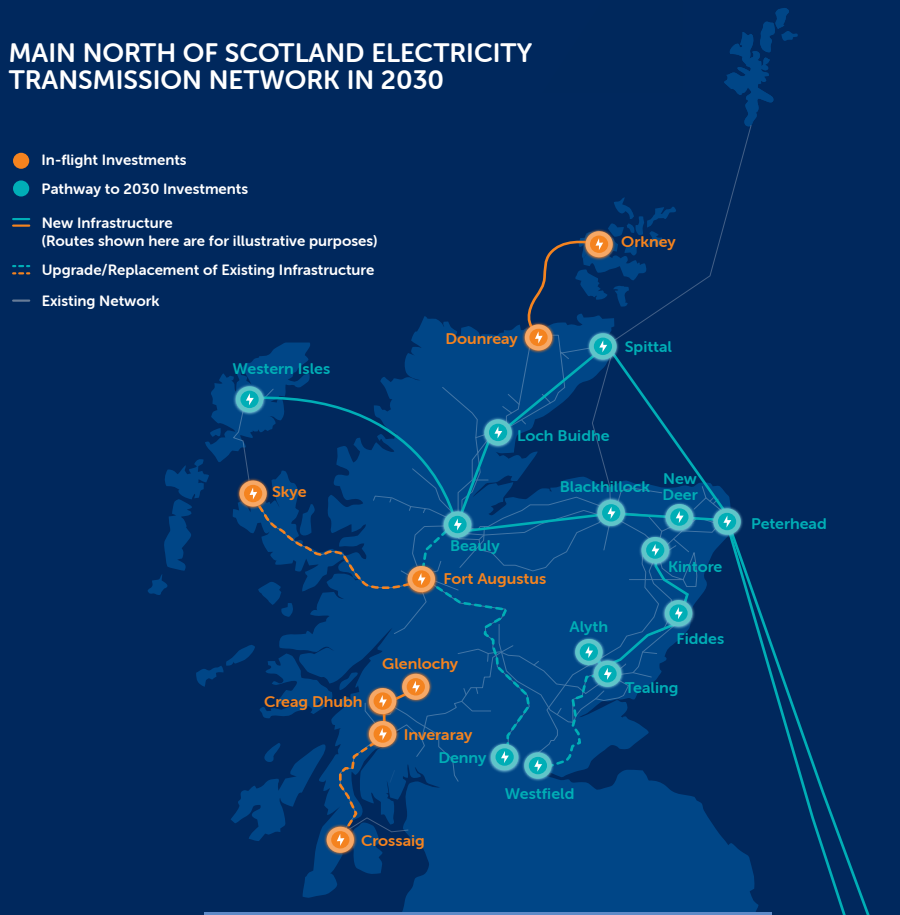
Delivering a positive environmental legacy

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

MAIN NORTH OF SCOTLAND ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION NETWORK IN 2030



Our commitment to deliver a positive environmental legacy

SSEN Transmission owns, operates, and develops the high voltage **electricity transmission network** in the north of Scotland. As a regulated business, delivering **critical national infrastructure**, our job is to connect and transport the renewable energy needed to support Scottish and UK emissions reduction targets and strengthen security of home-grown electricity supply. Connecting up to 11GW of renewable electricity to the GB grid by 2030.

As we deliver around £10bn of investment this decade to help tackle the climate emergency and energy security crisis, we recognise that we have a responsibility to help **tackle the twin environmental crisis** too. Guided by our industry leading environmental policies - which covers both land and marine enviornments - we aim to provide a **positive environmental impact** as we deliver a Network for Net Zero.

These commitments ensure that as we deliver our critical infrastructure we also take a stakeholder-led approach in creating environmental benefit for the communities that host our infrastructure to leave a positive lasting legacy that enhances biodiversity in Scotland's most precious habitats.

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS: ON LAND AND AT SEA

Sustainable and responsible project development from scoping to operation

Our sector leading environmental commitments mean that when developing routing and siting options for our overhead lines, underground cables and substations our projects will avoid, mitigate and restore any environmental impacts wherever possible. Our environmental teams are embedded in project development to consider and consult upon the most suitable route from the very start, using well established data sets and additional detailed survey work. To aid our selection process we have developed an iterative constraints analysis and mapping programme to consider all known environmental constraints and derive routing options with the least environmental impact.

During construction, our developments also aim to actively enable opportunities to significantly enhance existing ecosystems at our sites. **Leaving a positive, lasting legacy** throughout the lifetime of our operational assets for the benefit of our environment and our host communities.

Working in partnership with environmental experts to find nature positive solutions

We spend millions across our projects on environmental survey work each year, with ongoing monitoring of mitigation measures to ensure success. Working in close collaboration with statutory and non-statutory environmental consultees we aim to **work in partnership** to find acceptable routes and mitigation outcomes to deliver positive environmental solutions, targeting a net gain in biodiversity enhancement on all new sites.

Our Biodiversity Net Gain commitments

As the first developer to consult upon and implement an award winning approach to deliver **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) on all new sites, we're committed to delivering a "greener grid", focusing on habitat restoration and creating biodiversity growth as we invest in our network. We are committed to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on all sites gaining consent going forward. This ensures that we don't just restore our natural habitats but actively improve them for the benefit of local communities, wildlife, flora and fauna.

CASE STUDY: Bee-ing responsible in Caithness

Our wildflower meadow at Thurso South substation has helped to increase numbers of the Great Yellow Bumblebee, working in partnership with the Caithness Biodiversity Group and the Bumblebee Trust.

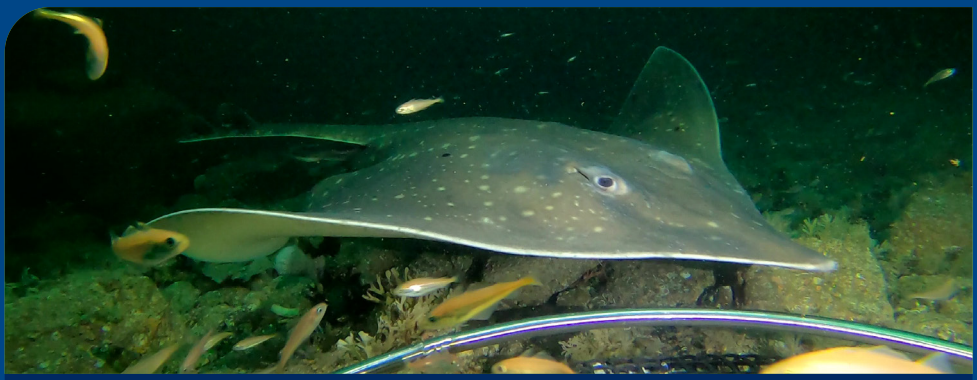
CASE STUDY: Delivering a 60% gain at Rothienorman substation

As part of our commitment to biodiversity net gain, we've created habitats which will deliver a significant improvement in biodiversity as we upgrade our Rothienorman substation, a critical part of wider East Coast reinforcement works. This has been done primarily through the planting of native species which will further reduce the visual impact of the substation as well as enhancing the local environment.

As a result of implementing these BNG measures, SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Toolkit's metric predicts that there will be a 60% net gain of biodiversity units compared to the habitats found on the site before construction. Boxes have also been added to the site to provide enhancements for bats, birds and insects, with hibernacula features created close to the ponds for amphibians.

Our Marine Biodiversity approach

In addition to our commitments to improve onshore biodiversity, we're also committed to ensuring **positive marine biodiversity outcomes** as we deliver our subsea cables offshore; connecting Scotland's remote islands to the GB grid and progressing vital reinforcements for ScotWind projects. Working in partnership with like minded local environmental groups we're working to better our collective understanding of the wider marine environment and potential impacts to protect and restore our most precious marine species and habitats.

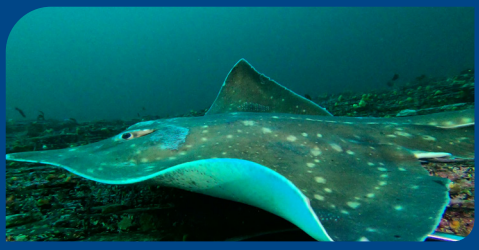


CASE STUDY: Partnering with the Orkney Skate Trust to support marine research

SSEN Transmission is working with Orkney Skate Trust by providing funding support for their invaluable research and sharing their unique marine data sets, which included 3D bathymetric and side-scan sonar data of the seabed collected as part of the route section for the proposed Orkney transmission connection.

As a stepping-stone to delivering habitat restoration in the marine environment, we reached out to the Orkney Skate Trust to initially support their 2022 survey works, and have now agreed a 5 year funding programme, after learning of their leading research work through Seasearch Scotland, a volunteer-led marine data organisation.

The information gathered from our partnership will give us a much deeper understanding of the marine environment and the ways in which we can help preserve and enhance the unique wildlife that exists there.



Our Woodland Commitments

SSEN Transmission supports and is committed to a **"no net loss" approach** in woodland cover on new projects, delivered through our commitment to compensatory tree planting. In circumstances where it is not possible to avoid impacts due to location or operational requirements, our policy ensures that trees are only removed as a last resort; if essential and if no other option is available. Our compensatory planting approach ensures that any loss is replaced with a higher quality species where possible to enhance local eco systems and create a net gain on biodiversity measurement.

CASE STUDY: ACT-ing in partnership to support Scotland's rainforest

Our partnership with ACT and Argyll and Bute Council is delivering our compensatory tree planting commitments through our Argyll network reinforcements, whilst supporting ACT's charitable community objectives. This proposal seeks to protect, enhance and extend Scotland's Historic Rainforest in Argyll.

This partnership is also enabling a number of local benefits including employment of a woodland officer, outdoor learning opportunities, use of local supply chain, health and wellbeing improvements for local people and climate change workshops. The project has been nominated for three prestigious awards in the past year due to its sector leading approach.

Our Irreplaceable Habitats commitments

Focusing on ancient woodland, veteran trees and peatland, our **Irreplaceable Habitats commitments** puts stringent processes in place to prioritise the avoidance of routing through these habitats wherever possible. In circumstances where impacts are unavoidable due to the extent of ancient woodland coverage in our network area, and where network resilience could potentially be put at risk, we will set out a comprehensive and site-specific irreplaceable habitats plan to minimise any potential impacts wherever possible, such as exploring micro-siting, reducing our standard operational corridor and restorative action where such impacts are unavoidable.

In the case of **ancient woodland** specifically, we're committed to funding appropriate restoration projects to enhance the condition of existing ancient woodland sites (e.g removing invasive Rhododendron) or replacing any unavoidable tree removal (which historically tend to be commercial plantation) with native broadleaves to enhance woodland eco systems.

We believe this approach is not only the right thing to do to protect these precious habitats, but also to enhance them, as we deliver our critical national infrastructure for an energy secure, zero carbon economy.

As we deliver a network for net zero, we're committed to delivering a responsible "greener grid" that creates lasting legacy benefits for communities, nature and society. For further information on our environmental approach and commitments please visit:
www.ssen-transmission.co.uk

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