Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

Fanellan Hub 400 kV Substation and Converter Station Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 4 | Technical Appendices

Appendix 6.1 – Pre-Application Consultation Report

February 2025

CONTENTS

Appendices

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 This Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report is submitted by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission), as part of an application for full planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) ('TCPA 1997') for Fanellan 400 kV substation and HVDC converter station located at Fanellan, south-west of Beauly (hereafter referred to as the "Proposed Development").

1.1.2 The Proposed Development falls within the category of `National Development` under the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (the Hierarchy Regulations). Therefore, there is a statutory requirement under s35(c) of the TCPA 1997 to undertake public consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations (DMRs) 2013 (SSI 2013/15)

1.1.3 The PAC Report provides an overview of the pre-application consultation process for the project which has been undertaken prior to submission of the application and illustrates the findings arising from this process. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with The Highland Council, statutory and non-statutory consultees, the local community, landowners, and individual residents to both inform and invite feedback on the proposals and provide a follow up opportunity to present responses to earlier feedback provided.

1.1.4 The PAC report comprises of 6 sections:

Document Structure

1: Introduction – sets out the purpose of the Pre-Application Consultation Report

2: Project Background– outlines the background to the project and provides a description of the key elements and non-statutory consultation undertaken;

3: The Consultation Process – describes the submission of Proposal of Application Notice (PAN); the dates and venues for consultation events; the advertising process; and any additional consultation required (or otherwise) by the local planning authority;

4: Feedback and Key Issues – summarises responses, key comments and views raised at the public consultation events, including the number of written responses received and number of attendees at the events.

5: Project Responses to Consultations – describes how we took account of views raised during the pre-application consultation process, and how members of the public were given feedback on our consideration of the views raised.

6: Conclusion.

1.1.5 Appendices are attached to provide evidence of consultation carried out, under the terms of the above-mentioned Regulations.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 Project Background, the Proposed Development Need

2.1.1 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, owns, operates and develops the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands and has a statutory duty under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical electrical transmission system in its licence area.

2.2 Site Description

2.2.1 The proposed site is located on land at Fanellan, south-west of Beauly within The Highland Council (THC) local authority area. The Proposed Development is a strategic development which is required to be sited in the Beauly area, approximately 3.6 km to the south-west of Beauly. The closest proposed building to Beauly is approximately 5 km to the south-west. The Proposed Development Site (which includes both the permanent and temporary construction features) covers an area of approximately 223 hectares (ha).

2.3 The Proposed Development

2.3.1 The Proposed Development is a National Development that is supported by National Policy, the National Energy System Operator (NESO[i]), and the GB energy regulator Ofgem. It will contribute significantly towards the delivery of the UK and Scottish Governments' Net Zero targets and help reduce the UK`s dependence on imported oil and gas. It will provide connections for the Western Isles Link, the Beauly to Peterhead 400 kV and the Spittal to Beauly 400 kV overhead line projects. A 1.7 km section of the existing Beauly-Denny overhead line near Fanellan will be diverted around the Proposed Development providing a connection onto the existing Transmission network. These works are subject to separate consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 and have been included along with the Proposed Development in all consultation materials.

2.3.2 The Proposed Development comprises:

- The construction of a new outdoor AIS 400 kV substation, including control building, switchgear and busbar;
- A new HVDC converter station;
- An AC (alternating current) connection between the HVDC converter and the new 400 kV substation.
- Land required on a temporary basis during construction for laydown, equipment storage, site offices and welfare facilities;
- Land for drainage, landscaping, habitat enhancement and access roads.

2.3.3 The following proposed new transmission infrastructure will require to connect into the proposed new Fanellan substation and converter station:

- Spittal-Loch Buidhe-Beauly (Fanellan) 400 kV overhead line (OHL)
- Peterhead - New Deer - Blackhillock-Beauly (Fanellan) 400 kV OHL
- Western Isles HVDC underground cable

2.4 Requirement for Pre-application Consultation

2.4.1 Regulation 4 of the DMRs requires that Pre-application Consultation is carried out for all National and Major developments. National and Major development types are defined by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009 ('the Hierarchy Regulations').

2.4.2 National developments are developments or classes described as such in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). Development is classed as Major development if it meets the thresholds or criteria associated with different development types in the Schedule attached to the Hierarchy Regulations. This proposal is classified within NPF4 as a `National Development`.

2.5 Early Non-Statutory Consultation

2.5.1 In conjunction with the Spittal to Beauly and Beauly to Peterhead overhead line projects, the first public events for the Proposed Development were held in Kilmorack Village Hall on 2nd March 2023, 2.30pm-7pm. An online event was also held on 6th March. Information on Stages 1 and 2 of our site selection process for the Proposed Development were presented.

2.5.2 There were 214 who registered attendance at the public event and 23 attended the online event. 162 written responses were received with comments and feedback.

2.5.3 A Consultation Document was prepared which described the stages of the site selection process and the site options identified, a copy of which is provided in Appendix A1 together with a copy of the Report on Consultation (Appendix A2) which summarised the feedback from this non-statutory consultation. Both documents were also made available on the project website (New Fanellan 400kV substation and Converter Station - SSEN Transmission).

2.5.4 Further engagement was carried out through webinars, Q&A sessions, in-person and online meetings. Feedback and comments were welcomed via a range of methods, online or hard copy feedback forms, emails or letters, notes from meetings or any relevant telephone conversations.

2.5.5 The Beauly Community Liaison Group (CLG) comprises representatives from 5 community councils - Kilmorack, Kiltarlity, Kirkhill & Bunchrew, Beauly, Strathglass Community Councils, some Kilmorack residents and is open to other interested parties who have an Agenda item. It was established at the time of the Beauly to Denny overhead line project and has continued to operate and serves to discuss other developments in the area, listen to feedback and incorporate improvements to visual aspects and noise mitigation measures. Quarterly meetings were held to discuss the proposals up until May 2024 when the CLG disengaged.

2.5.6 A total of 18 non-statutory engagements, such as webinars, public events and meetings were held throughout the project development phase. These are outlined in the Table 1 below:

Table 1: Non-statutory engagements

Stakeholder	Type of engagement/Venue	Dates of Engagement	Summary
Elected Members	Webinar	February 2023	Present project proposals for proposed new substation and overhead line connections
Public and interested stakeholders	Public Consultation event at Kilmorack Hall	March 2023	Non-statutory public event to share information about site selection and present our preferred site and gathered feedback.
Public and interested stakeholders	On-line consultation event held jointly with	March 2023	The same consultation material used in the public events were used. There were 23 attendees.

Stakeholder	Type of engagement/Venue	Dates of Engagement	Summary
	Spittal - Beauly overhead line.		
Beauly Community Liaison Group – comprising Local Ward Councillor and the 5 Community Councils	In-person meetings with option to join via Teams held at Lovat Hotel, Beauly	Feb 2023 April 2023 June 2023 August 2023 November 2023 March 2024	Ongoing meetings to provide local project updates in the area including the proposed Fanellan project. Explain the project need, the requirements, the types of technology, site selection process., Answer and discuss community councillor questions.
Aird & Loch Ness Councillors, Ward 12 Meetings	2 Pre-consultation Meetings. In-person at Council HQ and via Teams.	April 2023 February 2024	Presented information to be shared at the public events, answer questions and gather feedback.
Kate Forbes MSP meeting with Case Worker Kate Forbes MSP Round table meeting with Community Councillors, Communities B4 Power Companies. Convened by Kate Forbes MSP	Via Teams In-person round table meeting at Phipps Hall, Beauly.	April 2023 August 2023	Present project proposals, answer questions and collect feedback. Discussions around project need, location of proposed site and listened to and addressed concerns.
Six Fanellan Residents Meetings which included the below: Two with individual residents living adjacent to proposed site. Two with Individual households located further from the proposed site. Two Group Sessions with those Residents living closest to proposed site and second meeting for	Via Teams and In-Person In-person Question and Answer sessions at SSEN Transmission Depot, former bottling plant, Fanellan.	March 2024 August 2024 April/May 2024	Discussed residents' concerns about impacts of proposed works on their properties, noise during the construction phase, construction traffic to site and workers accommodation. Answered questions relating to the proposed project and shared Meeting Summary notes following the meetings.

Stakeholder	Type of engagement/Venue	Dates of Engagement	Summary
those Residents living the next closest.			
Beauly Community Council	In-person meeting, Phipps Hall, Beauly	June 2024	Discussed ways of mitigating various impacts on Beauly such as tourism and coach parking areas, workers accommodation plans. Provided reassurances and discussed ways of minimising impacts on local services and harnessing the benefits for the local community and businesses from the proposed project.

2.6 Pre-application Consultation with Local Planning Authority

2.6.1 A Major Pre-Application was carried out with The Highland Council (THC) in Autumn 2023 (reference: 23/04003/PREMAJ) with a written response provided by the Council on 14th November 2023 including responses from statutory consultees: HES, Naturescot and SEPA. Feedback from this was provided in the Report on Consultation November 2023 (see Appendix A2). A further Design Workshop was undertaken with THC (and SEPA and Naturescot in attendance) on 13th March 2024. Feedback is included in Section 4 alongside public and stakeholder feedback.

3. THE PRE-APPLICATION (PAC) CONSULTATION PROCESS

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 This section describes the statutory consultation process and demonstrates how statutory PAC requirements have been met. The PAC process is specified in Section 35B of the TCPA 1997, and in Regulation 7 of the DMRs.

3.2 Proposal of Application Notice (PAN)

3.2.1 A PAN must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), containing the information prescribed in 35B(4) of the TCPA 1997 and Regulation 6 of the DMRs, including an account of what consultation the applicant intends to undertake and information as to when such consultation is to take place, with whom and what form it will take.

3.2.2 A PAN was submitted to The Highland Council on 21 February 2024 triggering the beginning of the statutory consultation period. The PAN provided the Council with an outline of the application details, dates of public events, publicity arrangements, and confirmation of the site location.

3.2.3 Copies of the PAN, covering letter and location plan provided with it are provided in Appendix B.

3.2.4 No additional information or consultation was requested from The Highland Council in response to the PAN submission. An acknowledgement letter was received on the 23rd April 2024. The PAN was reported to the South Planning Applications Committee on the 30th April 2024 and a link to the report was received via e-mail on the 1st May 2024.

3.2.5 In addition to the PAN and attachments being sent to The Highland Council below is a list of other parties these were sent to via e-mail on the 21st February 2024:

- Kiltarlity Community Council
- Kilmorack Community Council
- Beauly Community Council
- Kirkhill & Bunchrew Community Council
- Cllr Chris Ballance
- Cllr Helen Crawford
- Cllr David Fraser
- Cllr Emma Knox
- Ian Blackford MP
- Kate Forbes MSP
- Ariane Burgess MSP
- Tim Eagle MSP
- Rhoda Grant MSP
- Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
- Edward Mountain MSP
- Emma Roddick MSP
- Douglas Ross MSP

3.3 Newspaper Notices

3.3.1 Newspaper adverts must be published in respect of public events, the form of which is described in Regulation 7 of the DMRs. Notice of these public events must be published at least 7 days in advance in a newspaper circulating in the locality of the proposed development. The second (or final) public event must be held at least 14 days after the first public event.

3.3.2 In respect of the first PAC consultation event, newspaper notices were published in the Press and Journal Newspaper in the 14th March 2024 edition.

3.3.3 In respect of the final consultation event, a newspaper notice was published in the Press and Journal Newspaper in the 7th June 2024 edition.

3.3.4 Copies of the newspaper notices are provided in Appendix C Notices directed readers to the project website and Community Liaison Manager contact details for further information.

3.4 Advertising Public Events

3.4.1 In addition to the publication of the newspaper notices, the public events were advertised in the following ways:

- Public consultation posters providing general information on the proposals and advertising the planned public events were published in The Press and Journal, Highland Edition:
  - Public Event 1 - Site Selection alongside overhead line – 2nd March and 27th April 2023
  - PAC1 Public Event - 19th and 23rd March 2024
  - PAC2 Public Event - 4th and 10th June 2024
- Posters advertising the public consultation events were circulated to the Kilmorack, Kiltarlity, Kirkhill & Bunchrew, Beauly Community Councils for sharing with their communities and for upload onto their social media platforms.
- Maildrops were delivered to all properties within a 10-mile radius of the proposed development, encompassing 4786 properties - residential and business.
- Email notifications of the events were sent to Ward 12 Aird & Loch Ness elected Councillors and MSPs and the Beauly Community Liaison Group including the Community Councils and stakeholder sign-ups.
- Press Releases were Issued to relevant press and uploaded onto the SSEN Transmission website and social media channels, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Public event notification was uploaded onto the project website

3.5 First Pre-Application Consultation events

3.5.1 The first round of statutory pre-application (PAC) events was held over two days in Spring 2024 on the following dates and venues:

- Tuesday 26th March 2024, Kiltarlity Village Hall, 12.30-3.30pm, 6-8pm
- Thursday 28th March 2024, Phipps Hall, Beauly, 2-7pm

3.5.2 For these PAC events the proposed site`s name was formally changed from `New Beauly Area substation and converter station` to `Fanellan 400 kV substation and converter station` to reflect feedback received following the previous site selection public events when stakeholders felt that the name of the substation/converter station should be relevant to the area in which it is located.

3.5.3 Information about the proposed overhead line connections into the proposed Fanellan site was also shared to provide a holistic picture of the proposed infrastructure in the area.

3.5.4 The purpose of these first statutory events was to share Information about the design development of the proposed substation and converter station following the site selection events the previous year and to provide an opportunity for members of the public, local stakeholders and statutory consultees to view information about the proposals, ask questions and provide feedback in person. The information comprised:

- A range of consultation materials to explain the proposals, including consultation information booklets and information banners together with advertisements are shown in Appendix D

- Additional visual aids including 3D modelling were presented on a screen showing Images of the proposed development from different viewpoints, size A0 maps of the project proposals, large map banner showing the redline boundary and a large map banner showing the proposed connections coming Into the Fanellan site.
- The consultation booklets, shown in Appendix D were available for attendants to take away and available online, with contact details, key dates, and information on how to provide feedback and comments both online through the project webpage, by completing the hard copy feedback form and by emailing the Community Liaison Manager. Feedback forms, including the closing date for feedback was communicated through the consultation materials which were available on the project website a week prior to the events. A template for which is shown in pages 31-33 of the consultation booklet in Appendix D

3.5.5 A sign-in register was used to understand the number of attendees and provide them an opportunity to sign-up to project updates. A total of 300 attendees signed in over the two events, 159 signed-in at the event at Kiltarlity Village Hall and 141 signed in at Phipps Hall.

3.5.6 The feedback period was open for 6 weeks closing on Thursday 9th May 2024. A selection of photos taken at these first PAC 1 events are found in Appendix E.

Stakeholders were made aware that comments made during the consultation process are not formal representations to The Highland Council and when the Planning Application is submitted there is the opportunity to make formal representations to The Highland Council.

3.6 Second Pre-application Consultation events

3.6.1 The second round of statutory events were held over two days on the following dates and venues:

- Wednesday 19th June 2024, Phipps Hall, Beauly, 2-7pm
- Thursday 20th June 2024, Kiltarlity Village Hall, 2-7pm

3.6.2 The purpose of these events was to share feedback to members of the public and interested parties in respect of comments received about the proposed development from earlier consultation and show how these have been implemented into the design where possible. These events provided further opportunity to view project design information following implementation of some of this feedback. Submission of further feedback was encouraged.

3.6.3 A range of consultation materials to explain the proposals was produced, including the project information booklet and information banners shown in Appendix F. The information comprised:

- Additional visual aids including more refined 3D modelling were presented on a screen showing Images of the proposed development from different viewpoints, in different colours, with screening and Suds ponds, maps of the project proposals, large map banner showing the redline boundary with temporary requirements and a map showing the redline boundary with permanent requirements. A large map showing the proposed connections into the proposed Fanellan site was shown.

3.6.4 In line with PAC requirements, consultees at the final event were provided a summary of comments received from the previous consultations and engagements with responses. This was published in the booklet for the final event, and can be seen on pages 18-26 of the booklet shown in Appendix F.

3.6.5 A sign-in register was used to understand the number of attendees and provide them an opportunity to sign-up to project updates. A total of 146 attendees signed in over the two events, 77 attendees signed in at Phipps Hall and 69 signed in at Kiltarlity Village Hall.

3.6.6 The feedback period was communicated through the consultation materials and remained open for submitting comments and feedback for 6 weeks by emailing or writing to the Community Liaison Manager, the formal feedback period closed on 1 August 2024.

3.6.7 A selection of photos taken at the final public consultation event are shown in Appendix G.

3.7 Additional Steps Taken to Consultation

3.7.1 In addition to the in-person public events, a virtual consultation exhibition was accessible online, available from the project website using the same materials as the public events. Those visiting the consultation online room were made aware of the closing date for comments and feedback.

3.7.2 Consultation and engagements undertaken with a variety of non-statutory stakeholders, alongside the public consultation events is explained earlier in this document 2.5.5.

4. HOW HAS THE PROJECT RESPONDED TO FEEDBACK

4.1.1 This section documents how the project has responded to the themes raised by stakeholders throughout the consultation process. Each theme has been addressed in turn below. These responses to the feedback raised and what has changed through the design development are detailed in the Consultation Booklet and banners for the second PAC event.

4.2 Common Questions Themes Across our Pathway to 2030 project consultations

4.2.1 Across all our Pathway to 2030 project consultations and engagements, we received feedback covering several common themes. Although some of this feedback related to topics which fell outside of the scope of our consultations, we recognise that it is important to address the points that our stakeholders took the time to raise, which we have summarised in this section. In addition, a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) have been created that can be viewed here, stakeholders were signposted to this alongside some of the responses. **Pathway to 2030 FAQs - SSEN Transmission (ssen-transmission.co.uk)**

Project Need

The need for these projects has been independently assessed by both the GB Electricity System Operator, National Grid ESO (ESO); and the GB energy regulator, Ofgem. Some responses questioned whether these projects are needed at all. In many cases, those questioning the need have done so as the electricity these projects will connect and transport is not all needed in the north of Scotland. Under our licence, we have a legal obligation to provide connections to electricity generators looking to connect to our network and we do not determine the location of new electricity generation. This is led by generators themselves, often underpinned by Government targets and policies. These projects - which are part of a major upgrade of the electricity transmission network across Great Britain - are needed to unlock the north of Scotland's vast renewable electricity resources and transport that power to demand centres across the UK. The renewable electricity these projects will transport will play a key role in meeting UK and Scottish Government renewable energy and climate change targets. They will also help secure the country's future energy independence by reducing dependence on imported power from volatile wholesale energy markets. For more details on why these projects are needed and how this need has been assessed, we have published a short briefing paper.

Environmental Impacts

4.2.2 We have received feedback highlighting concerns about potential environmental impacts, particularly on local biodiversity.

4.2.3 As one of the greatest risks to our natural environment and biodiversity is climate change, these projects are part of the solution if we are to tackle the climate emergency and deliver net zero emissions in Scotland and across the United Kingdom. However, we do recognise that in delivering these critical projects, there will be unavoidable impacts and we would like to reassure stakeholders that we take our environmental responsibilities extremely seriously.

4.2.4 To deliver our projects in the most sensitive way possible we ensure environmental factors are considered at every stage in the development of each project, along with technical requirements and economic considerations. A key way we do this for the environment is to follow the mitigation hierarchy. Firstly, we seek to avoid sensitive areas wherever possible and where impacts are likely to occur, we seek to minimise these, provide mitigation and identify opportunities to restore.

4.2.5 In addition, all of our consent applications will be accompanied by detailed environmental assessments which are prepared by external specialists. These assessments will consider impacts on a wide range of environmental topics (many of which have been highlighted in the stakeholder responses to this consultation) and identify measures that may be required to mitigate any impacts.

4.2.6 We also acknowledge that minimising impacts is not enough on its own, and we have therefore committed to delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on all our projects; as well as compensatory planting for any trees felled during the construction phase, where possible with native species. Where our projects are unable to completely avoid irreplaceable habitats (for example peatland or ancient woodland), we have also introduced a commitment to restore more habitat than we affect.

Socio-Economic impact

4.2.7 Several community responses highlighted concerns about the impact on the local community, including visual and tourism impacts. We have also been asked what local benefits these projects will provide.

4.2.8 We acknowledge that there will inevitably be a visual impact on some local communities and are committed to do all that we can to minimise and mitigate this as part of the ongoing development of this project. The environmental assessment that will accompany our consent applications will also consider landscape and visual impacts.

4.2.9 From a tourism perspective, as part of our consent application, we intend to consider socio-economic and tourism impacts as part of the suite of documentation to be submitted to relevant consenting authorities. This will ensure that appropriate consideration is given to these issues in the consenting process.

4.2.10 These projects will also provide significant benefits to local and national economies. Independent socioeconomic analysis undertaken on our Pathway to 2030 projects has estimated that they will collectively support around 20,000 jobs across the UK, around 9,000 of which are expected in Scotland, adding billions of economic value to the economy.

4.2.11 We also expect these projects to deliver significant local benefits, including direct and indirect job opportunities, alongside supply chain opportunities for local businesses. We will set out more details of these opportunities in due course, including ‘Meet the Buyer’ events to introduce local businesses to the opportunities presented through our main supply chain partners.

4.2.12 We are also committed to introducing community benefit funding, recognising the important role host communities will play in delivering the infrastructure required to meet our national endeavours to build a cleaner, more secure and affordable energy system for homes and businesses across Scotland and Great Britain in the long-term.

Consultation process

4.2.13 We have received some feedback that our consultation process was not well promoted to affected communities or wider stakeholders and concerns around the timescale provided for feedback to be given.

4.2.14 As we set out in the ‘Consultation Process’ section of this Report on Consultation, we held a number of public consultation events, public meetings and bilateral and group engagements, using a range of methods to promote our consultations to our stakeholders.

4.2.15 Even at this early stage of development, where our consultation activities are voluntary, we fully recognise the importance of gathering stakeholder input to help inform our development plans. In response to stakeholder feedback, we introduced extensions to our consultation period to encourage anyone interested in these projects to provide their feedback. In addition, we would like to highlight that there will be further opportunity to comment on our proposals through the consenting process and would encourage all stakeholders to fully engage in that formal consultation exercise.

4.3 Specific Project Feedback

Feedback with responses from the March 2023 events

4.3.1 The summary and main themes of feedback with responses from the first public events and engagements about the Site Selection, held in March 2023, are covered in the Report on Consultation November 2023 found here **report-on-consultation---new-beauly-area-400kv-substation-and-hvdc-converter-station.pdf**.

Feedback with responses from the Pre-Application Consultation Events - March and June 2024 and Pre-application with The Highland Council

4.3.2 Table 2 below summarises the online and written feedback themes received from both PAC Events held in March and June 2024. It includes feedback with responses that were provided up until the formal closing date of 1st August 2024.

Theme	*Response*
Pre-Application Notice (PAN) Boundary Map Concerns from residents over the extent of the Red Line Boundary map were received, with some concerned the substation platform had increased in size	The PAN Boundary Map issued in February 2024 was an indicative extent of total temporary and permanent land requirements at that stage of project development. These initial plans tend to be larger than the final requirements to allow for the unknowns at the early project stage and to prevent the requirement to re-start the planning timeline in the event that an increase be required at a later date. Since our March events the project team has been refining the permanent and temporary land requirements in discussion with landowners. This will be further reviewed as the project progresses to planning submission in late Summer 2024.
Noise Concerns were received from local residents regarding locations of noise monitoring equipment, with requests for an independent company to carry out noise monitoring at their properties. **Construction and Operational Noise General** concerns regarding noise during construction and operation were received.	Our noise consultants are independent, third party, specialist noise and vibration consultants. Receptors chosen are representative of the closest properties surrounding the Proposed Development and have been agreed with The Highland Council. The properties selected for monitoring will have the highest anticipated noise impact from the Proposed Development, and therefore if the chosen properties meet noise criteria then any property at greater distances will also pass the criteria. The information collected from the noise monitoring survey at receptor locations will provide the baseline noise data for the project i.e. a record of what the noise level is pre the proposed development. Our contractors will be required to comply with current guidance on noise from construction sites, as set out in the relevant British Standard. They will produce a noise management plan as part of their Construction Environmental Management Plan, which has to be agreed to by The Highland Council through planning condition. We have clear operational noise limits to achieve which are being imposed by The Highland Council's Environmental Health Team, which requires the operational noise from the site to not exceed 30dB at any noise sensitive properties and the rating level of the operational noise from the site must not exceed the current background noise levels at noise sensitive properties.

Theme	*Response*
	Now the project design has been sufficiently progressed, the noise consultants will model the predicted noise levels (based on design information) within the context of the site setting. They will produce construction and operational noise impact assessment reports which will set out the baseline noise and predicted noise results from the model and assess the impacts from the project on the surrounding noise sensitive receptors. The report will also make recommendations for noise mitigation where necessary to ensure no significant impacts arise from the development. All this information will be available as part of the EIA which will be published with the planning application
Dust and Light Pollution Dust and lighting during and post construction were also raised as potential impact concerns.	Construction working will be restricted as far as practicable to be during daytime periods only. During winter months when there is reduced daylight, lighting will be required to aid construction activity and will be switched off when not in use. A Light Management Plan will be adopted by our contractor to minimise any impacts associated with this, it will be included in the Planning Application and will confirm that lighting will point down into the site. During operation, the proposed new substation will not be permanently illuminated and will operate as a dark site. There will be PIR controlled lighting which will only be required for fault repair during hours of darkness. Routine maintenance would be undertaken during daylight hours Lighting would be installed at the substation 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 the sensor is activated as security lighting for nighttime access. Any out of hours working will need to be agreed in advance with The Highland Council. Again, lighting layout will follow best practice and will point inwards and downwards and would be switched off outside of working hours. Some low-level security lighting may be required in the Contractors' compounds. Dust impacts during construction, (particularly the earthworks phase from excavations and transport) will be managed in line with the Construction Environmental Management Plan produced by our contractor which will need to be agreed through planning condition with The Highland Council. These will require weather and ground conditions to be monitored and dust suppression /wheel washes etc to be employed on work areas and transport routes.
Site Location and Substation Preference for GIS over AIS technology	The project found no significant footprint benefits with a GIS option due to additional equipment/busbars required to link into the circuits. A GIS arrangement would not be limited to only a building and the requirements are equal to if not worse than AIS arrangement. When undertaking the site selection process, consideration was given to the footprint requirements of the proposed development and therefore space availability for potential sites was a key factor. We also considered splitting the HVDC converter station and substation across different sites as a comparison with a single site option to see if there were benefits from an

Theme	*Response*
Feedback indicated a preference for the substation to be GIS technology and to be located adjacent to the convertor station at Balblair quarry site. A question raised was why can GIS be used at other 400kV substations.	environmental perspective with having two smaller and separate installations. Site options 4, 9 and 11 and 11a represented these smaller sites. However, the benefits of a single site in providing improved electrical efficiencies, restricting visual impact to a smaller area and avoiding the impacts of a cable corridor connecting the two sites and longer diversion of the Beauly Denny OHL across the River Beauly, outweighed any potential benefits. The Site Selection Consultation Document outlines the findings and reasons for why the additional sites did not perform better than Option 7. Our assessment as to why we chose not to site the converter station adjacent to the existing Beauly Substation at Balblair, will be included in our EIA. It has been noted as a comparison that Kintore is a GIS site, however the intervening four years has been a fast-moving period for the transmission industry and SSEN Transmission is no different. Specifically, we have revisited how GIS solutions are implemented, particularly those that need GIB. (GIB being the outdoor Gas Insulated Busbar sections, whilst the main Gas Insulated Switchgear is housed inside buildings. Our evaluation of the criteria for Fanellan has led us to conclude that AIS is the preferred technology for the substation.
Workforce accommodation Concerns that the workforce will live on the site were raised.	We are currently developing working groups to determine the most suitable accommodation strategy for our Pathway to 2030 projects. This includes working with internal and external partners including Local Authorities to develop an accommodation strategy and plan to provide suitable and appropriate solutions and lasting benefit where possible. There will not be workers accommodation on the Fanellan site.
Wildlife impacts Feedback included concerns the project could be endangering wildlife and local habitats, including local birdlife which includes red, amber and green species and endangered species.	Habitat and protected species surveys are being completed by third party, independent consultants using their ecological and ornithological specialists to collect data, determine the impact to ecology and ornithology from the proposed project and propose suitable mitigation measures required to protect wildlife and habitats. The EIA will include a chapter on this and will be submitted with the project planning application and will be publicly available through the planning application portal. Our separate s37 consent application for the Beauly-Denny OHL diversion will be submitted with a voluntary Environmental Appraisal which will also have a chapter on ecology and ornithology
Construction traffic and Access Tracks Potential impact on roads in the surrounding area for traffic accessing site. Feedback suggested construction traffic should be	We understand that with large construction projects, increased construction traffic and road condition will often cause concern. In developing the proposals for Fanellan, traffic and road use is a primary consideration for us and our contractors. An initial construction traffic routing assessment has been undertaken to establish the most appropriate routes for construction traffic travelling to and from the site. To support this, an Abnormal Loads Assessment report will

Theme	*Response*
coordinated with residents to avoid times of getting to and from work/school and provide safe paths for walkers/cyclists over the Black Bridge. Some feedback expressed lack of Information about vehicle movements and routes. Flooding and drainage concerns were raised concerning the field proposed for the location of the access track.	also be undertaken for larger equipment being delivered to the site, this includes assessments around the use of Black Bridge. A package of Public Road Improvements will also be delivered prior to construction to ensure the local roads are suitable for the construction traffic. Our Contractor will prepare and adopt a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to ensure that appropriate mitigation and management strategies are identified and implemented. This will include the identification of road widening, junction improvements or repairs that will be required. It will also ensure a defined route is agreed with the council. Condition surveys of the public highway will be carried out before works start on site, and again upon completion, with any defects repaired to ensure the public highway is left in no worse state once the works are complete. In addition, we recognise the importance of separating construction traffic from the single-track road which is located at the south of the site. Therefore, a substation specific access road has been proposed for construction traffic and will be constructed prior to the main substation construction works commencing.
Screening visual impact Stakeholders requested more information and visuals showing how the site will be screened. Viewpoints towards the site should be taken from the Ruttle lochan. The platform should be sunk as low as possible Feedback included colour preferences for the buildings and fencing as requested.	The landscape strategy for the development is currently being drafted and will be informed by the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) undertaken as part of the EIA. The current proposals deliver boundary screening in the form of landscape forms (in conjunction with sinking the platform) and will include planting that seeks to mitigate the visual impact of the development and soften its appearance within the local environment. We are grateful for your feedback on colour suggestions and confirm that the colour of buildings located within the development will be selected to best mitigate visual impact, taking into account The Highland Councils wishes. Viewpoints have been discussed and agreed with The Highland Council Landscape Officer. A 3D model of our current design will be available at the next Fanellan Substation and Convertor Station events in June 2024. We received a mix of responses which included requests for greens, browns and blacks or a mix to camouflage in a matt finish. Subdued greens and browns were noted as prominent requests, alongside requests for as much native planting as possible. At the stage of submitting our planning submission, we will make a suggested colour selection taking account of public feedback and feedback from The Highland Council during pre-application discussions. This will be our preferred option and submitted to The Highland Council (THC) but will be subject to final approval by THC as the local authority
Community Concerns around the impacts on Ruttle Woods such as: • The amount of required tree felling.	We are committed to preventing, and where not possible, minimising, tree loss as far as practicable. To allow for the permanent relocation and diversion of the Beauly-Denny line, where the angled towers are likely to be located, there is currently proposed tree felling but this would be minimal on the periphery of the wood. We are required to ensure specific clearances (both width and height) from

Theme	*Response*
• Impacts as a local amenity for walkers and swimmers for example. • The importance of protecting wildlife, birdlife and habitats • Ensuring biodiversity net gain	vegetation and overhead lines for safety so felling will likely be needed there unless the design changes for the overhead line. However, as we have still to undertake our forestry and woodland surveys and as the design is still in progress, we cannot confirm at this stage what the final felling requirements will be. There will also be a requirement to fell in Ruttle Wood in relation to the proposed Spittal-Beauly 400kV overhead line. We have included an indicative corridor for this in our 3D model which will be available at the next Fanellan substation and converter station events. We also acknowledge that minimising impacts is not enough on its own, and we have committed to delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on all our projects; as well as compensatory planting for any trees felled during the construction phase, where possible with native species. Where our projects are unable to completely avoid irreplaceable habitats (for example peatland or ancient woodland), we have also introduced a commitment to restore more habitat than we affect
Health and Quality of life Some respondents stated that the proposal may cause or is causing feelings of stress and anxiety. Concerns over perceived risks from electro magnetic fields emitted from energy infrastructure were also noted. Comments included the development will cause a profound impact on the community changing from a tranquil natural environment to an industrial one.	We are mindful of the uncertainty that our proposals can pose to communities who may be affected. Our process for project development seeks to identify options that provide an appropriate balance across a variety of considerations and interests. We aim to do this as swiftly as possible to minimise the duration of uncertainty for affected communities. However, we are also committed to providing sufficient time and opportunity for all stakeholders to feed into each stage of our project development process, so that views can be understood and wherever possible incorporated into design decisions. This is a balance which has to be carefully managed. We understand that everyone may be impacted in different ways and would be interested in residents' views regarding any additional activities that would help to address their specific concerns. Our responses to these topics can be found at: **ssen-transmission.co.uk/2030faqs** Our statement on EMFs can also be found at: **ssen-transmission.co.uk/2030faqs** This and other information will be available as handouts at the public events.
Concerns around property values and requests for compensation	We understand that there are concerns about the potential impact of our proposed developments on properties within the vicinity of our proposed overhead line alignments and substations sites. These proposals are still under development and are subject to further consultation and design refinement. During this period, we want to work closely with communities and are looking to optimise timescales for decisions on final route alignments and substation location and designs. As the proposed alignments for the overhead lines are determined, and designs of substations are refined, we will engage with property owners, as well as listen to any other concerns there may be. We will look to mitigate impacts on residential properties as far as possible and these impacts will be assessed as part of the Environmental Impact

Theme	*Response*
	Assessments that will accompany our applications for consent. Extensive surveys will be carried out at identified receptors, including selected residential properties so that we are able to model potential impacts on the wider area. Concerns in relation to impacts on property are being noted by our team however, as a regulated business, we are obliged to follow a statutory legal framework under the Electricity Act 1989 and Land Compensation Act 1961. If you are entitled to compensation under the legal framework we will assess any claim on a case-by-case basis under the direction of this legal framework. If this is the case, we will recommend that you engage a professional adviser and SSEN Transmission will generally meet reasonably incurred professional fees in these circumstances. However, for the avoidance of doubt, we should advise that we will not meet fees incurred in objecting to our proposed developments.
Tower Design A request to use low profile towers L12 to reduce visual impact was received.	The L12 design was developed in the 1970's based on environmental loading (wind and ice) typical for England and Wales. The SSE400 design was developed from the L12 design to match the higher environmental loads present in Scotland, the more mountainous terrain and improvements in health and safety since the 1970's. The SSE400 is thus essentially an L12 design that is suitable for Scotland and the modern era. A company decision has been made on using steel lattice towers over the T-pylons. The choice of structure to support large powerlines must consider a wide range of different factors. These include structural design, constructability, visual impact, community impact, environmental impact, cost, manufacturing, flexibility for routing, suitability for terrain, reliability, safety and maintainability. The lattice steel tower is recognised globally as finding a reasonable point of balance between these different, often conflicting needs. The T-Pylon has been designed and developed to suit the needs of National Grid and their operating area in England and Wales. Unfortunately, this means it not readily suitable for the use in the North of Scotland. Some of the reasons for this include: An SSE400 version of the low height L12 was not developed for several reasons: • Greater visual and environmental impact as the extended bottom crossarm results in substantially greater loads acting on the tower, which, when combined with the higher overall loading in Scotland, would have substantially increased the width of the tower body or required greatly reduced span lengths. The former would result in visually larger, if shorter, more solid structures which are more prominent on the landscape. The latter would increase the overall number of towers that were built on the landscape. Loads from weather, such as wind and ice are more severe in SSEN`s operating area and as a result the span between structures would likely have to be reduced from the current 350m, therefore more structures increasing visual impact and the land occupied; • The extended bottom crossarm increases the width of the powerline corridor resulting in a need for increased tree felling. Transport and Pole

Theme	*Response*
	sections - Steel lattice towers are delivered as bundles of angle steelwork and can be transported by fewer and smaller vehicles, reducing the impact of construction traffic, compared to T-pylons; Construction plant - Additionally, due to the large size of the T-Pylon sections and foundations, the size of the construction equipment (cranes and piling rigs) is larger than needed for construction of lattice steel towers. There would be a notable increase in the width and depth of construction access roads needed for the project resulting in an increase in landscape impact, increase in construction traffic and extension to the duration of the project; • On sloping ground, the extended bottom crossarm means the outer most conductors can come closer to the ground than bottom conductors on a conventional tower. To ensure the outermost conductors are a safe distance from the ground it can then be necessary to increase the overall tower height, diminishing the main benefit of the low height tower. As such, these towers whilst ideal for flat lowlands offer far less benefit in mountainous and other hilly regions.
Archaeology Lack of surveys and assessments on the ancient archaeology which may lie in the area	Effects on the historic environment will be considered through the EIA process by our independent heritage professionals and any potential impacts reduced through the iterative design process and appropriate mitigation. A methodology for monitoring (as part of a Written Scheme of Investigation) was agreed with the Highland Council for the Ground Investigation works carried out in 2023 and results of that investigation and monitoring by the independent Archaeological Clerk of Works on site have been recorded. Further surveys will be conducted to inform the EIA (and voluntary Environmental Appraisal for the overhead line diversion) and where necessary methodology for further monitoring of works via Written Scheme of Investigation will be planned and agreed with The Highland Council ahead of construction.
Project Need Questions were raised over the need for the proposed development.	The proposed project at Fanellan is a National Development that is supported by national policy, the Electricity System Operator, and the energy regulator. It would contribute significantly towards the delivery of the UK and Scottish Government's Net Zero targets and help reduce the UK's dependence on imported oil and gas. Further details on the need for SSEN Transmission's Pathway to 2030 projects is available at: **ssen-transmission.co.uk/2030-need**
Biodiversity Net Gain We were asked to clarify the intention of the 10% biodiversity net gain element of our proposals and if this 10% will be partly or all done at another site	We are committed to delivering a 10% gain for biodiversity enhancement for all new infrastructure projects. This is our approach towards demonstrating positive effects for biodiversity and addressing requirements under policy of the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4. A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report will be produced, detailing the approach to assessment and results (including baseline units, post development units, temporary impacts, and irreplaceable habitat impacts). The BNG Assessment report will set out any proposed compensation to achieve the target biodiversity units. A long-term habitat management plan will be produced to support the creation and/or enhancement of proposed

Theme	*Response*
	post-development habitats in order to meet the proposed target conditions and secure positive effects for biodiversity. An EIA Scoping report will be submitted to The Highland Council that will set out our proposed plans for BNG assessment and they will consult with statutory consultees including NatureScot before responding. We try to design soft landscaping which addresses compensation and enhancement (the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain) on-site where possible. This is not always possible depending on the particular types and areas of habitats required and requirements of the network operation. In situations where it is not possible to implement 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on site, we are working with other partners to offset by supporting schemes which will enhance or create habitats. We start by looking for opportunities local to the development site but may need to look further afield if appropriate opportunities are not available locally.
Fire safety A concern regarding safety in respect of fire was raised.	Safety is our number one priority and forms the core of how we operate our electricity network across the north of Scotland. There will be a comprehensive fire risk assessment conducted by our contractor Siemens Bam. The substation will be made up of established technologies with no lithium batteries on site. In the unlikely event equipment catches fire, Fire Damage Zones (FDZ) are calculated and incorporated into the overall footprint to minimize the risk of fire spread outside of the equipment zone and substation.
Community Benefit Suggestions were received with respect to possible community benefits. These include: • High speed broadband • Electricity discounts • Circular paths in the woods of varying lengths • Path improvements for walkers and cyclists in the local and wider area • Improved sports facilities • New School • Triple glazing, solar panels and insulation was suggested to be provided at those properties adjacent to the proposed site.	We would like to thank residents for suggesting potential community benefits. While some of the suggestions are outside of the scope of the project to deliver, it is our intention to work with the community to further explore opportunities in this area. When is appropriate to do so, our Community Benefit Fund team will work with Communities and Groups to examine the suggestions made and better understand local needs, with a view to identifying initiatives that could be developed during the design refinement and construction phases. SSEN Transmission is in the process of establishing a Community Benefit Fund which will enable us to work directly with local communities to support initiatives across northern Scotland. We want to give back to the communities hosting our transmission network and to help fund projects that can leave a lasting, positive legacy in those areas. In terms of broader community benefits, our Pathway to 2030 projects will boost the economy and support local jobs and businesses. Recent studies show our Pathway to 2030 programme could contribute over £6 billion to the UK's economy, support 20,000 jobs across the UK and benefit Scotland by around £2.5 billion, supporting 9000 Scottish jobs. We typically hold 'Meet the Buyer' events prior to the construction phase to connect our principal contractors with local businesses and this has proven to be an effective means of sharing the economic benefits of our projects with local communities. We are also actively seeking opportunities to accommodate our workers in a way that provides a range of local benefits.
Pre-application discussion with the Highland Council	These comments are being considered by the relevant technical disciplines in engineering and our third party, independent landscape architect

Theme	*Response*
and SEPA providing technical comments relating to landscape and visual assessments and design, requesting reasoning for not siting the HVDC converter at the quarry to be provided in the EIA and comments from SEPA on culverting of watercourses.	consultants and will be addressed in their assessments and designs included in the planning permission submission. Our assessment as to why we chose not to site the converter station adjacent to the existing Beauly Substation at Balblair, will be included in our EIA.
Consultation Process Some feedback indicated that consultees felt the inability to influence the project. - Lack of information about disruption to wildlife, including nest sites of Schedule 1 species - Nothing material has changed since earlier consultations	We are committed to meaningful and constructive engagement with local communities and residents throughout the development process to seek input and feedback into our proposals. As we consult and develop our projects, we aim to be open and transparent with communities, engaging as early as possible to seek input into our early plans through to refinement. We share our plans and images in a number of formats, and we are also open to feedback as to how we could improve the way we do things. We commit to early engagement with the communities where we may have an impact, which means that the plans we shared in March/April 2023 were at a very early stage of development and therefore subject to change as they evolved. We have continually engaged with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the development process listening to concerns, comments and suggestions, incorporating these where possible. It is our preference to engage early with the community rather than wait until the formal planning stage before sharing plans. We favour the use of a 3D animation rather than scale models. This tool provides residents with personalised vantage point views and are very popular with the residents who engage with them. We believe the animations provide a more realistic and useful representation of our proposals than a 3D model would, as it puts the development in its proper context. As mentioned and explained under the `Wildlife` theme - The EIA will include a chapter on this and will be submitted with the project planning application and will be publicly available through the planning application portal. Our separate s37 consent application for the Beauly-Denny OHL diversion will be submitted with a voluntary Environmental Appraisal which will also have a chapter on ecology and ornithology Please refer to the June 2024 consultation booklet containing information which was shared at the second PAC event. Page 27 which explains changes implemented as a result of feedback, here Is the link **Consultation Feedback Event booklet – June 2024** Our site selection Report on Consultation (RoC), published in December 2023, provided details on the themes of the feedback received during site selection consultation in 2023, our response regarding how this feedback was considered or addressed, and sets out the site taken forward to the next

Theme	*Response*
	stage of the development, which you may find beneficial in the interim alongside the July 2024 booklet linked above. **ROC Nov 2023**
Flooding and drainage concerns in Butlers field where the proposed access track is planned.	An appropriate site drainage plan for both the construction and operational phases, including Butlers field will be developed to mitigate the impact on the surrounding water environment. The following hydrological aspects are being investigated as part of the ongoing EIA: • Groundwater and surface water bodies. • Potential for flood risk—a flood risk assessment is being produced and will form part of the EIA Report. • Site drainage—a Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) is being produced and will form part of the EIA report. • Public and private water supplies. • Drinking water protection areas. • Groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems. • If any, designated sites that are hydrologically linked to the site.
Impacts on Beauly Concerns raised around possible impacts of Beauly becoming a 'workers hub', construction traffic passing through impacting traffic, local services and affecting tourism	The project team are fully aware of these concerns and are/will be liaising with the Community Council to discuss. Our focus is on mitigating impacts on services, facilities and tourism in the area and to minimise construction traffic passing through Beauly. The proposed project will provide local business and socio-economic opportunities, and benefits. A Meet the Buyer event will be planned ahead of construction providing local business opportunities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 This PAC Report documents non-statutory and statutory consultation events which began in March 2023 with the Site Selection public event. Formal PAC consultation ran for 20 weeks, starting 12th March 2024 (two weeks ahead of first PAC event) with first PAC events 26th and 28th March 2024 and second PAC events 19th and 20th June 2024 with feedback closing on 1st August 2024.

5.1.2 The PAN was submitted to The Highland Council on 21st February 2024. Following this, the first round of public consultation events was held at Kiltarlity Village Hall and Phipps Hall, Beauly on 26th and 28th March 2024 and the final round of consultation events were held at Phipps Hall, Beauly and Kiltarlity Village Hall on 19th and 20th June 2024. Additional online consultation was held via an online consultation room throughout these events.

5.1.3 The consultation was designed to facilitate engagement with the local community, community councils, statutory authorities and local leadership to invite feedback on the Proposed Development. The common themes from the feedback were:

- Site location
- Visual impact
- Impacts on quality of life
- Environmental impacts

5.1.4 The approach to public consultation has ensured that the relevant stakeholders have been given the opportunity to comment on the proposals. This has enabled locally important issues and concerns to be identified and subsequently considered in the preparation of the proposed Fanellan 400 kV substation and converter station planning application.

5.1.5 This PAC process has been informed by the statutory process laid out in the TCPA 1997 and the DMRs as referenced above.

[i] Formally National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO)