VOLUME 2: CHAPTER 6 – SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

Figures and Visualisations (Volume 3a and 3b of this EIA Report)

There are no figures or visualisations associated with this chapter.

Appendices (Volume 4 of this EIA Report)

There are no appendices or visualisations associated with this chapter.

6. SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Introduction

The EIA Regulations require that an EIAR should describe the likely significant effects of a proposed development on the environment. Scoping of potential likely significant effects having regard to the physical impacts of a proposed development provides a basis for limiting the assessment of environmental effects to issues of genuine potential significance. This enables a proportionate approach to EIA that is focused on likely significant effects to be considered and assessed. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders early in the process, with advice and input from key consultees being sought at the early stages of a project, greatly helps to inform decisions about the design and EIA work for a proposed development.

This Chapter describes the pre-application consultation, the scoping process and further consultation that was undertaken to determine the scope of the EIAR, and the consultations that were undertaken to inform the local community of the Proposed Development. This Chapter also includes a brief description of the environmental receptors of potential significance associated with the Proposed Development that are addressed in detail in the EIAR, and those that are scoped out.

6.2 Consultation with the Local Community

SSEN Transmission has sought to maintain an open dialogue with local communities in the vicinity of the site of the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. This has included carrying out consultation events during site selection stages, engaging with local elected members such as Ward Councillors and Community Councils and engaging with landowners, residents and businesses that may be affected by the Proposed Development.

The New Spittal Area 400 kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station Report on Consultation (November 2023)[1] provides detail of the consultation events and engagement that has been undertaken. This is summarised below.

During the site selection stage and following publication of a Consultation Booklet in February 2023, face to face public consultation events were held in Spittal and Halkirk, the nearest settlements to the Proposed Development. Further consultation events were held in March 2024 and June 2024 and feedback is documented in the Pre Application Report supporting the planning application for the Proposed Development.

SSEN Transmission also maintained dialogue with all community and ward councils in the vicinity of the Site has sought to keep members up to date on project progress, and any upcoming consultation events. In addition to regular update meetings with MPs and MSPs, SSEN Transmission has also hosted a number of meetings with local elected members and community forums. A community liaison manager has been appointment as the main point of contact for all enquiries.

6.3 Scoping

An EIA Scoping Report (**Volume 4 Appendix 1.1)** was issued to The Highland Council (THC) in December 2023. A Scoping Opinion was provided by THC on 06/02/2024 and is included in **Volume 4 Appendix 1.2**. The responses, contained within the Scoping Opinion, were considered in detail during the EIA process. The requested information can be found within the technical chapters of this EIAR (**Volume 2 Chapter 8** to **Chapter 14)**.

6.4 Further Consultee Engagement

Stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since the early stages of the project and has continued throughout the scoping and EIA process. During the site selection stages of the project, stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback and all responses received were summarised in the relevant Report on

[1] SSEN Transmission (2030) New Spittal Area 400kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station Report on Consultation. Available online: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/banniskirk/

Consultation document[2]. **Table 6.1** provides a summary of the key meetings and engagement that has been undertaken by the Applicant with consultees during development of the project.

Table 6.1: Summary of Further Consultee Engagement During the Design Process

Consultee	Date	Summary of Engagement
The Highland Council (THC)	May and August 2024	Meetings have been conducted with THC to take them through the site selection and the design evolution of the Proposed Development. Throughout this process the applicant has sought to take onboard these comments. Examples of changes made in response to feedback include removing a secondary access point, moving the platforms further from the A9 (as practically possible) and redesigning the landscape mounds that seek to screen the development.
NatureScot	May 2024	In attendance with THC where the design was shared by the applicant. Feedback was provided in relation to the design.
SEPA	May 2024	Whilst unable to attend the meeting with THC, SEPA were provided all the presentation material and provided opportunity feedback on the design.
Historic Scotland	May 2024	In attendance with THC where the design was shared by the applicant. Feedback was provided in relation to the design.

6.5 Issues Scoped out of Assessment

It is proposed that the following topics do not require to be the subject of detailed EIA as they are not likely to give rise to significant effects as agreed with consultees through the Scoping process (see **Volume 4 Appendix 1.1**), as to the proposed scope of the EIAR.

6.5.1 Air Quality

The Proposed Development has limited potential to result in significant effects on air quality and receptors. Any air quality impact will be localised and temporary during construction and result from dust generated during construction. Construction vehicles along public highways and access tracks within the Site (the former of which is tarmacked) will also generate dust emissions from vehicle movements and from construction plant exhaust emissions.

The occurrence and significance of dust generated by construction activities is extremely difficult to estimate and depends on meteorological and ground conditions at the time and location of earthwork. The nature of the construction activities, the type of soil at the site and the limited receptors in the surrounding area are such that significant effects are not likely.

The IEMA (2023) Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic advise that significant impacts to local air quality may occur if changes to LGVs are more than 100 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) within or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and more than 500 AADT elsewhere. For HGVs, the criteria are more than 25 AADT within or adjacent to an AQMA, and more that 100 AADT elsewhere. Based on the expected volume of construction traffic, none of the above criteria will be met or exceeded. In addition, the Proposed Development is not located within an AQMA and due to the temporary nature of the increase in vehicles using the proposed access route, any effects on local air quality will be short term and reversible.

Standard mitigation measures adopted by SSEN Transmission on all projects and implemented via a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will control impacts to a level that are not significant e.g. dust suppression measures, engines of stationary vehicles to be turned off, etc., with particular focus on ensuring the minimal possible potential for effects on the nearby properties along the A9 highway and north of the Site.

[2] SSEN Transmission (2030) New Spittal Area 400kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station Report on Consultation. Available online: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/banniskirk/

6.5.2 Climate Change

In the context of the EIA process, climate change is considered both in relation to the contribution of the Proposed Development to increasing or decreasing gaseous emissions with global warming potential (GWP), and in relation to climate change resilience and adaptation. Emissions associated with the Proposed Development will be limited to temporary and short-term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide as a result of dewatering and exposing peat[3] and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of GWP.

With regard to resilience and adaptation to climate change, consideration will be given to these factors during the design of the Proposed Development (e.g. design for increased flood risk and adverse weather). The environmental team will support the consideration of climate change design through the hydrology assessment.

No significant effects are considered likely and climate change is scoped out of further assessment.

6.5.3 Major Accidents and Disasters (MAAD)

Relevant types of accident / disaster, given the rural context of the Proposed Development, include:

- severe weather events, including high winds, high rainfall leading to flooding, or extreme cold leading to heavy snow and ice loading;
- wildfire;
- traffic related accidents; and
- mass movement associated with ground instability.

Severe weather resilience is a core component to the electricity network design and includes consideration of flooding resilience and vegetation management to reduce the risk of unplanned power cuts and wildfires. In the event of an unplanned power cut, effects are likely to be short term and essential services e.g. medical facilities, are likely to have some form of backup generation. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be developed post-submission to reduce the potential for traffic related accidents during construction. The Proposed Development is located in an area with no history of Natural Disasters or wildfires.

No significant effects are likely due to major accidents and disasters and it is proposed that this topic is scoped out of further assessment.

6.5.4 Electric *and Magnetic Fields (EMF) and Radio Frequency Interference (RFI)*

The UK Health Protection Agency (HPA) is the government body responsible for policy and guidance on Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)[4]. Exposure guidelines have been developed by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) to ensure protection of human health in different situations, occupational exposure and public exposure, which have been adopted by the HPA for application in the UK.

Whilst substation equipment is known to generate EMFs, these have been observed to drop away to background levels quickly with distance from source. In addition, EMF generated by substation infrastructure has been consistently recorded to be lower than that associated with incoming/outgoing overhead line or underground cables associated with the substation[5].

All EMF generating infrastructure will be set back from the Site boundary and accounting for this, the nearest properties to the Site (those adjacent to the A9 and those located north of the Site) are unlikely to be located within 150-200 m of any electrical infrastructure. It is therefore anticipated that EMF would be at, or close to, background levels at the Project site boundary. The Proposed Development will adhere to the relevant

[3] The GI conducted within the Core Study Area identified no deep peat (i.e., peat at depths greater than 1 m below ground level) at the location of trial pits and boreholes.

[4] Health Protection Agency. URL: http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/Radiation/UnderstandingRadiation/UnderstandingRadiationTopics/ElectromagneticFields/ElectricAndMagneticFields/ExposureGuidelinesForElectricAndMagneticFields/

[5] http://www.emfs.info/Sources+of+EMFs/Substations/National+Grid+substations/

regulations and guidance relating to EMF and no significant effects are likely. It is proposed that EMF is scoped out of further assessment in the EIA.

6.5.5 Forestry

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

- Effects on commercial viability;
- Compromise of financial returns; or
- No effects on forestry.

Within the Proposed Development Site boundary woodland accounts for 4.8 ha, a very small area of land cover. Some of the field margins are planted with coniferous trees. However, these are not grown as a commercial crop.

There are no forestry designations, Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) or commercially viable forestry within the site boundary. Therefore, due to the likely minimal impact on forestry it has been scoped out of further assessment in the EIA.

6.6 Other Issues

The EIA Regulations contain a number of factors to be considered within an EIAR; specifically, those factors listed under Regulations 4(3) and 4(4), and Schedule 4. **Table 6.2** describes how this EIAR has addressed these factors.

Table 6.2: Assessment of Factors Identified in Regulations 4(3), 4(4) and Schedule 4

Topic	Potential for Significant Effects
Population and Human Health	Potential effects relating to population and human health have potential to arise from EMF, Electromagnetic Interference (EMI), air quality, noise and / or vibration effects. Such effects are deemed to be not significant and are scoped out of detailed assessment, as discussed within this Chapter. Potential effects on Drinking Water supplies are considered in **Volume 2: Chapter 12 – Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils**.
Biodiversity (in particular species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)	The requirement to consider effects on biodiversity is addressed in **Volume 2: Chapter 9 – Ecology, Ornithology and Nature Conservation**.
Land and Soil (and natural resources availability)	The potential effects on geological receptors, peat and groundwater resources are considered in **Volume 2: Chapter 12 – Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils**.
Water (and natural resource availability)	The potential effects on the water environment are considered in **Volume 2: Chapter 12 – Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils**.
Air and Climate	This Chapter (**Volume 2 Chapter 6 - Scope and Consultation**) considers potential effects on air and climate under Part 6.6: Issues Scoped-out of Assessment.
Material Assets, Cultural Heritage	**Volume 2: Chapter 10 – Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**, includes an assessment of the potential for significant effects on material assets and cultural heritage including archaeological assets and historic landscapes.
Landscape	**Volume 2: Chapter 8 - Landscape and Visual Amenity** considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape.

Major Accidents and Disasters	This Chapter (**Volume 2: Chapter 6 - Scope and Consultation**) considers potential effects on major accidents and disasters under Part 6.6: Issues Scoped-out of Assessment.
Interaction Between Factors (cumulative effects)	The approach to cumulative effects is described within **Volume 2: Chapter 5 - EIA Process and Methodology** and is considered within each of the technical chapters (Volume 2) where appropriate.