VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Figures (Volume 2 of this EIA Report)

Figure V1-1.1: Overview of the Proposed Development

Appendices (Volume 4 of this EIA Report)

There are no appendices associated with this Chapter.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report ("EIA Report") has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited ("ASH") 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 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 section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act").

1.1.2 The Applicant seeks consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act to construct and operate a new double circuit 132 kV overhead line (OHL), to initially connect the consented Strathy South Wind Farm[1] to the electricity transmission network at Connagill 275/132 kV substation. To allow for futureproofing, it is proposed that a section of the new double circuit OHL would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required.

1.1.3 The Applicant is also seeking deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) for certain elements of the project, or ancillary development required to facilitate its construction and operation. These ancillary works would include the installation of a cable sealing end (CSE) compound, temporary and permanent access tracks, tree and vegetation clearance, temporary working measures / areas, and dismantling and removal of redundant parts of the existing 132 kV OHL infrastructure that the new double circuit OHL would replace.

1.1.4 Certain elements of the project would fall under the Applicant's permitted development rights[2]. This includes two short sections of underground cables (UGC). These elements are considered within this EIA Report for completeness.

1.1.5 The electricity transmission project is referred to as the "Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection" (and hereafter also referred to interchangeably as "the Proposed Development"). An overview of the Proposed Development is shown in **Volume 2: Figure V1-1.1**. The Proposed Development comprises a Proposed Alignment, and as described in Section 1.5 of this Chapter, an Alternative Alignment. Both the Proposed Alignment and the Alternative Alignment are shown on **Volume 2: Figure V1-1.1**.

1.1.6 The Proposed Alignment would consist of approximately 10.5 km of 132 kV double circuit OHL supported by steel lattice towers from Strathy North 'T' (near Dallangwell) to a new CSE compound, prior to connecting into Connagill 275/132 kV substation via two short sections of single circuit 132 kV UGC. To allow for futureproofing, it is proposed that a section of the Proposed Alignment would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required.

1.1.7 The route of the Proposed Alignment passes through the footprint of the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub, in accordance with the proposals currently submitted[3]. The minimum distance required between the proposed wind turbines and an OHL capable of operating at 275 kV could not be maintained along the route of the Proposed Alignment and, therefore, should Melvich Wind Energy Hub be granted consent, an alternative OHL alignment would need to be considered. This alternative alignment is referred to in this EIA Report as the 'Alternative Alignment' and more detail is provided in Section 1.5 below.

[1] Received consent from the Scottish Government in November 2021 (Reference ECU00002133).
[2] Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992
[3] Melvich Wind Energy Hub (2023) (Reference ECU00004514). Available at: https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00004514

1.1.8 Other associated works are required to complete the connection of the Proposed Development. These comprise the construction of a 132 kV single circuit UGC connecting the consented Strathy South Wind Farm on-site substation ("Strathy South substation") to a CSE compound in the vicinity of the Strathy Wood Wind Farm on-site substation ("Strathy Wood substation"). This connection is referred to in this EIA Report as "the Strathy South Wind Farm 'Southern Section' Grid Connection". From the CSE compound at Strathy Wood substation, both Strathy Wood and Strathy South wind farms would share a double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel lattice tower to Strathy North 'T' (near Dallangwell) (referred to in this EIA Report as "the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection"), where it would join the Proposed Development for onward transmission to Connagill 275/132 kV substation. These associated works do not form part of the Proposed Development and are subject to separate applications for consent as part of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections (see Section 1.4 for further details).

1.1.9 Once the Proposed Development is constructed and commissioned, redundant parts of the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL, which currently transports electricity generated by the operational Strathy North Wind Farm and is proposed to temporarily transport electricity generated by the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm[4] (see Section 1.4), would be dismantled and removed. Thereafter, the Proposed Development would act as 'shared infrastructure' for the Strathy Wood and Strathy North wind farms.

1.1.10 Electricity transmission infrastructure (such as the Proposed Development) is recognised in Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) as a National Development[5] under 'ND3 Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure'. The Proposed Development forms a vital element in the delivery of network and grid infrastructure required to meet both the UK and Scottish Government's legally binding targets for net zero emissions and renewable energy electricity generation objectives.

1.1.11 An Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") has been undertaken for the Proposed Development in accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 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 would be taken to prevent, reduce and, where possible, offset predicted likely significant adverse effects.

1.2 Project Need

1.2.1 The Applicant owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a transmission licence under the 1989 Act. In terms of section 9(2) of 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 in the supply and generation of electricity'.

1.2.2 The consented Strathy South Wind Farm is located approximately 12 km to the south of the village of Strathy at its closest point (see **Volume 2: Figure V1-1.1**). It will consist of up to 35 turbines with a maximum height of up to 200 m and an installed capacity of approximately 208 MW[6]. Strathy South Wind Farm was approved by Scottish Ministers in November 2021.

[4] Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (ECU Reference ECU00005221)

[5] Given that this development is of a scale that would have otherwise been classified as 'Major' by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

[6] Details as per the Strathy South Wind Farm Determination letter dated 24 November 2021.

1.2.3 Strathy South Wind Farm requires a connection to the electricity transmission network at Connagill 275 / 132 kV substation by April 2027. This is in accordance with agreements between SSEN Transmission, National Grid Electricity System Operator (as operator of the National Grid) and SSE Renewables (as developers of the consented Strathy South Wind Farm). As mentioned in paragraph 1.1.8, the Applicant has identified an opportunity to utilise the Proposed Development as 'shared infrastructure' to facilitate part of the connection requirements for the operational Strathy North and consented Strathy Wood wind farms (see Section 1.4 for further details).

1.3 Project History

1.3.1 In 2013, SSEN Transmission sought consent for the construction of two parallel 132 kV trident wood pole OHLs; one to connect the consented Strathy North Wind Farm to the electricity transmission network and the other to provide a connection for the then proposed Strathy South Wind Farm. These connections were collectively referred to as Strath Halladale to Dallangwell 132 kV Connection.

1.3.2 Consent for the Strath Halladale to Dallangwell 132 kV Connection was granted by Scottish Ministers in February 2014[7] and construction of one of the OHLs (to connect Strathy North Wind Farm to the electricity transmission network) was completed in 2015. The second consented OHL (to provide a connection for the then proposed, but not consented, Strathy South Wind Farm) was not constructed due to delays in consenting of the wind farm. The section 37 consent for the second OHL has now lapsed. Furthermore, the Strathy South Wind Farm developer has sought to change the point of connection from the Strathy North Wind Farm on-site substation, near Dallangwell, to the Strathy South Wind Farm substation. These factors, together with the requirement for the Applicant to consider other connection requirements in the wider area (see Section 1.4), have resulted in a new application for the Proposed Development being brought forward.

1.4 Connagill Cluster Grid Connection Works

1.4.1 The Proposed Development forms part of a wider connection strategy for renewable generation in the area referred to as the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections. The developments that make up the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections include[8] the consented Strathy South Wind Farm, the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm, the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub (comprising 12 turbines with 57.6 MW capacity plus 42 MW of battery storage) and the proposed Kirkton Energy Park (comprising 11 turbines with 52.8 MW capacity plus 20 MW of battery storage). To facilitate the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections, a new switching station, known as Strathy Switching Station, would also be required. In light of these connection requirements, the Applicant has taken a rationalised approach to these connection requests with the aim of utilising shared infrastructure where practicable. This is discussed further in **Volume 1: Chapter 2 – The Routeing Process and Alternatives**, which also provides further detail on the routeing and alignment selection stages of the project.

1.4.2 The proposed technology solution and consenting approach for each grid connection across the cluster is outlined in **Table V1-1.1**.

Table V1-1.1: Connagill Cluster Grid Connections – Proposed Technology Solutions and Consenting Approach

Project	Technology Solution	Description	Consenting Approach
Infrastructure required to connect Strathy	132 kV UGC (referred to in this EIA Report as Strathy South	From Strathy South Wind Farm on-site substation to a CSE compound in the	Anticipated to be Permitted Development under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country

[7] Received consent form the Scottish Ministers in February 2014 (ECU Reference 99/13-14 and 100/13-14).

[8] The Proposed Armadale Wind Farm was originally included within the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections project. However, in May 2024 the developer of the proposed Armadale Wind Farm withdrew the section 36 application and consequently no longer require a grid connection. As such, this project has been removed from the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.

Project	Technology Solution	Description	Consenting Approach
South and Strathy Wood Wind Farms to Connagill 275/132 kV Substation	Wind Farm 'Southern Section' Grid Connection)	vicinity of Strathy Wood Wind Farm on-site substation.	Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.
	132 kV OHL supported by steel structure (referred to in this EIA Report as Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection)	From a new CSE compound near to Strathy Wood Wind Farm on-site substation a new double circuit 132 kV OHL would proceed north to connect to the existing network via a 'T' onto the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL. This OHL would transport the electricity generated from Strathy Wood Wind Farm initially to Connagill 275/132 kV substation for onward transmission.	Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 Submitted in November 2024, ECU Ref. ECU00005221.
	132 kV OHL supported by steel structure (referred to in this EIA Report as the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection, or the Proposed Development)	Due to the combined generating capacity of the consented Strathy South and Strathy Wood wind farms, the shared connection would be unable to utilise the existing 132 kV wood pole OHL to Connagill 275/132 kV substation (as per the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection). Instead, a new section of double circuit 132 kV OHL would continue the connection from within the vicinity of the 'T' point to Connagill 275/132 kV substation. A new double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel structures would therefore be constructed to continue the connection between the Strathy North 'T' (at Dallangwell) to Connagill 275/132 kV substation. A section of OHL would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required. Upon completion of this OHL, electricity generated by Strathy Wood, Strathy South and Strathy North wind farms would be transferred over to the new OHL and redundant parts of the existing 132 kV wood pole OHL removed (see below).	Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Infrastructure to connect Melvich Wind Energy Hub	132 kV UGC	From Melvich Wind Energy Hub on-site substation to the existing Strathy	Anticipated to be Permitted Development under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country

Project	Technology Solution	Description	Consenting Approach
to Connagill 275/132 kV Substation		North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL (section to be retained).	Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.
Infrastructure to connect Kirkton Energy Park to Connagill 275/132 kV Substation	132 kV trident wood pole OHL	The works would include a short span (<1 km) of single circuit 132 kV trident wood pole OHL between Kirkton Energy Park on-site substation and a 'T' on the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL (section to be retained).	Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989. Anticipated to be submitted in autumn 2025.
Existing Strathy North 132 kV OHL	132 kV trident wood pole OHL	Once the Proposed Development is constructed, to further rationalise the project, a section of the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be removed. The section of wood pole OHL that would remain in place would be re-purposed for use by the Melvich and Kirkton Grid Connections into Connagill 275/132 kV substation.	This would fall under ancillary development of the section 37 submission for the Proposed Development.
Strathy Switching Station	Switching station	To facilitate the four connections, a new switching station would be required to collect all incoming circuits onto a double busbar before taking these through the double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel structure.	Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Anticipated to be submitted in autumn 2025.

1.4.3 Further information on the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections is available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/Connagill-Cluster/. The proposed Strathy Switching Station and other Connagill Cluster Grid Connections are considered where relevant in this EIA Report within the cumulative assessments.

1.5 Alternative Alignment

1.5.1 As referred to in paragraph 1.1.4 of this Chapter, the Applicant also seeks consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act for an alternative option to circumnavigate the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub, referred to as the "Alternative Alignment". As shown on **Volume 2: Figure V5-3.1: The Proposed Development - Alternative Alignment**, the Alternative Alignment would follow the same alignment as the Proposed Alignment from Strathy North 'T' between Towers 19 - 31[9]. From Tower 31, the Alternative Alignment would deviate away from the Proposed Alignment for approximately 8 km, by heading further north and east towards the A836 (Towers A1 - A15), traversing ground to the east of Cnoc a Bhodaich and Cnoc an Ruffer and once across the Baligill Burn, would pass between Cnoc na Cilliche and Cnoc Eadar Dha Allt. Upon crossing the Allt na Cleite watercourse,

[9] Both the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment commence at Tower 19.

the Alternative Alignment would head in a southerly direction (Towers A16 - A27), passing between local knolls, returning to rejoin the Proposed Alignment to the north of the Achridigill Burn and would thereafter follow the same alignment (Towers 48 to 64) to the proposed new CSE compound. The Alternative Alignment would connect into Connagill 275/132 kV substation via two short sections of single circuit 132 kV UGC, as per the Proposed Alignment. The total length of the Alternative Alignment would be approximately 13.5 km.

1.5.2 The decision taken by the Applicant to include both options within the consent application has been made given the route of the Proposed Alignment passes through the footprint of the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub. The minimum distance required between the proposed wind turbines and an OHL capable of operating at 275 kV could not be maintained along the route of the Proposed Alignment and therefore, should Melvich Wind Energy Hub be granted consent, in accordance with the proposal currently submitted, an alternative OHL alignment would need to be considered. The Applicant requests that the Scottish Ministers consider both the Proposed Alignment and the Alternative Alignment whilst noting that only one of the options would be built.

1.5.3 **Volume 5** of this EIA Report contains a description of the Alternative Alignment and the results of an EIA undertaken for the Alternative Alignment.

1.5.4 The key differences between the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment are set out in **Table V1-1.2** below.

Table V1-1.2: Key differences between the Proposed Alignment and the Alternative Alignment

Item	Proposed Alignment	Alternative Alignment
Length of OHL Alignment	10.5 km	13.5 km
Number of steel lattice towers	46 No.	58 No.
Length of UGC (permanent)	780 m	780 m
Approximate length of existing track	5.7 km	5.7 km
Approximate length of existing track to be upgraded	13.3 km	10.9 km
Approximate length of new permanent access track	7.4 km	7.9 km
Approximate length of new temporary access track	5.8 km	6.0 km
Length of temporary wood pole OHL diversion	None	2.2 km
Number of temporary wood poles	None	30 No.
Length of temporary UGC diversion	None	485 m
Length of existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL to be dismantled	7.1 km	7.1 km[10]
Length of existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL to be retained	4.8 km	4.8 km
Number of watercourse crossings	Access Tracks • one new temporary crossing • four new permanent crossings	Access Tracks • one new temporary crossing • six new permanent crossings

[10] This total includes the sections of temporary UGC diversion required to build the Alternative Alignment

Item	Proposed Alignment	Alternative Alignment
	• 16 existing crossings on tracks to be upgraded UGC • two permanent crossings	• 18 existing crossings on tracks to be upgraded UGC • two permanent crossings
Woodland felling to create an Operational Corridor	5.75 ha	5.75 ha

1.6 Legislative and Statutory Context

1.6.1 Consent for the Proposed Development is sought from Scottish Ministers under section 37 of the 1989 Act. The 1989 Act is the primary legislation governing the electricity supply industry in Great Britain and places statutory obligations upon a licence holder.

1.6.2 The Applicant, as a transmission licence holder under the 1989 Act has a statutory duty, under paragraph 3 of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act '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".

1.6.3 The requirement to undertake an EIA for developments requiring consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act (subject to stipulations and thresholds) is set out in the EIA Regulations 2017 ("the EIA Regulations"). This is discussed further in Section 1.7 of this Chapter.

1.6.4 Construction of the Proposed Development and ancillary works constitutes development in terms of section 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ("the Planning Act"). Accordingly, these works require planning permission. However, section 57(2) of the Planning Act provides that on the granting of a consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act, the Scottish Ministers may direct that planning permission for the ancillary works of that development shall be deemed to be granted. Deemed planning permission under section 57 of the Planning Act is, therefore, being sought from the Scottish Ministers in terms of the application.

1.6.5 The Proposed Development is located within sites of European nature conservation importance, as defined by European Council Directives of 2nd April 1979 on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) and of 21st May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC). The Directives were implemented in the UK by the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, and those Regulations (as amended) remain in force post-Brexit. For projects requiring consent under the 1989 Act, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 apply. Where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, and that plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, such sites are protected by the duties placed on competent authorities. Those duties include the requirement to make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives and, in general terms, to agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site[11] or where adverse effects exist, there are no alternative solutions, it can be justified for imperative reasons of overriding public interest ("IROPI") and compensatory measures can be secured.

[11] The integrity of a site can be defined as the coherence of all its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations for which it was classified.

1.6.6 Information is provided in this EIA Report to assist the competent authority's appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment on European sites. Shadow Habitat Regulations Appraisals (HRA) have been undertaken and are included in **Volume 4: Appendix V1-7.6: Shadow HRA for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Ramsar site** (the Alternative Alignment is considered in **Annex B** of this appendix) and **Volume 4: Appendix V1-8.3: Shadow HRA for European Sites of Ornithological Importance** (the Alternative Alignment is considered in **Annex A** of this appendix).

1.6.7 The Proposed Development would be partially located within the Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS), which was formally inscribed by UNESCO in July 2024 for its internationally important blanket bog, oligotrophic and dystrophic loch, mire, heath and peat bog habitats. A WHS Assessment has been undertaken for the Flow Country WHS utilising The Highland Council's (THC's) Flow Country Candidate World Heritage Site Impact Assessment Toolkit[12] as published on THC's website[13]. The toolkit is a modified version of the guidance and toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context Resource Manual (UNESCO and Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, 2022). The WHS Assessment undertaken for the Proposed Alignment is included in **Volume 4: Appendix V1-7.7: Flow Country WHS Assessment** (the Alternative Alignment is considered in **Annex D** of this appendix).

1.7 The Need for EIA

1.7.1 The EIA Regulations contain two schedules: Schedule 1 lists projects where EIA is mandatory and Schedule 2 lists projects 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'*.

1.7.2 The definition of Schedule 1 development in the EIA Regulations includes:

(3) construction of overhead electrical power lines with a voltage of 220 kilovolts or more and a length of more than 15 kilometres.

1.7.3 While the Proposed Development would have the capacity in the future to operate at a voltage of 220 kilovolts (kV) or more if required, it is initially proposed to be operated at 132 kV. Regardless, the Proposed Development would cover a distance of less than 15 km and is not categorised as 'Schedule 1' development under the EIA Regulations.

1.7.4 Schedule 2 to the EIA Regulations identifies projects where EIA may be required where a project listed in that Schedule is "likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location".

1.7.5 The Proposed Development is classified as Schedule 2 development under the EIA Regulations by virtue of it being classed as:

"The carrying out of development (other than development which is Schedule 1 development) to provide any of the following -

(2) an electric line installed above ground –

(a) with a voltage of 132 kilovolts or more"

[12] It is noted that the Flow Country WHS has been formally inscribed as a WHS since the toolkit was published, and therefore is no longer a 'candidate' WHS. However, the toolkit has yet to be updated and therefore the 'candidate' WHS toolkit remains applicable until such time an updated version is published by The Highland Council.

[13] The Highland Council, Flow Country Candidate World Heritage Site Impact Assessment Toolkit. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/28012/flow_country_candidate_world_heritage_site_impact_assessment_toolkit

1.7.6 Given the Proposed Development would form a natural extension to the separately proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection[4], itself deemed to be EIA development, the Applicant has taken the decision to produce an EIA Report to accompany an application for consent, without requesting an EIA Screening Opinion from the Scottish Ministers.

1.7.7 A request for a Scoping Opinion was submitted, in the form of a Scoping Report, to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) by the Applicant in March 2024[14] to determine the scope of environmental assessment work. A Scoping Opinion was provided by Scottish Ministers in June 2024 which referred to site specific issues of interest to the Scottish Ministers, to be considered and addressed in addition to those laid out in response from consultees. Further details are contained in **Volume 1: Chapter 4: Scope and Consultation**, and associated appendices.

1.8 EIA Report Structure

1.8.1 The EIA Report consists of the following volumes:

- Volume 1: Main Report;
- Volume 2: Figures;
- Volume 3a: Visualisations (NatureScot guidelines);[15]
- Volume 3b: Visualisations (The Highland Council guidelines);[16]
- Volume 4: Appendices to support each of the Chapters in the EIA Report where required;
- Volume 5: EIA of Alternative Alignment; and
- Non-Technical Summary.

1.8.2 Volume 1 of the EIA Report provides an introduction to the Proposed Development and provides a description of the key components of the Proposed Development, including construction and operational access requirements, and the main alternatives considered during the development of the project. The approach to the EIA Report is also outlined, as well as the consultations that have been undertaken to define the scope of the EIA. This volume also includes an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development (comprising the Proposed Alignment) 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. The consideration of cumulative effects is also discussed where relevant in each specialist topic.

1.8.3 Volume 2 contains supporting figures referred to in Volume 1 and Volume 5 of the EIA Report. Figures associated with Volume 1 include the prefix ‘V1’ whereas figures associated with Volume 5 include the prefix ‘V5’.

1.8.4 Volume 3a and Volume 3b comprise photomontage visualisations of the Proposed Development from a series of viewpoints that have been prepared in accordance with the relevant guidance from both NatureScot (Volume 3a) and The Highland Council (Volume 3b). Visualisations associated with the Proposed Alignment include the prefix ‘V1’ whereas visualisations associated with the Alternative Alignment include the prefix ‘V5’.

1.8.5 Volume 4 comprises supporting appendices to Volume 1 and Volume 5 of the EIA Report. Appendices include further detailed reporting or information to support the EIA Report and technical assessments contained therein. Notable appendices include shadow HRAs where the Proposed Development crosses through, or within the vicinity of, European nature conservation importances. Appendices associated with Volume 1 include the prefix ‘V1’, whereas appendices associated with Volume 5 include the prefix ‘V5’.

[14] Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection Scoping Report – March 2024, produced by SSEN Transmission. ECU Reference: ECU00005081
[15] NatureScot (Formerly Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)), (2017), Visual Representation of Wind Farms (Version 2.2) (SNH, 2017)
[16] The Highland Council (THC), (2016), Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments (THC, 2016)

1.8.6 Volume 5 contains a description of the Alternative Alignment of the project, and the results of an EIA undertaken for the Alternative Alignment.

1.8.7 A standalone Non-Technical Summary is provided which describes the project and the likely significant effects predicted in a concise, non-technical manner.

1.8.8 A Planning Statement is also included with the application as supporting information. The Planning Statement considers the compatibility of the Proposed Development in the context of the development plan and national energy and planning policies.

1.8.9 A Socio-economic and Tourism Technical Note is included with the application as supporting information. The Technical Note assesses the potential socio-economic and tourism impacts from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

1.9 Notifications

1.9.1 In accordance with the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990, and Regulation 14 of the EIA Regulations, the application and this EIA Report will be advertised in the John O'Groats Journal and the Northern Times newspapers. Adverts will also be placed in the Edinburgh Gazette and on the Applicant's website.

1.9.2 Notice of the section 37 application, including this EIA Report and associated documents and figures, will be available for viewing at the following locations:

- West End Stores and Melvich Post Office, Melvich, Portskerra, Thurso, KW14 7YL (normal opening hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm and Saturday 9am to 5pm).
- Thurso Service Point, Council Offices, Rotterdam Street, Caithness, KW14 8AB (normal opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am to 12.30pm).

1.9.3 An electronic version of the EIA Report is available online at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/Connagill-Cluster/

1.9.4 This EIA Report is available in other formats if required. For details, including costs, contact:

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