

ANNEX H: SUMMARY OF ALIGNMENT STAGE CONSULTATION FEEDBACK FROM STATUTORY & NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES – JUNE 2023

Statutory and Non-Statutory Alignment Stage Consultee Feedback – June 2023

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
Statutory		
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>	See below responses.
	<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 Stronelairg 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 Stronelairg UGC, consideration must be given to the interaction between the existing Stronelairg 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 Stronelairg UGC circuit and the existing capacity for which it is designed. Furthermore, the heating effect of the existing Stronelairg 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</p>

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		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.
	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	This is correct. With respect to the OHL, both connections can be accommodated on the same towers.

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	<p>accommodated on the same tower thus removing the need for parallel towers and lines.</p>	
	<p>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 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>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 Beauly – 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.</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 Stronelairg, 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>Figure 1 shows the proposed layout for Cloiche and Dell wind farms and the layout of Stronelairg 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>

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	<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 developments to deliver positive effects for biodiversity, primarily under Policy 3.</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>
	<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>Previous comments from SEPA have been noted.</p>
	<p>SEPA would add / re-emphasise the following points to their previous advice:</p> <p>To ensure that the development that comes forward makes use of existing infrastructure and disturbed areas as much as possible.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>SEPA asked that SSEN Transmission please ensure that the application identifies all supporting infrastructure – potential</p>	<p>These points have been noted, and:</p> <p>Existing infrastructure and disturbed areas will be used as much as possible.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>All supporting infrastructure and access arrangements will be set out in the EA / EIA Report.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>This is noted.</p>

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	<p>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.</p> <p>SEPA suggested that it would be helpful if SSEN Transmission's scoping report included any baseline information already collected.</p> <p>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 quality or rare Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)).</p> <p>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.</p>	
Historic Environment Scotland (HES)	HES had no comments to make at this stage for heritage assets within their remit.	This has been noted.
Non-Statutory		
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.

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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 Monaliadh 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 their safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS Safeguarding has no safeguarding objection to the project.	This has been noted.
Scottish Water	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.	Appropriate measures would be put in place during construction works to minimise potential adverse effects on water quality.
	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.	SSEN Transmission will continue to engage with Scottish Water as the project progresses as part of consultation processes.
	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	This is noted, and relevant plans will be reviewed to confirm.

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	<p>should be confirmed however through obtaining plans from Scottish Water Asset Plan Providers.</p>	
<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC)</p>	<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 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>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> <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>

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		<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 Stronelairst UGC, consideration must be given to the interaction between the existing Stronelairst 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 Stronelairst UGC circuit and the existing capacity for which it is designed. Furthermore, the heating effect of the existing Stronelairst 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 Stronelairst 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> <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 Stronelairst 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-</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>

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	<p>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>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 approximately 1 km north of the Beauly – 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>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>
	<p>Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) state the Stronelairst cable haul track is described in the Consultation Document as a windfarm access track which is not correct.</p>	<p>The existing Stronelairst UGC haul road is referred to separately from the existing access track network for Stronelairst Wind Farm and Melgarve Substation access track in the Consultation Document. Windfarm access tracks in the Consultation Document should refer to the existing Stronelairst 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>

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	Glenshero Estate (SIMEC) agreed that the need for the project is adequately explained.	This is acknowledged.
	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.	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. SSEN Transmission will continue to liaise with Glenshero Estate as the project progresses via meetings as appropriate.
SSE Generation Limited as owner/operator of Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme	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.	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.
	While the Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme power station itself is not within the study area, large parts of the study area are within the catchment area, so SSE Generation requested that SSEN Transmission show SSE Generation's assets on a plan.	This is a matter which is being discussed directly between the parties outwith the Report on Consultation.
	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.

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	<p>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.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission are arranging a meeting with SSE Generation to discuss any interfaces relating to Glendoe Hydroelectric Scheme.</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
SSE Renewables (Cloiche Wind Farm)	<p>The comments expressed by SSE Renewables (Cloiche Wind Farm), solely reflect SSE Renewables' interests as the Developer of the proposed Cloiche Wind Farm project.</p>	<p>This is noted.</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<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</p>	<p>This is acknowledged and further discussion with SSE Renewables will be undertaken as the project progresses to avoid any conflict.</p>

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	<p>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>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>
Stonelairst Wind Farm (SWFL)	<p>SWFL's primary concern is that SSEN Transmission fully considers the potentially significant impact on Stonelairst Wind Farm as an existing operational wind farm.</p>	<p>Stonelairst 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 Stonelairst Wind Farm.</p>
	<p>Given the local and national significance of Stonelairst, SWFL hope that by discussing and mitigating any potential impact to Stonelairst's operations, the Project can proceed without disrupting Stonelairst'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 Stonelairst Wind Farm, and the construction and operational phases of the proposed connection. Specifically, the 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 Stonelairst's most western turbines to minimise any interface and disturbance.</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission will liaise further with SWFL on all comments in relation to the interface with Stonelairst 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 Stonelairst Wind Farm would conflict 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</p>	<p>SSEN Transmission will remain in contact with SWFL in relation to these topics as the project progresses.</p>

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	the above issues, and SWFL welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further.	
Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables)	<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>	All route stage consultation responses continue to be considered as the project progresses.
	<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 sporting activities, on which the Stronelaig Estate relies on as a very importance source of income.</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>
	Stronelaig Estate (Connell Renewables) understand that although a preferred alignment has been arrived at, design solutions are still progressing and alternative routes, including	A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) will be included within the EA / EIA Report.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Response by SSEN Transmission
	<p>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>
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>This has been noted.</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>This has been noted.</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>
Wind Farms JRC	<p>No concerns were raised in relation to the Melgarve Cluster project.</p>	<p>This has been noted.</p>