

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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### Figures (Volume 3 of this EIA Report)

Figure 1.1: Site Location Overview

Figure 1.2: Site Location Detail

### Visualisations (Volume 4 of this EIA Report)

There are no visualisations associated with this Chapter.

### Appendices (Volume 5 of this EIA Report)

There are no appendices associated with this Chapter.

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Overview

- 11.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIA Report') has been prepared by WSP UK Limited on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ('the Applicant') who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission ('SEN Transmission'), own, operate, develop and maintain the high voltage electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and remote islands. In this EIA Report "the Applicant" and "SEN Transmission" are used interchangeably unless the context requires otherwise.
- 11.2 The EIA Report has been prepared to accompany an application for consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989<sup>1</sup> ('the 1989 Act') to construct and operate a new double circuit steel structure 400 kilovolt (kV) overhead line (OHL) to connect into new substation sites at Beauly, New Deer and Peterhead. The project is referred to as the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV OHL Project<sup>2</sup> (the 'Proposed Development') and it will pass through the local planning authority areas of Highland, Moray, and Aberdeenshire. The Proposed Development also includes the realignment of a section of the existing 275 kV OHL south of Ferness.
- 11.3 The location of the Proposed Development and related substation proposals is shown on **Figure 1.1 Site Location Overview**.
- 11.4 In addition, the application also seeks consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act for an alternative alignment ('the Kellas Alternative Alignment'). In this particular location, the alignment of the Proposed Development passes through an area which is within the application boundary for the proposed Kellas Drum Wind Farm, for which an application for consent under section 36 of the 1989 Act has been submitted to the Scottish Government (application reference ECU00005054). If the windfarm application were to be consented<sup>3</sup>, then the Kellas Alternative Alignment, which passes to the north of the proposed windfarm, would be constructed. This EIA Report assesses both alternatives and consent is sought for both alignments.
- 11.5 The Applicant is also seeking deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997<sup>4</sup> for the construction and operation of the OHL and carrying out of ancillary works. These ancillary works will include the removal of the existing 132 kV OHL from Beauly to Knocknagael substations; installation of temporary and permanent access tracks; and tree and vegetation clearance.
- 11.6 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development, including the Kellas Alternative Alignment in accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017<sup>5</sup> ('the EIA Regulations') to assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development. The findings of the EIA are presented in this EIA Report, including the measures which would be taken to prevent, reduce and, where possible, offset predicted likely significant adverse effects.
- 11.7 To facilitate construction of the Proposed Development, modification to the electricity distribution network will be required, such as where the Proposed Development crosses a distribution line. These works do not form part of the consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the Proposed Development but are a consequence of its construction. These works are therefore included here as 'associated works' for the purposes of the EIA.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Government (1989). Electricity Act 1989. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/contents>

<sup>2</sup> Also referred to as 'Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV Project'

<sup>3</sup> There may be other circumstances associated with the status of the application for consent of the proposed Kellas Drum Wind Farm where the Kellas Alternative Alignment would be constructed.

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government (1997). Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents>

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government (2017). The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/introduction/made>

- 1.1.8 Other related works include the need to build new substations at Beaully (Fanellan 400 kV substation, application reference 25/00826/FUL), New Deer (Greens 400 kV substation, application reference APP/2024/1927) and Peterhead (Netherton 400 kV Hub, application reference APP/2024/1714). The substation developments are being progressed separately and will be subject to the appropriate consenting processes as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

## 1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The Applicant owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a transmission licence under the 1989 Act. In terms of section 9(2) of the 1989 Act, the Applicant has a statutory duty to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated, and economical system of electrical transmission, and a separate duty to facilitate competition between current and new generators of electricity.
- 1.2.2 In order to support the continued growth in onshore and offshore renewables across the north of Scotland, supporting the country's drive towards Net Zero, further investment in network infrastructure is needed to connect this renewable power and transport it from source to areas of demand across the country. Further detail on project need is provided in **Chapter 2: Project Need**. The Proposed Development has been identified as a key corridor for onshore electricity network reinforcement.
- 1.2.3 SSEN Transmission has undertaken studies during the various stages of identifying the route options and the proposed alignment and design solution for the electricity transmission project that involved consideration of environmental, technical, and cost factors. This work was carried out prior to selecting a proposed corridor, proposed route, proposed alignment, and finalising the design solution for the Proposed Development. Consultation has been undertaken during corridor, route, and alignment selection stages to seek comments from stakeholders, including members of the public, on the options put forward prior to finalising the design of the Proposed Development as described in this EIA Report. Further detail on the corridor, routeing and alignment selection stages of the project is contained within **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**.

## 1.3 Legislative and Statutory Context

- 1.3.1 Consent for the Proposed Development is sought from Scottish Ministers under section 37 of the 1989 Act. The 1989 Act (as amended) is the primary legislation governing the electricity supply industry in Great Britain and places statutory and licence obligations upon a licence holder.
- 1.3.2 The Applicant, as a transmission licence holder under the 1989 Act, has a statutory duty, under paragraph 3 of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act when formulating relevant proposals to:
- *'have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic, or archaeological interest'; and*
  - *'do what [it] reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects'.*
- 1.3.3 The requirement to undertake an EIA for developments requiring consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act is set out in the EIA Regulations. This is discussed further in **Section 1.4** of this Chapter.
- 1.3.4 Construction of the Proposed Development and ancillary works constitutes development in terms of section 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ('the Planning Act'). Accordingly, these works require planning permission. However, section 57(2) of the Planning Act provides that on the granting of a consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act, for overhead transmission lines and ancillary development, the Scottish Ministers may direct that planning permission for that development shall be deemed to be granted. Deemed planning permission under section 57 of the Planning Act is therefore being sought from the Scottish Ministers in terms of the application.

- 1.3.5 Following the UK's exit from the European Union, domestic legislation was amended to ensure that the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC<sup>6</sup> continues to apply in Scotland. The Proposed Development passes over, or is within the zone of influence of, a number of European designated sites, formerly known in Scotland as Natura 2000 sites<sup>7</sup>. The Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to any European site's management for nature conservation. Therefore, under the Conservation Habitats and Species Regulations 2017<sup>8</sup> ('the Habitats Regulations', the Proposed Development has been required to undergo a screening for likely significant effects on the European sites. This screening is the first stage of a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) that is required to be carried out by the competent authority upon submission of a consent application. To inform the competent authority's HRA, a HRA has been provided alongside the EIA Report. The HRA has followed relevant guidance from NatureScot and the European Commission (EC) Guidance on Managing Natura 2000 sites, together with EC Methodological Guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC<sup>9</sup> which sets out the HRA procedure.

## 1.4 The Need for EIA

- 1.4.1 The Proposed Development is classified as Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations under category (3) '*construction of overhead electrical power lines with a voltage of 220 kilovolts or more and a length of more than 15 kilometres*', where EIA is mandatory. The scope of this EIA Report is discussed in **Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation**.

## 1.5 EIA Report Structure

- 1.5.1 This EIA Report is split into five volumes as follows:

- **EIA Report Contents, Abbreviations and Preface**
- **Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary;**
- **Volume 2: Main Report;**
  - 1: Introduction and Background;
  - 2: Project Need;
  - 3: Project Description;
  - 4: The Routing Process and Alternatives;
  - 5: EIA Process and Methodology;
  - 6: Scope and Consultation;
  - 7: Landscape and Visual;
  - 8: Ecology;
  - 9: Ornithology;
  - 10: Water and Geological Environment;
  - 11: Cultural Heritage;
  - 12: Forestry;
  - 13: Transport;
  - 14: Recreation and Tourism;

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2019) Managing Natura Sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/11e4ee91-2a8a-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>7</sup> NatureScot and European Commission (n.d.). Managing and Protecting Natura 2000 sites. Available at: [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/natura-2000/managing-and-protecting-natura-2000-sites\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/natura-2000/managing-and-protecting-natura-2000-sites_en)

<sup>8</sup> UK Government (2017). The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents>

<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2002). Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2b6c4b16-e867-42da-b604-f67ee6fe60c3/language-en>

- 15: Noise and Vibration;
- 16: Cumulative Assessment;
- 17: Summary of Effects; and
- 18: Schedule of Mitigation.
- **Volume 3: Figures** – contains the EIA Report figures, except for the landscape and visual and cultural heritage visualisations;
- **Volume 4: Visualisations** – contains the landscape and visual and cultural heritage visualisations; and
- **Volume 5: Appendices** – contains supporting information for the chapters in Volume 2: Main Report.

## 1.6 Supporting Documents

1.6.1 The s37 application will also include the following supporting documents:

- Aviation Report;
- Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) Report;
- Planning Statement;
- Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA); and
- Socio-Economic Report.

## 1.7 Notifications

1.7.1 In accordance with the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990, and Regulation 14 of the EIA Regulations, the application and this EIA Report will be advertised in the following local newspaper:

- Press and Journal.

1.7.2 It will also be advertised in the following national newspaper:

- Edinburgh Gazette.

1.7.3 Notice of the section 37 application, including this EIA Report and associated documents and figures, will be available for viewing at the public locations listed in **Table 1.1** during normal opening hours.

**Table 1.1: EIA Report Viewing Locations**

| Location                      | Opening Hours                                                                                                                                                                                   | Address                                                            |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Kiltarlity Post Office</b> | Monday to Friday: 8 am to 4.30 pm<br>Saturday: 8 am to 2.30 pm<br>Sunday: 8.30 am to 12.30 pm                                                                                                   | Kiltarlity Post Office<br>Allarburn Place<br>Kiltarlity<br>IV4 7HG |
| <b>Inverness Library</b>      | Monday to Wednesday: 9 am to 6.30 pm<br>Thursday 9 am to 7 pm<br>Friday 9 am to 6.30 pm<br>Saturday: 9 am to 5 pm<br>Sunday: Closed                                                             | Inverness Library<br>Farraline Park<br>Inverness<br>IV1 1NH        |
| <b>Nairn Library</b>          | Monday: 9.30 am to 5.30 pm<br>Tuesday: 9.30 am to 5.30 pm<br>Wednesday: 9.30 am to 2 pm<br>Thursday: 9.30 am to 7 pm<br>Friday: 9.30 am to 5.30 pm<br>Saturday: 10 am to 2 pm<br>Sunday: Closed | Nairn Library<br>68 High Street<br>Nairn<br>IV12 4AU               |

| Location                             | Opening Hours                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Address                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Forres House Community Centre</b> | Monday to Friday: 9 am to 10 pm<br>Saturday: 9 am to 3 pm<br>Sunday: Closed                                                                                                                                                                     | Forres House<br>Community Centre<br>High Street<br>Forres<br>IV36 1BU                       |
| <b>Elgin Library</b>                 | Monday to Thursday: 10 am to 8 pm<br>Friday: 10 am to 5 pm<br>Saturday: 10 am to 4 pm<br>Sunday: Closed                                                                                                                                         | Elgin Library<br>Cooper Park<br>Elgin<br>IV30 1HS                                           |
| <b>Linden Centre, Huntly</b>         | Weeks commencing Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> and Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> October:<br>Monday: Closed<br>Tuesday to Thursday: 9 am to 5 pm<br>Friday: Closed<br>Saturday and Sunday: Closed                                                           | Linden Centre<br>Castle Street<br>Huntly<br>AB54 4SE                                        |
| <b>Linden Centre, Huntly</b>         | Weeks commencing Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> October onwards:<br>Monday: 9 am to 5 pm<br>Tuesday: 9 am to 8 pm<br>Wednesday: 9 am to 9 pm<br>Thursday 9 am to 6.30 pm<br>Friday: 9 am to 12 noon and 3 pm to 5.30 pm<br>Saturday and Sunday: Closed | Linden Centre<br>Castle Street<br>Huntly<br>AB54 4SE                                        |
| <b>Turriff Library</b>               | Monday: 10 am to 6 pm<br>Tuesday: Closed<br>Wednesday: 9.30 am to 1.30 pm<br>Thursday: Closed<br>Friday: 9 am to 5 pm<br>Saturday and Sunday: Closed                                                                                            | Turriff Library<br>Grange Villa<br>The Square<br>Turriff<br>AB53 4AE                        |
| <b>Mintlaw Library</b>               | Monday: Closed<br>Tuesday: 9.30 am to 5 pm<br>Wednesday: 11.30 am to 7 pm<br>Thursday: Closed<br>Friday: 9.30 am to 4.30 pm<br>Saturday: 9.30 am to 12.30 pm<br>Sunday: Closed                                                                  | Mintlaw Library<br>MACBI Community Hub<br>Newlands Road<br>Mintlaw<br>Peterhead<br>AB42 5GP |
| <b>Buchan House Peterhead</b>        | Monday to Friday: 8.45 am to 5 pm (closed between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm)<br>Saturday and Sunday: Closed                                                                                                                                          | Buchan House<br>St Peter Street<br>Peterhead<br>AB42 1QF                                    |

- 1.7.4 The Non-Technical Summary (NTS) will also be available for viewing at the public location detailed in **Table 1.2** during normal opening hours.

**Table 1.2: NTS Viewing Location**

| Location             | Opening Hours                                                                                                                                                          | Address                                               |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Keith Library</b> | Monday: 12 pm to 4 pm<br>Tuesday: 10 am to 7 pm<br>Wednesday: Closed<br>Thursday: 10 am to 7 pm<br>Friday: 10 am to 4 pm<br>Saturday: 10 am to 12 pm<br>Sunday: Closed | Keith Library<br>18 Union Street<br>Keith<br>AB55 5DP |

17.5 The EIA Report can also be viewed via the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) website:

[www.energyconsents.scot](http://www.energyconsents.scot)

17.6 Electronic versions of the application, including this EIA Report, are available to download from SSEN Transmission's project website at:

<https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/beauly-blackhillock-new-deer-peterhead-400kv/>

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

BBNP Community Liaison Manager

SSEN Transmission

10 Henderson Road

Inverness

IV1 1SN

Or

Email: [bbnp@sse.com](mailto:bbnp@sse.com)