include further detailed reporting or information to support the EIA Report and technical assessments contained therein.
- 1.5.6 **Volume 5** comprises the confidential supporting appendices for **Volume 2** of the EIA Report.

⁶ Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) Regulations 2009. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2009/9780111001714/contents> [Accessed: February 2024].

⁷ The Scottish Government, (2023). National Planning Framework 4. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/> [Accessed: February 2024].

1.6 Notifications

- 1.6.1 In accordance with Regulation 21 of the EIA Regulations^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}, the application and this EIA Report will be published on the Council's application website, and advertised by the Council in the Edinburgh Gazette, the Banffshire Journal and Buchan Observer.
- 1.6.2 In accordance with Regulation 25 of the EIA Regulations^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}, hard copies of this EIA Report and associated documents and figures will be available for viewing at selected local public locations during normal opening hours, the locations of which are to be agreed with the Council.
- 1.6.3 Updates on the project and details of the application and Proposed Development, are available on SSEN Transmission's website: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/greens>