

# **Report on Consultation – Alignment Options**

## **Melgarve Cluster**

**June 2023**

**REF: LT218, LT287, LT419**





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Figure 1: Preferred Alignment with Surrounding Existing and Proposed Wind Farms

Figure 2: Proposed Alignment

## GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Alignment	A centre line of an overhead line OHL or underground cable (UGC), along with location of key angle towers (OHL only) or angles of deviation (UGC Only).
Alignment (preferred)	An alignment taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of alignment options.
Alignment (proposed)	An alignment taken forward to consent application. It comprises a defined centre line and includes an indicative support structure (tower or pole) schedule, also specifying access arrangements and any associated construction facilities.
Amenity	The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape and visual quality. Also includes the impact of SSEN Transmission's works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction activities.
Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)	The Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) is a provisional guide to the location of Ancient Woodland. It contains three main categories of woodland: Ancient Woodland (1a and 2a); Long-established woodlands of plantation origin (LEPO) (1b and 2b); and Other woodlands on 'Roy' woodland sites (3).
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	A process which follows the principal of biodiversity enhancement and leaves nature in a better state than before development work started.
Conductor	A metallic wire strung from structure to structure, to carry electric current.
Consultation	The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views and, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
CNP	Cairngorms National Park.
Design Solution	The design of the transmission infrastructure.
Electromagnetic compatibility (EMC)	The interaction of electrical and electronic equipment with its electromagnetic environment.
Environmental Appraisal (EA)	Environmental Appraisals can be undertaken for non-EIA development, reporting on the potential environmental effects of a project and the mitigation measures to reduce the level of effect.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process set down in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 used to systematically identify, predict and assess the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed project or development.
GWDTE	Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) are wetlands which depend on groundwater flows or chemistries. They are safeguarded by the Water Framework Directive and are sensitive to changes caused by developments.
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Habitat Management Plan (HMP)	Sets out habitat enhancement measures proposed as part of a development.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).
Micrositing	The process of positioning individual structures to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
NVC	National Vegetation Classification (NVC), is a common standard developed for the classification and description of plant communities.
Ordnance Datum (OD)	Ordnance Datum or OD is a vertical datum used by an ordnance survey as the basis for deriving bathymetric levels on charts. A spot height may be expressed as AOD for "above ordnance datum" or BOD for "below ordnance datum".
Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or poles.
Route	A linear area of approximately 1 km width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points.
Route (preferred)	A route taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of route options.
Route (proposed)	A route taken forward following stakeholder consultation to the alignment selection stage of the routeing process.
Routeing	The work undertaken which leads to the selection of a proposed alignment, capable of being taken forward into the consenting process under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Areas of national importance. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.
Span	The section of overhead line between two structures.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated under the EC Habitats Directive to ensure that rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats or species of community interest are either maintained at or restored to a favourable conservation status.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Landscapes designated by The Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.
Special Landscape Quality (SLQ)	A key landscape characteristic identified for the Cairngorm National Park or Wild Land Areas identified by NatureScot.
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SSEN Transmission works.
The National Grid	The electricity transmission network in the Great Britain.
Underground Cable (UGC)	An electric cable installed below ground, protected by insulating layers and marked closer to the surface to prevent accidental damage through later earthworks.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.
WLA	Wild Land Area as identified by NatureScot
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)	The computer-generated theoretical visibility of an object in the landscape

## PREFACE

This Report on Consultation has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (herein referred to as 'SSEN Transmission'), operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc. This document has been prepared to provide a summary of the responses received from key stakeholders (including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents) during a consultation period held between January 2023 and March 2023, in response to the preferred alignment and design solution identified for a new 132 kV connection required to connect the consented Dell and Cloiche wind farms to the National Grid at Melgarve substation, near Laggan.

A Consultation Document<sup>1</sup> setting out the results of the alignment selection process was made available for download via the online project website from 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023:

<https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/melgarve-cluster/>

In-person consultation events were also undertaken to seek the views of the local community. The consultation events were held at the following times:

- 8 February 2023 2-7pm, Laggan Community Hall; and
- 9 February 2023 2-7pm, Fort Augustus Village Hall.

This Report on Consultation also provides a summary of how SSEN Transmission have responded to comments received from key stakeholders on the preferred alignment and design solution, and details the actions that will be taken as the project progresses through to the EA (Environmental Appraisal) / EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and consenting stage.

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<sup>1</sup> SSEN Transmission (January 2023): Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options - Consultation Document

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed Cloiche and Dell wind farms require connection to the electricity transmission network at the existing Melgarve substation, via a new 132 kV single circuit connection for each development. A combination of overhead line (OHL) and underground cable (UGC) is proposed to facilitate these connections.

SSEN Transmission, operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, are undertaking studies to identify a proposed alignment and design solution to meet the project requirements, in line with SSEN Transmission's obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Work to date on the project has focussed on the identification of a proposed route and preferred alignment / design solution to take forward to a future consent application.

This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which was undertaken during the alignment selection stage of the project between January to March 2023, following the identification of a preferred alignment and design solution (as described within the Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document<sup>1</sup>). The programme of consultation was designed to engage with stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the rationale for, and approach to, the selection of the preferred alignment and design solution.

This report describes the key responses received and provides detail on the actions proposed in response to the issues raised. The consultation process has confirmed that subject to minor changes to the position of the transition points from OHL to UGC, as well as the indicative UGC alignment, the preferred alignment, as identified within the Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document<sup>1</sup>, should be taken forward as the proposed alignment as the project progresses through to the EA / EIA and Consenting Stage and be the subject of further study.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Purpose of Document

- 1.1.1 This Report on Consultation has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited (“ASH”) on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN Transmission), operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, who own, operate and develop the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.
- 1.1.2 The proposed Cloiche Wind Farm, consisting of up to 29 turbines, and the proposed Dell Wind Farm, consisting of up to 10 turbines, both require a new 132 kV single circuit connection to the National Grid. The new connections would be routed between the proposed wind farms’ on-site substations and Melgarve substation (see **Figure 1**). It is anticipated that the connections to Dell Wind Farm on-site substation (approximately 14.4 km in length) and Cloiche Wind Farm on-site substation (approximately 9.4 km in length) would be via a combination of underground cable (UGC) and overhead line (OHL), to account for environmental and technical constraints. The overall connection project is known as the Melgarve Cluster Project.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with SSEN Transmission’s guidance,<sup>2</sup> a process of consultation on the preferred route (November 2021 and February 2022) and the preferred alignment and design solution (between January and March 2023), has been undertaken.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.1.4 This Report on Consultation, documents the consultation process for the project between January and March 2023, during the alignment selection stage of the project, as described within the Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document.<sup>1</sup> The programme of consultation was designed to engage with key stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the rationale for and approach to, the selection of the preferred alignment.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.1.5 This report describes the key responses received and details the actions taken in response to the issues raised.

### 1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of this report are:
- To document the consultation process between January and March 2023;
  - To summarise feedback received from stakeholders;
  - To document actions undertaken in response to feedback where relevant; and
  - To clearly set out how the proposed alignment and design solution has been informed by the consultation process.

### 1.3 Document Structure

- 1.3.1 This Report on Consultation is structured as follows:

Section 1: Introduction – setting out the purpose of the Report on Consultation;

Section 2: Project Overview – outlines the background to the project and provides a description of the key elements;

Section 3: Identification of Preferred Alignment and Consultation – describes how the preferred alignment was identified, the framework for consultation and methods which have been employed;

Section 4: Consultation Responses from Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees – summarises the responses from these bodies;

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<sup>2</sup> SSEN (September 2020), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132 kV and above

<sup>3</sup> Identified within the Melgarve Cluster Consultation Document – Alignment Options, produced by SSEN Transmission

Section 5: Community Consultation Responses– summarises the responses and key comments and issues arising from the public through the consultation process;

Section 6: Identification of a Proposed Alignment – describes how the comments and issues raised during consultation led to the confirmation of a proposed alignment and design solution; and

Section 7: Conclusions and Next Steps – provides confirmation of the proposed alignment and design solution, a summary of the conclusions reached and actions going forward.

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Proposals Overview

- 2.1.1 The Melgarve Cluster Project is located approximately 10 km to the east of Fort Augustus and is driven by the requirement to connect the proposed Dell and Cloiche wind farms, located in the Monadhliath mountain range, to the National Grid. The proposed wind farms are located adjacent to the operational Stronelairst Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.
- 2.1.2 The connection point at Melgarve Substation is located to the south of the proposed wind farms, near Garva Bridge and adjacent to the Beauly to Denny 400 kV OHL. The operational Stronelairst Wind Farm is connected to Melgarve Substation by underground cable.
- 2.1.3 The boundary of the Cairngorms National Park lies to the east of the proposed connection, and Laggan, the nearest village to Melgarve substation, is located approximately 11 km to the east.

### 2.2 Design Solution Considered

- 2.2.1 SSEN Transmission's license obligations are to develop an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission. As explained in the Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document,<sup>1</sup> whilst both OHL and UGC options were considered during the alignment selection process (in order to make comparative assessment of the benefits and disbenefits of both technology types), SSEN Transmission has determined that steel lattice towers are the preferred technical and cost effective solution for this project and would make use of this support structure for the OHL where possible. SSEN are also contracted to develop the connection types stipulated by the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers, which is OHL.
- 2.2.2 However, the sections of the connection that pass through or close by existing (Stronelairst) or proposed (Cloiche and Dell) wind turbines are unsuitable for OHL. This is in accordance with SSEN Transmission's policy to avoid having an OHL encroach on a clearance zone from wind turbines that is equal to three times the magnitude of the rotor diameter. This is because the 'wake effect' of the wind turbines within this clearance zone can cause excessive vibration on the OHL components. While the impact of the wake effect can vary depending on wind turbine height, local topography and specific OHL arrangements, the vibrations can lead to premature fatigue and failure of the OHL. For this project, it is not possible to achieve an OHL alignment through the existing and proposed turbines that does not encroach on the three-rotor diameter clearance. As a result, an UGC would be required on this project at higher elevations through the existing and proposed wind farms. A section of UGC would also be required for the final approach to Melgarve Substation in order to cross under the Beauly-Denny 400 kV line.
- 2.2.3 A further design consideration at this site is the presence of Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, owned and operated by SSE Generation. The proposed alignment of the UGC will need to be located and designed to avoid existing infrastructure associated with the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.
- 2.2.4 Where possible it is proposed that the connection would run in close proximity and parallel to existing and proposed access tracks. This would seek to utilise construction / operational corridors where practicable to minimise disturbance to undisturbed areas.

### 2.3 Construction Activities

#### *Overhead Line General Construction Activities*

- 2.3.1 To facilitate the construction of the OHL components of the connection, the main tasks are anticipated to include:
- establishment of one or more construction compounds;
  - establishment of suitable laydown areas for materials;
  - construction of stone tracks (both temporary and permanent) and other temporary access solutions as

necessary;

- delivery of structures and materials to site;
- excavation and construction works associated with foundations, as necessary;
- assembly and erection of OHL towers;
- stringing of conductors using hauling ropes and winches;
- construction of sealing end compounds (to facilitate transition from OHL to UGC); and
- inspections and commissioning.

2.3.2 It is currently anticipated that the steel lattice structures would be the L7 suite of towers. Tower heights would vary, depending on local topography, but would typically be in the region of 27 m to 33 m in height and have an average span length of 250 m.

2.3.3 Plate 2.1 shows a photograph of a typical steel lattice tower for illustrative purposes.

**Plate 2.1 Example Steel Lattice Tower OHL Structure**



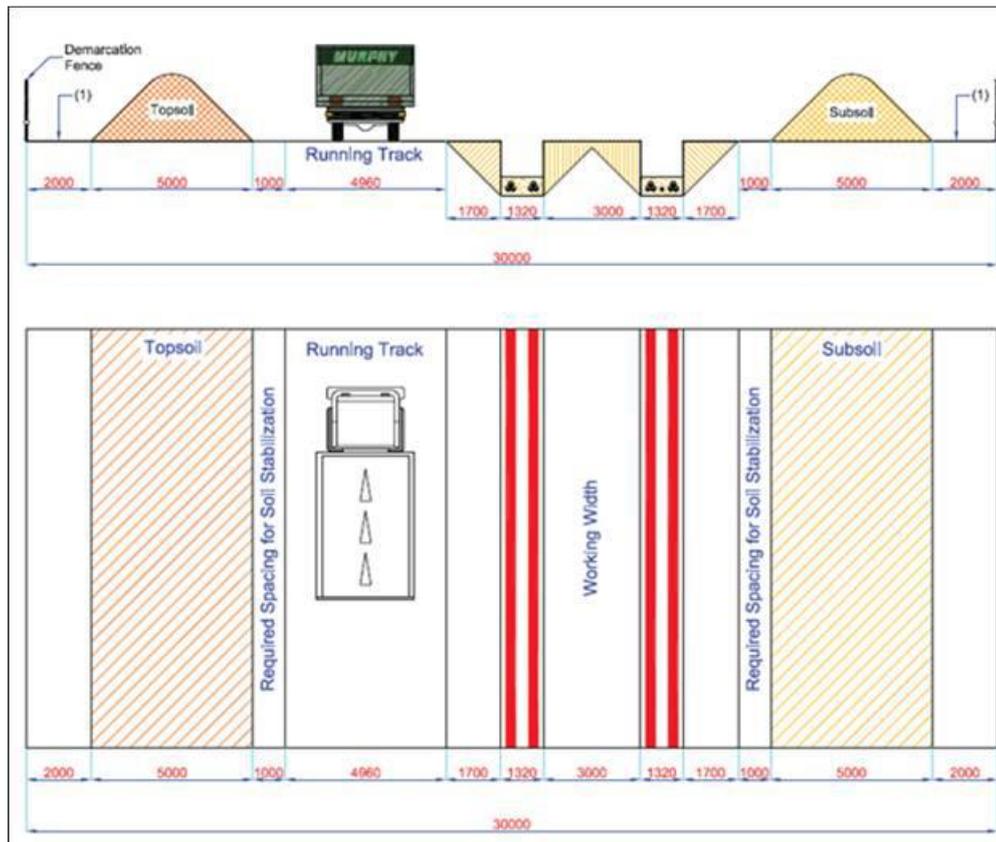
*Underground Cable General Construction Activities*

2.3.4 It is anticipated that installation of the UGC would involve the following tasks:

- Establishment of one or more construction compounds;
- Establishment of suitable laydown areas for materials;
- Establishment of a working corridor approximately 30 - 40m wide, broadly centred on the cable centreline;
- Installation of access haul road and temporary bridges where required;
- Strip topsoil and shallow peat layers to facilitate cable trenching;
- Excavate a trench up to 2 m in depth and 1 m wide, widening through benching and battering where stability and safety concerns arise;
- Clear out all materials likely to damage cable ducts, e.g. clods, rocks, stones and organic debris, and employ use of pumps to remove any water;
- Installation of ducting within the trench, surrounded by engineered backfill in suitable layers for protection, with protection tile and warning tape placed above the cable line, reinstatement to sub-soil level;
- Excavation and formation of power cable joint bays with above ground electrical link pillars and associated demarcation;
- Transportation of and installation of power cable;
- Mobilisation of jointing containers and jointing of power cable;
- Reinstatement of joint bays and installation of fencing at link pillar locations;
- Reinstatement of excavated surface layers in reverse order; and
- Commissioning of cable system.

2.3.5 **Plate 2.2** shows a diagram of a typical UGC construction corridor.

**Plate 2.2: Typical UGC Construction Corridor**



*Access Strategy*

- 2.3.6 It is anticipated that traffic for the construction and operation of this project would reach the site via two access points; from the north utilising the existing track built for Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and upgraded as part of Stronelaig Wind Farm, accessed from the B862 near Fort Augustus, and from the south via the access track used for the construction of the Beauly to Denny OHL to Melgarve Substation (via the A86).
- 2.3.7 Existing tracks would be utilised where practicable during construction of the project, although there is a likelihood that new temporary and permanent tracks would be required.

*Programme*

- 2.3.8 It is anticipated that construction of the project would take place over a 24-month period, following the granting of consents. Detailed programming of the works would be the responsibility of the Contractor in agreement with SSEN Transmission.
- 2.3.9 Every effort would be made to minimise disturbance to landowners, local residents and other stakeholders during construction by providing regular updates on works and restrictions via the site manager, community liaison manager and corporate affairs team.

### 3. IDENTIFICATION OF PREFERRED ALIGNMENT AND CONSULTATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Consultation Document<sup>4</sup> sets out the approach to the consideration and appraisal of alignment options, informed by SSEN Transmission's guidance 'Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132 kV and above'. The guidance sets out SSEN Transmission's approach to selecting a route and alignment for an OHL and UGC. This document helps SSEN Transmission to meet its obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989, which requires transmission license holders:

- To have a 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 interests; and
- To do what they reasonably can to mitigate any effect that the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.

3.1.2 In consideration of the principles outlined in the guidance document, the method of identifying a preferred alignment and design solution involved the following 4 key tasks:

- Identification of the baseline situation;
- Identification of alignment options;
- Environmental and engineering analysis of alignment options; and
- Identification of a preferred alignment and design solution.

#### 3.2 Identification of Preferred Alignment

3.2.1 The preferred alignment and design solution was selected on the basis that it is considered to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical, and economic factors. The preferred alignment and design solution presented within the Consultation Document<sup>1</sup> is shown on **Figure 1**.

#### 3.3 The Consultation Process

##### *Route Selection Stage*

3.3.1 In accordance with SSEN Transmission's guidance,<sup>5</sup> a process of consultation on the preferred route has previously been undertaken, seeking comments from statutory and non-statutory consultees, and members of the public. This included a face-to-face meeting with representatives from The Highland Council (THC), NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in November 2021. Also, in January 2022 virtual public exhibitions took place to further engage stakeholders. The Route Selection Stage Report on Consultation<sup>6</sup> summarises the feedback received during these consultations, and how these were to be considered and actioned by SSEN Transmission. This led to the confirmation of the proposed route.

##### *Alignment Selection Stage*

3.3.2 In accordance with SSEN Transmission's guidance a similar process of consultation on the preferred alignment has also been undertaken. The following methods were used to consult on the preferred alignment, as set out below.

##### Consultation Document

3.3.3 The Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document (January 2023) was produced detailing the selection process for the preferred alignment and design solution, taking account of environmental, economic and technical

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<sup>4</sup> SSEN Transmission (January 2023) Melgarve Alignment Options - Consultation Document

<sup>5</sup> SSEN Transmission (September 2020), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132 kV and above

<sup>6</sup> SSEN Transmission (May 2022) Melgarve Route Options - Report on Consultation

factors.<sup>1</sup> The Consultation Document was made available for download on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 from the project website: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/melgarve-cluster/>

3.3.4 **Table 4.1** details the stakeholders in receipt of the Consultation Document or otherwise informed of the website details:

**Table 4.1: List of Stakeholders**

Stakeholders	
<b>Statutory Consultees</b>	
Energy Consents Unit (ECU)	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
NatureScot	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
The Highland Council (THC)	
<b>Non-Statutory Consultees</b>	
British Telecom (BT)	Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) - Airspace
Crown Estate Scotland	Dell Estate
Fisheries Management Scotland	Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston Community Company
Glengarry Community Council	Glengarry Community Woodland and Laggan Forest Trust
Glengarry Trust	Glenshero Estate (SIMEC)
Hillhouse Estates	Highland and Islands Airports (HIAL)
Inverness South Ward Councillors	John Muir Trust
Joint Radio Company (JRC)	Laggan Community Council
Ministry of Defence (MOD) (RSP Safeguarding)	Mountaineering Scotland
National Air Traffic Service (NATS) Safeguarding	Ness District Salmon Fisheries Board
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Scottish Forestry
Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways)	Scottish Wild Land Group (SWLG)
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Scottish Water
Spean Bridge, Roy Birdge and Achnacarry Community Council	Spey District Salmon Fishery Board
SSE Generation Limited as owner/operator of Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme	SSE Renewables (Cloiche WF)
Strathdearn Community Council	Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council
Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust	Stronelairg Estate (Connell Renewables)
Stronelairg Wind Farm (SWFL)	Transport Scotland
Visit Scotland	Wind Farms JRC

3.3.5 Community Councils and councillors were made aware of the Consultation Document, and updates were issued via email to project website subscribers.

3.3.6 Feedback on the Consultation Document was requested by 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

3.3.7 In addition, SSEN Transmission held virtual meetings with representatives from THC, NatureScot, and SEPA on 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023. At these meetings, SSEN Transmission delivered presentations on the alignment options to the representatives in attendance and followed with a round table discussion of each statutory consultee's comments and suggested actions in relation to the proposals.

Public Consultation Events

3.3.8 In-person consultation events took place for this project at the following times:

- 8 February 2023 2-7pm, Laggan Community Hall; and
- 9 February 2023 2-7pm, Fort Augustus Village Hall.

3.3.9 Consultation events were advertised in the local press, SSEN Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project website. A mail drop of a booklet and letter informing of the event was also carried out to 854 households ahead of the consultation.

3.3.10 A total of 23 people attended the public consultation events across the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2023. No feedback forms were received by post or online after the virtual consultation.

## 4. CONSULTATION RESPONSES FROM STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 **Table 4.1** sets out a summary of the feedback received from statutory and non-statutory consultees following the consultation period (January to March 2023). A response to the feedback is also provided by SSEN Transmission, together with confirmation of the action to be taken, where relevant.

4.1.2 The following consultees did not provide any feedback to the consultation:

- Energy Consents Unit (ECU);
- Crown Estates Scotland;
- Fisheries Management Scotland;
- Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston Community Company;
- Glengarry Community Council;
- Glengarry Community Woodland and Laggan Forest Trust;
- Glengarry Trust;
- Highland and Islands Airports (HIAL);
- Hillhouse Estates;
- Inverness South Ward Councillors;
- John Muir Trust;
- Mountaineering Scotland;
- Ness Fishery Board;
- RSPB;
- Scottish Forestry;
- Spean Bridge, Roy Birdge and Achnacarry Community Council;
- Spey District Salmon Fishery Board;
- Scottish Wild Land Group;
- Scottish Wildlife Trust;
- Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council;
- Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust;
- Strathdearn Community Council; and
- Visit Scotland.

**Table 4.1: Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultee Feedback**

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
<b>Statutory</b>		
THC	<p>THC did not provide any further comments on the Consultation Document, beyond those given verbally on 7th February 2023 during a meeting between SSEN Transmission and THC to explain the project. A meeting note was prepared and shared with THC. The below points reflect a summary of THC’s verbal comments.</p>	<p>See below responses.</p>
	<p>THC stated that the rationale for the use of OHL from Junction A across undisturbed peatland and off the plateau (in terms of a reduced impact on the peat when compared to UGC) was clearer than for in the area from Junction B down to Melgarve substation. It was suggested that SSEN Transmission should robustly justify this choice where land has already been disturbed alongside the existing track and UGC of Stronelaig Wind Farm.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission’s license obligations are to develop an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission. As such SSEN Transmission is obliged to seek the most cost effective solution, which is usually an OHL connection. In this case, SSEN Transmission are also contracted to develop the connection types stipulated by the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers, which are OHLs. Should OHL connections be deemed unfeasible on environmental, engineering or economic grounds, other options, including UGC connections, can be explored.</p> <p>In the case of this project, it is deemed that an UGC is necessary on the plateau given technical constraints presented by existing and proposed renewable energy infrastructure. For the remainder of the connection, it is considered that the use of OHL has advantages over UGC in terms of its ability to span over and therefore reduce impacts on sensitive habitats, biodiversity and watercourses.</p> <p>Although land has already been disturbed in the area from Junction B down to Melgarve Substation by the existing Stronelaig UGC, consideration must be given to the interaction between the existing Stronelaig UGC and any potential future UGC circuits. UGC circuits generate heat, and the performance/rating of a cable is impacted by the temperature that it can safely be operated at. The inclusion of additional UGC circuits in proximity results in an increase in the heating of the surrounding soil mass and would therefore negatively impact the existing Stronelaig UGC circuit and the existing capacity for which it is designed. Furthermore, the heating effect of the existing Stronelaig UGC on any potential future UGC circuits for Cloiche and Dell windfarms would result in the need of an easement width that well exceeds the width of previously disturbed ground. Issues of thermal interaction can be exacerbated in areas of deepening which are necessary to cross watercourses and other natural obstacles. As soil temperatures increase with depth, circuit spacing would have to increase further in these cases. An additional construction easement width of approximately 40 m over undisturbed ground would be envisaged to accommodate any new UGC for the potential Cloiche and Dell circuits where they run in proximity to the existing Stronelaig UGC. Given these technical constraints, and to minimise disturbance to habitats and watercourse, an OHL solution from Junction B to Melgarve Substation is preferred.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	THC asked for details of the consultation process to be shared with THC.	Details of the consultation process and the Consultation Document have been shared with THC.
	It was requested the Scoping submission be associated with survey information where available to help inform consideration of issues.	The combined Screening / Scoping Report (due to be published in June 2023) will include baseline information and survey information where available.
	THC asked that all details associated with the project be included in submissions for overall impacts to be understood. Including compounds, permanent and temporary access tracks (type/location etc) borrow pits etc.	As far as possible, details of ancillary works will be included in the consent application. In some instances, where details are not known at this stage, separate consents (e.g. for borrow pits) may be sought by the Principal Contractor.
	THC commented that the position of the cable sealing end compound relative to the Beaully-Denny line would need to be carefully considered given its proximity as it could potentially increase the prominence of the existing line if positioned too close.	The location of the cable sealing end compound near the Beaully-Denny line will be carefully considered to find the most appropriate location.
NatureScot	NatureScot referred to their previous comments on the Melgarve Cluster provided in November 2021, as they suggested that these comments remain valid. NatureScot outlined that it would be useful if more detailed survey information could be provided at the Scoping stage to help inform their consideration of issues. NatureScot maintained their previous advice that the selection of a preferred alignment is informed by detailed survey and assessment. NatureScot advise any impacts are minimised through appropriate mitigation, details of which should be provided with any future application.	Previous comments from NatureScot are noted. More detailed survey information will be provided at the Screening/Scoping stage. The selection of a preferred alignment has been informed by detailed survey findings, and these will continually be reviewed as the project progresses. Appropriate mitigation measures would be set out in the future application.
	NatureScot stated that they were encouraged to hear that SSEN Transmission expect both circuits can now be accommodated on the same tower thus removing the need for parallel towers and lines.	This is correct. With respect to the OHL, both connections can be accommodated on the same towers.
	In relation to Wild Land Areas (WLAs) NatureScot advised that in seeking the best design solution for the project (given its proximity to WLAs and the potential for significant effects to arise), the wild land assessment guidance is a useful process by which any significant effects can be identified and potentially mitigated through appropriate design iterations. They therefore advise that	Potential effects on WLAs have been considered in developing preferred alignment and design solution. The proposed connection would not be situated within the WLA and would be seen only in the context of other similar developments including the Melgarve Substation and Beaully – Denny 400 kV OHL from within a very small and peripheral part of it. It is considered that the preferred alignment and design solution would be unlikely to lead to any significant loss of wild land characteristics within the WLA and it is therefore considered unlikely that a WLA assessment should be required.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>undertaking this assessment may help to inform SSEN Transmission's design solution for this proposal, and also to inform the decision maker about the full range of significant effects.</p>	
	<p>In relation to priority peatland habitats, NatureScot outlined that the project crosses a significant area of mapped Class 1 peatland. NatureScot suggested that it is not yet clear whether the project follows a route which would have minimised impacts to priority peatland habitats and NatureScot recommend that future consultations seek to confirm this. NatureScot outlined that it would also be useful if future consultations could show the project together with the proposed layout for Cloiche and Dell wind farms and the layout of Stronelaig, including access tracks, so as to understand to what extent the project follows existing infrastructure. NatureScot have not yet seen National Vegetation Classification (NVC) data for this proposal, but their responses to Cloiche wind farm highlighted the sensitivity of habitats in this area including the presence of high quality montane bog. These responses may be useful to consider for the Melgarve Cluster project.</p>	<p>Areas of Class 1 and 2 peat soils were identified during route and alignment appraisals, and NVC surveys have informed the selection of a preferred alignment and design solution, seeking to minimise impacts on priority peatland habitat where possible.</p> <p><b>Figure 1</b> shows the proposed layout for Cloiche and Dell wind farms and the layout of Stronelaig Wind Farm in the context of the preferred alignment.</p> <p>NatureScot's response to Cloiche Wind Farm has been reviewed and will be considered where relevant in respect of this project.</p>
	<p>NatureScot highlighted that Policy 3 of the Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) will be particularly relevant when considering the implications of this proposal for priority peatland habitats. NatureScot would expect the mitigation hierarchy to be applied so that impacts are avoided, or minimised as far as possible, and where they cannot be avoided appropriate restoration measures are secured. In this situation NatureScot would generally recommend aiming for a total area of compensatory peatland restoration in the order of ten times that of the area lost from the development, aiming for like for like compensation. Further advice on peatland restoration is available on their Peatland Action website.</p>	<p>NVC surveys have informed the selection of a preferred alignment and design solution, seeking to minimise impacts on priority peatland habitat where possible. Further detail on potential effects and mitigation measures will be provided in the EA / EIA Report.</p> <p>Appropriate and proportionate compensatory peatland restoration will be discussed and agreed with NatureScot in line with other projects and as part of SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) commitments.</p>
	<p>NatureScot highlighted that positive effects for biodiversity is reflected in NPF4, which sets out new requirements for</p>	<p>A BNG Report setting out the assessment of biodiversity impacts and proposals for biodiversity enhancement will be included with the future application for the project.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>developments to deliver positive effects for biodiversity, primarily under Policy 3.</p> <p>In relation to Ornithology, NatureScot had no further comments based on the summary data provided.</p>	<p>This has been noted.</p>
SEPA	<p>SEPA outlined that their previous pre-application advice already covers the issues from SEPA's perspective.</p> <p>SEPA would add / re-emphasise the following points to their previous advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure that the development that comes forward makes use of existing infrastructure and disturbed areas as much as possible.</li> <li>- SEPA need clear information on impacts on areas identified for peatland restoration for other local projects, how that will be replaced and what mitigation and enhancement will be offered for this specific project. Clear drawings are required to explain this.</li> <li>- SEPA asked that SSEN Transmission please ensure that the application identifies all supporting infrastructure – potential laydown areas and construction compounds, tracks and borrow pits. Please confirm access arrangements and identify areas where access will be via boards (or similar), floating tracks and cut tracks.</li> <li>- SEPA suggested that it would be helpful if SSEN Transmission's scoping report included any baseline information already collected.</li> <li>- SEPA would welcome further engagement when SSEN Transmission have detailed layout plans showing the location of all infrastructure in relation to peat depth (with individual peat probes shown, coloured for depth – showing deeper peat avoidance), peat quality (avoiding good quality habitat) and NVC survey (avoiding good</li> </ul>	<p>Previous comments from SEPA have been noted.</p> <p>These points have been noted, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existing infrastructure and disturbed areas will be used as much as possible.</li> <li>- This is noted, and impacts on peatland habitats (including any known areas that are subject to peatland restoration) will be set out in any future application.</li> <li>- All supporting infrastructure and access arrangements will be set out in the EA / EIA Report.</li> <li>- Available baseline information will be included in SSEN Transmission's scoping report where this is relevant to inform the proposed scope of the EA / EIA Report.</li> <li>- SSEN Transmission will continue to engage with SEPA as the project progresses and will seek to provide further information in relation to peat depths, peat quality and habitat survey results.</li> <li>- This is noted.</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>quality or rare Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SEPA asked that SSEN Transmission please ensure that the layout that is submitted in the application accurately reflects, based on the information collected, what is proposed to be built. So for example ensure that towers are not shown in the application to be located within watercourses.</li> </ul>	
Historic Environment Scotland (HES)	HES had no comments to make at this stage for heritage assets within their remit.	This has been noted.
<b>Non-Statutory</b>		
BT	BT reviewed the project, with respect to Electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) and related problems to BT point-to-point microwave radio links. Their conclusion was that the project should not cause interference to BT's current and presently planned radio network.	This has been noted.
Laggan Community Council	Laggan Community Council expressed an appreciation of some movement towards the Community's expressed wish about the undergrounding of the cable connections from the wind farms on the Monaliadhth Plateau. However, they also expressed disappointment that there is the intention to have towers to connect into Melgarve Substation, in a visible manner, up and down the valley from the plateau.	SSEN Transmission are contracted to develop the connection types stipulated by the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers, which are OHLs. Should OHL connections be deemed unfeasible on environmental, engineering or economic grounds, other options, including UGC connections, can be explored. In the case of this project, it is deemed that an UGC is necessary on the plateau given technical constraints presented by existing and proposed renewable energy infrastructure. Beyond the extent of these wind farms, an OHL is the preferred solution in light of technical constraints and to minimise disturbance to habitats and watercourses, as well as being the most cost effective solution. The alignment selection process has involved consideration of the potential landscape and visual effects of the OHL, and further assessment will be undertaken during the EA / EIA stage.
MOD	MOD has no concerns with this application.	This has been noted.
NATS Safeguarding	The project was examined from a technical safeguarding aspect by NATS Safeguarding, and it was found that it does not conflict with	This has been noted.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>their safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS Safeguarding has no safeguarding objection to the project.</p>	
Scottish Water	<p>Scottish Water outlined that the project falls partly within a drinking water catchment where a Scottish Water abstraction is located. Loch Ness supplies Invermoriston Water Treatment Works (WTW) and it is essential that water quality and water quantity in the area are protected. It is a relatively large catchment and the activity is sufficient distance from the intake that it is likely to be low risk, however care should be taken and water quality protection measures must be implemented.</p>	<p>Appropriate measures would be put in place during construction works to minimise potential adverse effects on water quality.</p>
	<p>Scottish Water would request further involvement at the more detailed design stages, to determine the most appropriate proposals and mitigation within the catchment to protect water quality and quantity, as well as timing of works.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission will continue to engage with Scottish Water as the project progresses as part of consultation processes.</p>
	<p>Scottish Water highlighted that there are no Scottish Water assets (including water supply and sewer pipes, water and wastewater treatment works, reservoirs, etc.) in the area. This should be confirmed however through obtaining plans from Scottish Water Asset Plan Providers.</p>	<p>This is noted, and relevant plans will be reviewed to confirm.</p>
Glenshero Estate (SIMEC)	<p>Glenshero Estate would be affected from a point around 5 km north of Melgarve Substation, where the preferred alignment (OHL) crosses the northern boundary of the Estate, to the point where the connection enters Melgarve Substation.</p> <p>Glenshero Estate pointed out that it is already impacted by existing electricity network infrastructure, and its primary concern is that full consideration is given to the cumulative impact of this from a landscape and visual perspective and also from an environmental and ornithological perspective.</p>	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC)'s comments have been noted and full consideration will be given to the cumulative impact of the electricity network infrastructure in the area within the EA / EIA Report.</p> <p>SSEN Transmission will continue to liaise with Glenshero Estate as the project progresses. The route and alignment selection process aims to balance environmental, technical and cost considerations prior to arriving at a proposed solution.</p>
	<p>The majority of comments raised by Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) were in relation to the use of OHL. It is the Estate's view that landscape and visual impact, ornithological impact, environmental impact and long-term cumulative impact on this very rural setting will only be</p>	<p>As noted above, the alignment selection process has balanced environmental, technical and cost considerations in reaching its preferred alignment and design solution. The concerns of Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) are however noted, and further consideration of the potential environmental effects of the project will be undertaken as part of the EA / EIA stage of the project.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>satisfactorily addressed by the use of an UGC over the entire connection. It was pointed out that, in the case of the Stronelaig Wind Farm connection, SSE Renewables recognised the requirement for an underground connection.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission are contracted to develop the connection types stipulated by the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers, which are OHLs. Should OHL connections be deemed unfeasible on environmental, engineering or economic grounds, other options, including UGC connections, can be explored. In the case of this project, it is deemed that an UGC is necessary on the plateau given technical constraints presented by existing and proposed renewable energy infrastructure, with the remaining connection converting to OHL within the vicinity of Melgarve Substation. Beyond the extent of these wind farms, an OHL is the preferred solution in light of technical constraints and to minimise disturbance to habitats and watercourses, as well as being the most cost effective solution.</p> <p>SSE Renewables elected to connect via UGC for the Stronelaig Wind Farm, at a greater cost than OHL, whereas the developers in this case have not chosen to do this.</p>
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) stated that the only argument against the UGC preference is by reference to the Stronelaig cable. They stated that the poor design and/or installation of the Stronelaig UGC is not enough reason to reject an UGC solution against the weight of other indicators.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission's license obligations are to develop an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission. As such SSEN Transmission is obliged to seek the most cost effective solution, which is usually an OHL connection. In this case, SSEN Transmission are also contracted to develop the connection types stipulated by the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers, which are OHLs. Should OHL connections be deemed unfeasible on environmental, engineering or economic grounds, other options, including UGC connections, can be explored.</p> <p>In the case of this project, it is deemed that an UGC is necessary on the plateau given technical constraints presented by existing and proposed renewable energy infrastructure. For the remainder of the connection, it is considered that the use of OHL has advantages over UGC in terms of its ability to span over and therefore reduce impacts on sensitive habitats, biodiversity and watercourses.</p> <p>Although land has already been disturbed in the area from Junction B down to Melgarve Substation by the existing Stronelaig UGC, consideration must be given to the interaction between the existing Stronelaig UGC and any potential future UGC circuits. UGC circuits generate heat, and the performance/rating of a cable is impacted by the temperature that it can safely be operated at. The inclusion of additional UGC circuits in proximity results in an increase in the heating of the surrounding soil mass and would therefore negatively impact the existing Stronelaig UGC circuit and the existing capacity for which it is designed. Furthermore, the heating effect of the existing Stronelaig UGC on any potential future UGC circuits for Cloiche and Dell windfarms would result in the need of an easement width that well exceeds the width of previously disturbed ground. Issues of thermal interaction can be exacerbated in areas of deepening which are necessary to cross watercourses and other natural obstacles. As soil temperatures increase with depth, circuit spacing would have to increase further in these cases. An additional construction easement width of approximately 40 m over undisturbed ground would be envisaged to accommodate any new UGC for the potential Cloiche and Dell circuits where they run in proximity to the existing Stronelaig UGC. Given these</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
		<p>technical constraints, and to minimise disturbance to habitats and watercourse, an OHL solution from Junction B to Melgarve Substation is preferred.</p> <p>Resilience of an UGC circuit has also been considered. While reliability of UGC is generally good with relatively low failure rates, SSEN have must consider contingency scenarios should remedial works become necessary in order to maintain operation of the circuit or re-establish operation in the shortest possible timeframe. The size and weight of plant necessary for the excavation, retrieval and replacement of UGC and associated joints well exceeds that of an OHL and would be impractical to do so should that ever become a necessity in winter. Experience with the installation of the Stronelairg UGC has demonstrated these challenges and is another key factor in the technology selection.</p>
	<p>It was the view of Glenshero Estate that Landscape and Visual effects have not been given sufficient robust consideration and weighting when compared to cost when the option of OHL or UGC has been considered. The longer-term visual impact of all connection options must be considered as well as the short-term impact of the installation/construction works themselves. The only reference to this is one sentence at 7.5.7 which states that UGC would be the preferred option. It is stated that Landscape and Visual Impact assessment is to be part of EIA once route is chosen. This does not seem to give this aspect of the route choice and connection design appropriate weight in the balance of all other aspects of the consultation. The rigorous analysis of Landscape and Visual impact is essential to inform the choice of OHL/UGC prior to a preferred routeing decision being made.</p>	<p>The consideration of potential landscape and visual constraints has been an integral part of the alignment selection stage, which sought to select a preferred alignment and design solution which minimised potential impacts on landscape and visual receptors in the vicinity, on balance with other environmental, technical and cost considerations.</p>
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) stated that the visualisation provided by SSEN Transmission was useful to an extent, however they suggested that the trees should be removed from the landscape as commercial forestry is not a permanent landscape feature and can screen issues that become intrusive when the trees are harvested.</p> <p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) stated that the visualisation also shows the cable sealing end compound at Junction C immediately to the north of the Beauly – Denny line. This appears as a very imposing and intrusive structure, which does not fit at all with its surroundings. The plans show Junction C as being located</p>	<p>The visualisations referred to were part of a video prepared to aid the consultation and to give an indication of where the sealing end compound may be placed and what it may look like. It is not common practice to remove commercial forestry from visualisations given such areas are typically on a fell and restock cycle, and will continue to remain a commercial plantation, albeit at different stages.</p> <p>The positioning and dimensions of the cable sealing end compound are not currently fixed and will be informed by environmental and engineering considerations, including landscape and visual considerations, as the project progresses. In response to feedback, it is likely that a greater spacing from the Beauly-Denny line will be progressed but exact position will be dependent on the outcome of ground investigations.</p> <p>Junction C is not intended to be in the same location as the cable sealing end compound which is the point at which the OHL transitions onto UGC.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>approximately 1 km north of the Beaulay – Denny line, where it would appear even higher above the access track. Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) suggest that the location of Junction C should be clarified.</p>	
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) state the Stronelairg cable haul track is described in the Consultation Document as a windfarm access track which is not correct.</p>	<p>The existing Stronelairg UGC haul road is referred to separately from the existing access track network for Stronelairg Wind Farm and Melgarve Substation access track in the Consultation Document. Windfarm access tracks in the Consultation Document should refer to the existing Stronelairg and the proposed Cloiche Wind Farm access tracks.</p>
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) state that the EIA has not been completed or published prior to the choice of proposed route/connection type being made. They outline that it is essential that the EIA feeds into this decision.</p>	<p>The route, alignment and EIA stages of this project are iterative, which allows routeing decisions to be reviewed throughout these stages of the project.</p>
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) agreed that the need for the project is adequately explained.</p>	<p>This is acknowledged.</p>
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) felt that the preferred alignment is not the most appropriate option for further consideration at the EA / EIA and Consenting stage. They state that by SSEN Transmission’s own document the preferred option in almost all cases is for an underground cable. Cumulative visual impact has not been adequately considered and must be assessed. The EA/EIA should cover all available options, not just the SSEN Transmission preferred route and should be made publicly available at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>The route and alignment selection process aims to balance environmental, technical and cost considerations prior to arriving at a preferred solution. The Consultation Document highlighted that the potential environmental effects of an UGC connection compared to an OHL differed across topics, but that the difference between the alignment options within each section for environmental considerations are subtle. The engineering preferences though were more absolute.</p> <p>SSEN Transmission will continue to liaise with Glenshero Estate as the project progresses via meetings as appropriate.</p>
<p>SSE Generation Limited as owner/operator of Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme</p>	<p>SSE Generation’s primary concern is that in its development of the Melgarve Cluster Project, SSEN Transmission fully considers the potentially significant impact on Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme as an existing operational asset and enters into meaningful and full consultation on the mitigation of this impact to avoid disruption of Glendoe’s operations and its ability to export electricity.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission have considered the impact on Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and will continue to liaise with SSE Generation Limited as the project progresses. Details of the ‘as built’ infrastructure have been sought and a suitable crossing point of the existing Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme tunnels by the UGC will be agreed between SSEN Transmission and SSE Generation. This may require minor deviations to the UGC as a result of Ground Investigations and detailed design.</p>
	<p>While the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme power station itself is not within the study area, large parts of the study area are within the</p>	<p>This is a matter which is being discussed directly between the parties outwith the Report on Consultation.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	catchment area, so SSE Generation requested that SSEN Transmission show SSE Generation's assets on a plan.	
	SSE Generation stated that UGC installation is likely to have a greater chance of causing issues for SSE Generation than OHL construction would.	As explained within Section 2.2 of this report, the current contracted position is for SSEN Transmission to connect Dell and Cloiche wind farms via OHL. However, some sections of the connection, including those areas within the vicinity of Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, are unsuitable for OHL given they pass through areas of existing and proposed wind turbines. As a result, an UGC would be required on this project at higher elevations through existing and proposed wind farms.
	SSE Generation would welcome clarity on whether the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and its existing infrastructure was also considered in the context of constraints.	Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and its existing infrastructure was considered as part of the alignment stage consultation - see Section 4.3 of the Consultation Document in particular. SSEN Transmission will liaise further with SSE Generation to discuss any interfaces with the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.
	SSE Generation would welcome the opportunity to engage in further consultation with SSEN Transmission so that further information on the extent of overlap between the Melgarve Cluster and Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme infrastructure can be understood.	SSEN Transmission are arranging a meeting with SSE Generation to discuss any interfaces relating to Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.
	SSE Generation provided a number of other detailed comments in relation to the interface with Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, and the construction and operational phases of the proposed connection.	SSEN Transmission will liaise further with SSE Generation on all comments in relation to the interface with Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, including during the construction and operational phases of the project.
SSE Renewables (Cloiche Wind Farm)	The comments expressed by SSE Renewables (Cloiche Wind Farm), solely reflect SSE Renewables' interests as the Developer of the proposed Cloiche Wind Farm project.	This is noted.
	SSE Renewables noted that the UGC from Dell Wind Farm to Junction A, would impose on a preferential Habitat Management Plan (HMP) area for Cloiche WF (NW of the proposed UGC section). The land surrounding Junction A is also proposed as a potential HMP area. SSE Renewables would look for the proposed connection to take due cognisance of the HMP areas for Cloiche Wind Farm and its long-term management to ensure it satisfies NatureScot's peatland restoration requirements.	This issue has been further discussed in meetings between SSEN Transmission and SSE Renewables. On further investigation it is likely that the extent of overlap with any potential HMP on land surrounding Junction A will be reduced and conflict within this zone is likely to be resolved. SSEN Transmission propose to make a minor alteration to the UGC in the approach to Dell Wind Farm to minimise interface with the northern HMP areas. This will be finalised at the detailed design stage. Minimising interaction with proposed HMP areas will continue to be considered as the project progresses.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>SSE Renewables noted SSEN Transmission's commitment that a minimum of three rotor diameters will be maintained between any turbines at OHL towers. SSE Renewables (Cloiche Wind Farm) welcomed the UGC option that negates this, however they suggested that some proposed Cloiche Wind Farm turbines are sited within the preferred alignment.</p>	<p>The preferred alignment in relation to the proposed Cloiche Wind Farm turbines has been re-assessed. Although the interface is close, no direct conflict is expected to arise. Further discussion with SSE Renewables will be undertaken as the project progresses to manage any interfaces to avoid any conflict, including where the OHL transitions to UGC.</p>
	<p>SSE Renewables suggested that the preferred alignment must ensure that a micro-siting allowance of 50 m can still be applied to the Cloiche Wind Farm turbines as per their Section 36 application. SSEN Transmission should confirm whether the connection will meet the required horizontal clearance from all proposed Cloiche Wind Farm turbines, especially within proximity to the Junction A.</p>	<p>This is acknowledged and further discussion with SSE Renewables will be undertaken as the project progresses to avoid any conflict.</p>
	<p>SSE Renewables would welcome the opportunity to discuss all points made on behalf of the future Cloiche Wind Farm project (including around the timings of the connection(s) and type of lattice tower circuit connection) with SSEN Transmission, especially with regards to Cloiche's requirement for extensive HMP areas.</p>	<p>Further meetings between SSEN Transmission and SSE Renewables (Cloiche Wind Farm) have occurred and are ongoing.</p>
Stonelaig Wind Farm (SWFL)	<p>SWFL's primary concern is that SSEN Transmission fully considers the potentially significant impact on Stonelaig Wind Farm as an existing operational wind farm.</p>	<p>Stonelaig Wind Farm has been taken into consideration throughout the route and alignment selection stages. The preferred alignment has sought to follow existing tracks where possible and further discussion will be held with SWFL in relation to the interface with Stonelaig Wind Farm.</p>
	<p>Given the local and national significance of Stonelaig, SWFL hope that by discussing and mitigating any potential impact to Stonelaig's operations, the Project can proceed without disrupting Stonelaig's capacity to operate and its ability to export renewable energy.</p>	<p>Further discussion with SWFL will be undertaken as the project progresses.</p>
	<p>SWFL has previously responded to the prior Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation document in February 2022 which remain applicable.</p>	<p>All route stage consultation responses continue to be considered as the project progresses.</p>
	<p>SWFL provided a number of other comments in relation to the interface with Stonelaig Wind Farm, and the construction and operational phases of the proposed connection. Specifically, the</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission will liaise further with SWFL on all comments in relation to the interface with Stonelaig Wind Farm. Interfaces will be carefully considered as part of the detailed design process to minimise interfaces/mitigate their impacts. Diverting the UGC to the west of Stonelaig Wind Farm would conflict</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>interface with existing cables and the preferred alignment is identified with a suggestion that the UGC route should be altered to pass along the west of Stronelaig's most western turbines to minimise any interface and disturbance.</p>	<p>with the proposed Cloiche HMP area which is not a feasible alternative. The design of the cable alignment has sought to follow the existing access tracks where possible.</p>
	<p>SWFL appreciate that in the Consultation Document SSEN Transmission commits to further engagement on a number of the above issues, and SWFL welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission will remain in contact with SWFL in relation to these topics as the project progresses.</p>
<p>Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables)</p>	<p>Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) welcomed the opportunity to provide further comments on the proposal, while these are still capable of having an influence on the final submitted design solution.</p> <p>They pointed out that they have previously provided comments on the route options issued by SSEN Transmission in January 2022, all of which remain relevant to this consultation stage.</p>	<p>All route stage consultation responses continue to be considered as the project progresses.</p>
	<p>Stronelaig Estate suggested that the decision on the preferred alignment appears to be biased towards the best technical and engineering solutions, with the Red RAG scores considered more absolute than the environmental constraints which are considered to be more subtle. The Report also concludes that (other than where UGC is necessary for technical reasons) the OHL is the most cost-effective option with reduced maintenance costs, in this challenging elevation and topography. Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) however, stated that whilst potentially more disruptive and costly during construction, with sympathetic reinstatement UGC can, especially in the longer term, overcome the potential significant adverse visual and land use impacts of an OHL. Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) suggest that this is particularly relevant on higher ground between Junction A and Junction B, where OHL would have a significant detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the landscape and as well as practical implications for the tourist and visitors who come to the area for recreational walking and for</p>	<p>The alignment selection process has balanced environmental, technical and cost considerations in reaching its preferred alignment and design solution. SSEN Transmission are contracted to develop the connection types stipulated by the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers, which are OHLs. Should OHL connections be deemed unfeasible on environmental, engineering or economic grounds, other options, including UGC connections, can be explored. In the case of this project, it is deemed that an UGC is necessary on the plateau given technical constraints presented by existing and proposed renewable energy infrastructure. Beyond the extent of these wind farms, an OHL is the preferred solution in light of technical constraints and to minimise disturbance to habitats and watercourses, as well as being the most cost-effective solution.</p> <p>Further assessment of potential environmental effects of the project will be undertaken during the EA / EIA stage.</p>

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>sporting activities, on which the Stronelaig Estate relies on as a very importance source of income.</p> <p>Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) understand that although a preferred alignment has been arrived at, design solutions are still progressing and alternative routes, including UGC, has not been ruled out. With full LVIAs to be carried out as part of the EA/EIA, including ZTV figures and visualisations, Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) is confident that further consideration will be given to potential landscape and visual impact of OHL, which should be given the same consideration/weight as the engineering and cost implications.</p> <p>Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) suggested that further detailed surveys are still required (including EIA with LVIAs) to better establish the landscape and visual impact constraints – before a final decision can be made on the use of UGC and OHL for Melgarve Cluster grid connection.</p>	<p>A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) will be included within the EA / EIA Report.</p> <p>A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) will be included within the EA / EIA Report.</p>
Transport Scotland	<p>Transport Scotland passed the Consultation Document to SYSTRA Limited for review in their capacity as Term Consultants to Transport Scotland – Roads Directorate. Based on the review undertaken, Transport Scotland then provided comments.</p> <p>Transport Scotland noted that a Route Selection process was carried out between September 2021 and May 2022 resulting in a preferred route being identified. Transport Scotland note that the route does not cross any trunk roads.</p> <p>Given the distance from the trunk road network, Transport Scotland confirmed that they have no comment to make on the alignment options themselves and will await formal consultation on the application when submitted.</p>	<p>This has been noted.</p> <p>This has been noted.</p> <p>This has been noted.</p>
Wind Farms JRC	No concerns were raised in relation to the Melgarve Cluster project.	This has been noted.

## 5. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### 5.1 Summary

5.1.1 In-person consultation events took place for this project at the following times:

- 8 February 2023 2-7pm, Laggan Community Hall; and
- 9 February 2023 2-7pm, Fort Augustus Village Hall.

5.1.2 A total of 23 people attended the public consultation events across the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2023.

5.1.3 Feedback received from the local community and general public in response to the public consultation events was minimal. Some of the key themes discussed at the events related to technology types including the use of OHL and UGC, traffic concerns regarding the main access roads for construction and hours of HGV traffic, and timings on key project steps.

5.1.4 No feedback forms were received by post or online after the virtual consultation.

5.1.5 Any further comments received by the local community will be considered as the project is taken forward into the EA / EIA and consenting stage. This process will remain inclusive, seeking further consultation where appropriate.

## 6. IDENTIFICATION OF A PROPOSED ALIGNMENT

### 6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 SSEN Transmission has reviewed and considered the responses provided by stakeholders following the identification of a preferred alignment and design solution, as set out within the Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document.<sup>1</sup> Responses to each of the points raised by stakeholders through the consultation process are included in Sections 4 and 5 of this report.
- 6.1.2 SSEN Transmission has concluded from this review that the preferred alignment and design solution set out within the Melgarve Cluster Alignment Options Consultation Document<sup>1</sup> should be taken forward as the proposed alignment and design solution, subject to some minor alterations with respect to the proposed locations of cable sealing end compounds and the indicative UGC alignment. The proposed alignment and design solution can be seen in **Figure 2**.
- 6.1.3 This proposed alignment and design solution is considered to provide an appropriate balance between the competing preferences of environmental, engineering and cost factors. The decision to progress with an UGC solution through the existing (Stronelairg) and proposed (Cloiche and Dell) wind farms has been dictated by technical requirements given it is not possible to achieve an OHL alignment through this part of the route due to the proximity to wind turbines and the resultant 'wake effect' that can lead to premature fatigue and failure of the OHL. As a result, an UGC would be required on this project at higher elevations through the existing and proposed wind farms, and SSEN Transmission will liaise closely with each wind farm developer with respect to any potential interfaces with the UGC and wind farm infrastructure. A section of UGC would also be required for the final approach to Melgarve Substation in order to cross under the Beaulay-Denny 400 kV line.
- 6.1.4 For the remainder of the route, an OHL solution is proposed. This is in line with SSEN Transmission's obligations to develop an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission, and the contracted position between SSEN Transmission and the Cloiche and Dell wind farm developers. It is also considered that the use of OHL has advantages over UGC in terms of its ability to span over and therefore reduce impacts on sensitive habitats, biodiversity and watercourses.
- 6.1.5 A further design consideration at this site is the presence of Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme, owned and operated by SSE Generation. The proposed alignment of the UGC will need to be located and designed to avoid existing infrastructure associated with the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme and further discussion with SSE Generation will be held to ensure this is achieved.
- 6.1.6 All comments and considerations to date, as well as those resulting from any further meetings and liaison with stakeholders will be taken forward into the EA / EIA and consenting stage, through which assessments will be carried out for all relevant environmental aspects. This process will remain inclusive, seeking further consultation where appropriate.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### 7.1 Conclusion

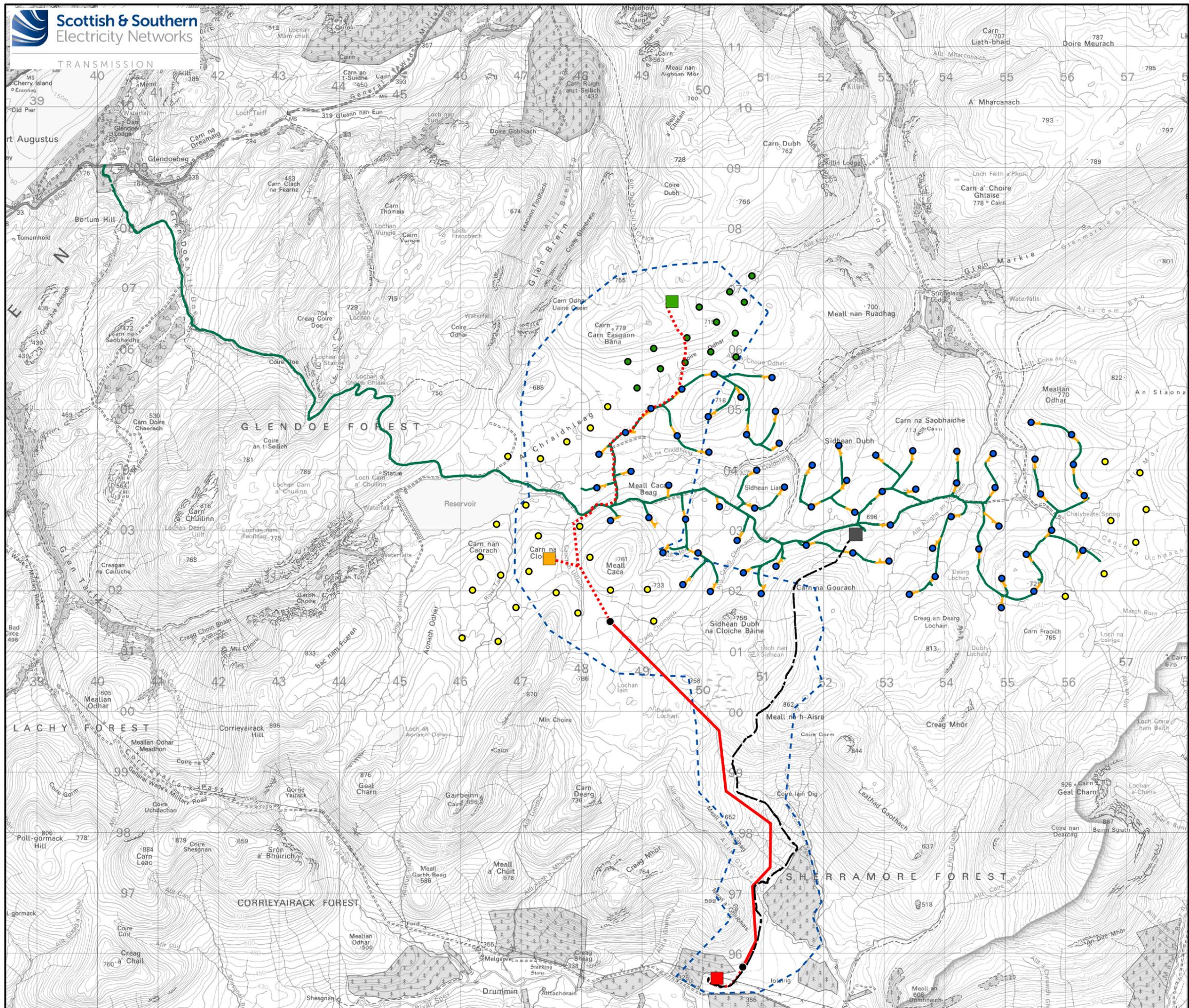
7.1.1 This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which has been undertaken for the project between January and March 2023. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the rationale for and approach to, the selection of the preferred alignment option.

7.1.2 This report has described the key responses received and provides detail on the actions proposed in response to the issues raised. The consultation process has confirmed that, subject to some minor alterations, the preferred alignment and design solution as set out within the Consultation Document should be taken forward as the proposed alignment into Stage 4: EIA / EA and consenting. This is displayed on **Figure 2**. The proposed alignment and design solution was selected on the basis that it is considered to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical and economic factors.

### 7.2 Next Steps

7.2.1 The project will now progress into Stage 4 (EIA / EA and consenting). Should further site and desk-based analysis at the EA / EIA and consenting stage identify a particular constraint, a further review of the proposed alignment and design solution may be required.

7.2.2 As part of the EA / EIA process, a screening request will be submitted to the Energy Consents Unit of the Scottish Government in June 2023 to seek a Screening Opinion from Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) to determine whether the elements of the Proposed Development seeking Section 37 and deemed planning consent (i.e. the OHL and ancillary infrastructure) should, or should not, be considered EIA Development in the context of the EIA Regulations. The screening request will also set out the proposed scope of environmental assessment work to inform the evolving design and support a future application.



**Legend**

- Proposed Route
- Proposed Alignment Overhead Line (OHL)
- Indicative Underground Cable (UGC) Alignment
- Indicative Cable Sealing End Compound

**Substations**

- Stronelairg
- Dell
- Melgarve
- Cloiche

**Stronelairg Infrastructure**

- Stronelairg Turbines
- Stronelairg Tracks
- Stronelairg Hardstandings
- Stronelairg Underground Cable (UGC)

**Proposed Cloiche Infrastructure**

- Proposed Cloiche Turbines

**Proposed Dell Infrastructure**

- Proposed Dell Turbines

N  
0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 km  
Scale - 1:60,000 @ A3

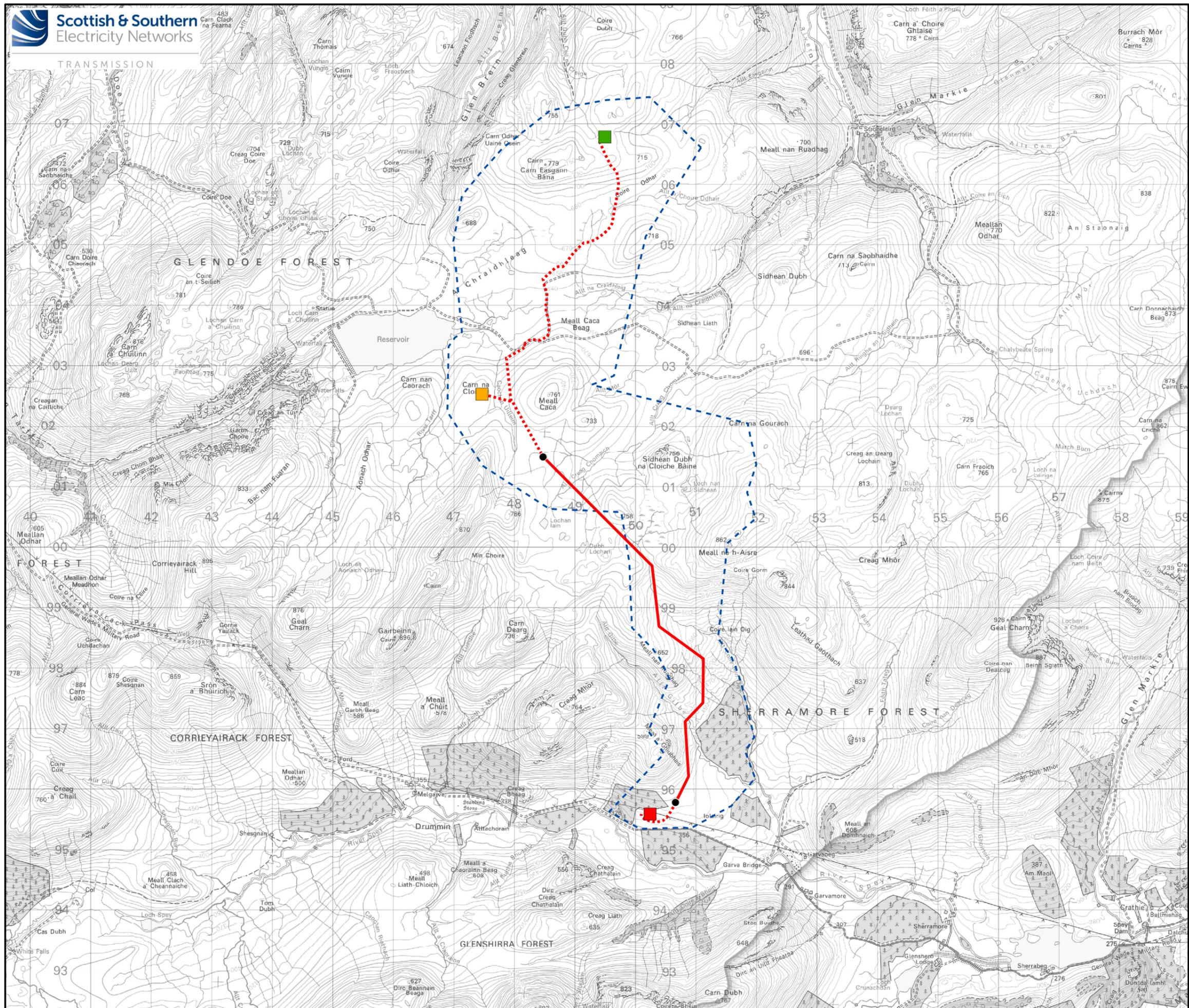
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Project: Melgarve Cluster: Report on Consultation - Alignment Options

Title: Figure 1 - Preferred Alignment with Surrounding Existing and Proposed Wind Farms

Drawn by: HL/KM/CG Date: 02/06/2023

Drawing: 121010-D1-A-ROC-1.0.1

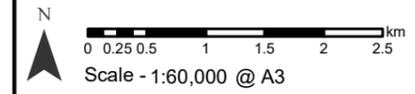


**Legend**

- Proposed Route
- Proposed Alignment Overhead Line (OHL)
- Indicative Underground Cable (UGC) Alignment
- Indicative Cable Sealing End Compound

**Substations**

- Dell
- Melgarve
- Cloiche



ash

**Project:** Melgarve Cluster: Report on Consultation - Alignment Options

**Title:** Figure 2 - Proposed Alignment

**Drawn by:** CG **Date:** 02/06/2023

**Drawing:** 121010-D2-A-ROC-1.0.1