

**Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to
Peterhead 400 kV Project
Environmental Impact Assessment Report
Volume 5 | Appendices**

**Appendix 12.1.34: Woodland Report Parcel 13206,
Blackcroft Wood**



APPENDIX 12.1.34: Woodland Report Parcel 13206, Blackcroft Wood

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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Appendix presents information relevant to the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV Overhead line (OHL) Project (the Proposed Development). It should be read in conjunction with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report, specifically **Chapter 12: Forestry**, for full details of the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.2 As part of the EIA, it has been identified that construction of the Proposed OHL Alignment and the associated access tracks would cross several woodland areas within private or publicly owned landholdings.
- 1.1.3 This woodland report has been prepared to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on Woodland, Parcel 13206, Blackcroft Wood. It includes the requirements for woodland removal and management recommendations to mitigate the impact of the woodland removal. The report provides an overview of the characteristics of the affected woodland, including woodland composition, site conditions, soil conditions, exposure levels and existing felling approvals. The report also provides details of existing infrastructure, and potential constraints related to forestry operations. It aims to inform decision-making by identifying key environmental and logistical considerations associated with the Proposed Development. Additionally, it evaluates the feasibility of timber extraction and access whilst highlighting necessary mitigation measures to minimise disruption to the woodland ecosystem and surrounding landscape.
- 1.1.4 Field surveys of the woodland areas have been undertaken and have been used to determine the various woodland characteristics, to identify the woodland removal required and recommended. This document also sets out the area quantity hectares (ha) to be compensatory planted to ensure no net loss of woodland is achieved.

2 Woodland Property

- 2.1.1 The landholding property boundaries are identified in **Figure 12.1.34a: Parcel 13206 Location Map**. The woodlands are situated directly east of the A9, 4.5 km south of Inverness in the Highland council area (NH 717511 405661).

3 Development Requirements

3.1 400 kV Overhead Line Infrastructure Requirements

- 3.1.1 The Study Area for this assessment initially focussed on a 100 m width either side of the centreline of the Proposed OHL Alignment and ancillary infrastructure, where relevant, prior to the identification of an Operational Corridor (OC). The Applicant defines the OC as the area in which it has rights to remove woodland for the purposes of the safe construction, resilience and continued maintenance of OHLs, or protection of electrical plant as required by the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002¹ and The Electricity Act 1989². The OC is defined based on two different factors as follows:
- The first factor in which the OC is determined is with reference to the distance at which a tree could fall and cause damage to the OHL, resulting in a supply outage. As a result, the OC width would be based on the safety distance required to allow for a mature tree falling towards the OHL at the mid-point on an OHL span between two towers, taking account of topography and tree height at maturity. Standard falling distance for a mature conifer tree is considered to be a minimum of 45 m. Where the OC passes through areas of broadleaved woodland, it is noted that the width of woodland removal is likely to be reduced, due to the general lower height and characteristics of the tree species present.

¹ UK Gov (2002). The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002. Available at: [The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002](#)

² UK Gov (1989). Electricity Act 1989. Available at: [Electricity Act 1989](#)

- The second factor that is considered is the maximum distance that the OHL conductors can blow out from the tower under a 1 in 50-year return period wind condition, plus the required electrical clearance distance. This is to ensure that the OHL conductors do not come into contact with, or come close enough to, any object that could result in an electrical clearance infringement. This conductor blowout distance varies between each tower dependent on span length and must therefore be considered on a span-by-span basis.

- 3.1.2 The typical OC required within areas of commercial conifer forestry for a 400 kV OHL is 90 m (i.e. 45 m either side of the centre line). Where the OC passes through areas of broadleaved woodland, it is proposed that the extent of woodland removal is likely to be reduced due to the lower height of the tree species present. The OC for the Proposed OHL Alignment through areas of broadleaved woodland has been reduced to 70 m (i.e. 35 m either side of the centre line of the OHL). This has been based on the likely height of the woodland at maturity. Where any woodland removal within the OC is proposed to be reduced from the 45 m either side of the line, a site-specific assessment must be carried out to confirm that the conductor blowout does not exceed the OC width. If the conductor blowout exceeds the OC, then the width of the OC must be increased to meet the requirements of the blowout assessment as a minimum. This will ensure compliance with ESQCR requirements and that the required safety clearances are maintained.
- 3.1.3 A resilient OC of 90 m in width is required throughout the commercial conifer woodland within Woodland Parcel 13206 and taking into account the requirements of the conductor blowout assessment. The OC is illustrated in **Figure 12.1.34b: Parcel 13206 Proposed Felling Requirement**.

3.2 Access Track Route Design

- 3.2.1 The tracks associated with this section of the OHL are within the OC.

4 Woodland Characteristics

4.1 Woodland Composition and Site Conditions

- 4.1.1 The woodland was surveyed in January 2025. The proposed section of OHL consists of a section of OC between towers CB2-16A (on the west side of the A9 trunk road) and CB2-18A.
- 4.1.2 The woodland in and around the OC between the A9 trunk road and the existing access track consists of plantation forest of predominantly mature Scots pine (SP) with other species such as Birch (Bi), larch (L) and Sitka spruce (SS)³. The woodland is recorded as Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). There are discrete stands of Birch in the understorey, with Juniper and Rowan as well as Sitka spruce regeneration. This area of woodland has been thinned in the past.
- 4.1.3 The section of Proposed OHL Alignment is moderately exposed at the top of Daviot Brae. The land on the northeastern side of the parcel is presently felled over land and as such the northern edge of the woodland is currently exposed.
- 4.1.4 The Ecological Site Classification⁴ describes the site as being moderately exposed with a maximum Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring (DAMS) score of 14 and having a cool, moderately exposed and wet climate.
- 4.1.5 The Soil Map of Scotland⁵ identifies the soils as being predominantly humus-iron podzols.
- 4.1.6 The woodland is identified as native woodland in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland⁶ (NWSS) and is described as 'Native pinewood', with 80% canopy cover.

³ A guide to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/guide-understanding-scottish-ancient-woodland-inventory-awi>

⁴ Ecological Site Classification, Available at: <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

⁵ National Soil Map of Scotland. Available at: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/soil-maps/national-soil-map-of-scotland/>

⁶ Native Woodland Survey of Scotland. Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/sustainable-forestry>

- 4.1.7 No existing forest plans or felling permissions were found on the Scottish Forestry Web Viewer.
- 4.1.8 There is an existing tarmacadam single track road in poor repair within the ownership, extending from the B851 and running within the ownership to the OC. Following upgrade, timber can be extracted along this route to the B851 from there south to the A9 trunk road. This is classified as a Consultation⁷ Route by the Timber Transport Forum⁸.

4.2 Photo Record – Operational Corridor Assessment

- 4.2.1 The following photographs provide a visual record of key locations along the OC. Each image illustrates existing vegetation types, land use, and notable landscape features relevant to the planning and management of the OC. Particular attention has been given to areas of mature woodland, natural regeneration, and locations where proposed works may intersect with ecologically or visually sensitive habitats. The photos are intended to support site assessments and inform mitigation strategies.

Photo 1: View at CB2-17 at Grid Reference NH 718612 406833, looking southwest into OC showing Scots pine plantation with understorey.



⁷ Consultation Routes are recognised as being key to timber extraction but are not up to Agreed Route standard. Consultation with the Local Authority is required and it may be necessary to agree limits of timing, allowable tonnage etc. before the route can be used. B roads and minor roads that are not categorised should be assumed to be Consultation Routes unless covered by one of the other classifications (e.g. Severely Restricted Route)

⁸ The Timber Transport Forum. Introduction to Agreed Routes Map. Available at: <https://timbertransportforum.org.uk/agreed-routes-map/introduction-to-agreed-routes-map/>

Photo 2: View at Grid Reference NH 718837 406644 of well thinned SP stand.



5 Windblow Risk

5.1.1 It is acknowledged that the creation of the OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to potential increased risk of damage (windblow). Each woodland report identifies further areas of felling to a windfirm edge, defined as 'Management Felling' (categorised as an indirect secondary impact), which is covered in more detail in the **Chapter 12: Forestry** in **Section 12.4**. Management felling would be considered as part of any application for felling permission. This would provide restocking as agreed with Scottish Forestry which would result in balancing the loss of woodland. Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner (and not the Applicant). It is the intention of the Applicant to encourage the landowners to follow this good practice in terms of redesign of their current Long-Term Forest Plans, which in-turn would aim to follow UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)⁹ for the implementation of the works required.

5.1.2 There is a risk of windblow within this property as the SP has been extensively thinned.

6 Woodland Management Impact

6.1.1 Felling in the OC will reduce the area of productive forestry to the north of the OC but should not impact access. The infrastructure built for this section of the OHL could provide a benefit to the landowner for future forest management as it could provide a more robust access and extraction route for woodland management.

6.1.2 Given the location of the stand adjacent to a major trunk road the timing of any management felling should be considered at the same time, or immediately after felling within the OC.

⁹ Scottish Forestry (2024). UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/sustainable-forestry/uk-forestry-standard-ukfs>

6.1.3 The Proposed OHL Alignment introduces an electrical hazard, but the constraint associated with the electrical hazard will be reduced by regular maintenance of the OC which will avoid the incidences of “Red Zone” trees (reference Forest Industry Safety Accord, FISA 804 “Electricity at Work: Forestry”¹⁰).

6.1.4 The total loss of Commercial conifer woodland resulting from the proposed alignment is 2.31 ha.

7 Mitigation Opportunities

7.1 Woodland Mitigation Measures

7.1.1 To mitigate the landscape impact on this section of the Proposed OHL Alignment the ‘Landscape Replanting Proposals’ as set out in the Landscape chapter will be followed as demonstrated in **Figure 12.1.34c: Parcel 13206 Proposed Planting Areas**.

7.2 Restructuring

7.2.1 The area of plantation to be felled is mature Scot pine and could have been expected to have been clearfelled in the next 20 years. There is an existing age class difference between this stand and a stand of Sitka spruce to the south of this stand in the same ownership, established in 2007-08. Therefore, there is no positive or negative impact of the felling on the structure within the ownership.

7.2.2 The felling of the OC for the development will create new green edges, which will allow the landowner to work to in the future if that is desired. In the long term this might benefit forest structure.

7.3 Restocking

7.3.1 There will be a restocking obligation on the landowner within management felling areas.

7.3.2 As set out in the Landscape chapter under the ‘Landscape Replanting Proposals’ restocking can potentially take place within the OC to mitigate the visual impact of the OC. Restocking within the OC will be carried out by the applicant. Detail shown in **Figure 12.1.34c: Parcel 13206 Proposed Planting Areas**.

8 Net Effect / Summary

8.1.1 Tables 8.1 to 8.4 outline the operational requirements for forestry management within the OC between towers CB2-16A (on the west side of the A9 trunk road) and CB2-18A. They detail the areas designated for clear felling, both within the OC and additional recommended Management Felling outside the OC to address windthrow risks and forest design considerations.

Table 8.1: Woodland removal for Infrastructure, within OC

Item	Woodland Type	Area (ha)
OC felling	Commercial conifers (90 m)	2.31
Total area		2.31

Table 8.2: Compensatory Planting

Item	Woodland Type	Area (ha)
Compensatory Planting Area	Commercial conifers	2.31
Total area		2.31

¹⁰ Forest Industry Safety Accord (2020), FISA 804 Electricity at Work: Forestry. Available at: <https://ukfisa.com/Safety/Safety-Guides/fisa-804>

Table 8.3: Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure

Item	Area (ha)
Total Loss of Woodland Area	2.31
Total Compensatory Planting Area	2.31
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area	0.00

Table 8.4: Woodland removal for Management Felling, outwith OC

Item	Woodland Type	Area (ha)
Management Felling	Commercial conifers	0.70
Replanting / Restocking Opportunities	Commercial conifers	0.70
Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.00

9 Compensatory Planting

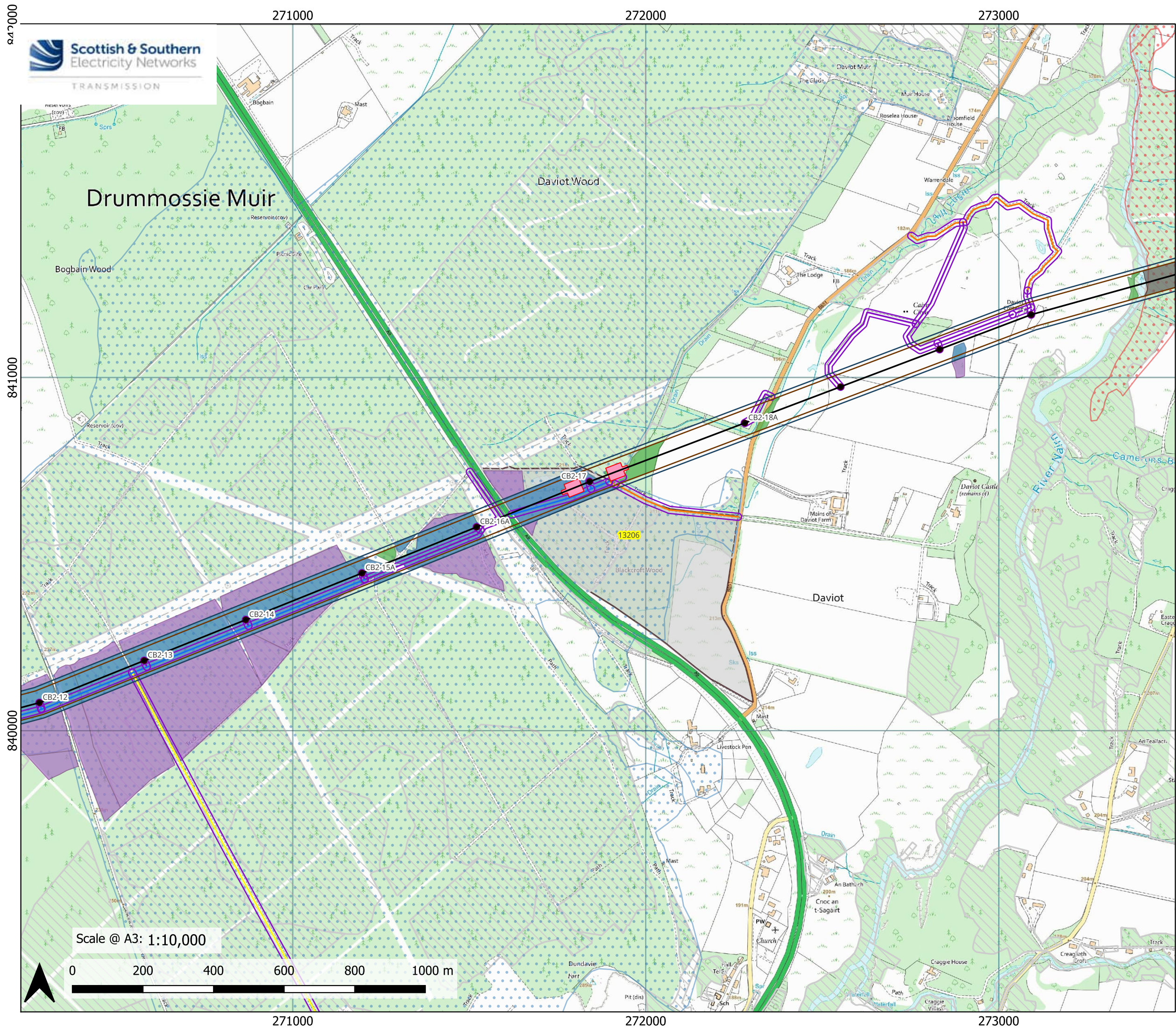
9.1.1 Only areas directly impacted by the OC will be included in the compensatory planting total, in accordance with the Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP)¹¹. This policy ensures that woodland loss due to development is mitigated by appropriate replanting or regeneration efforts, but it specifically applies to areas where tree removal is necessary for the Proposed Development. See **Appendix 12.3 Compensatory Planting Management Strategy**.

9.1.2 Any additional felling outside the OC, such as areas cleared for windthrow management or forest design improvements, falls under the responsibility of the landowner and is not included in the compensatory planting requirements. Instead, these areas may be replanted under a forest plan revision or felling license at the landowner's discretion. This approach aligns with national forestry guidelines, balancing infrastructure development with sustainable woodland management.

9.1.3 The total amount of net felling requiring compensation under the CoWRP is 2.31 ha.

9.1.4 In order to provide a greater balance limiting long-term impacts on forestry interests it is proposed that the majority of this woodland loss is compensated via off-site compensatory planting within the same local authority area. It is proposed that full details of the areas subject to this off-site compensatory planting is notified to Scottish Forestry prior to energising the OHL.

¹¹ Forestry Commission Scotland (2009). Control of Woodland Removal Policy. Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/285-the-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal/viewdocument/285>



Legend

- Proposed Tower - 400 kV
- Proposed OHL Alignment - 400 kV
- Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)
- 70m Operational Corridor - Broadleaved Woodland
- 90m Operational Corridor - Commercial Woodland
- Access Track 20m Buffer

Proposed Access Tracks

- Existing Access – Upgrade – Good/Fair Condition
- Existing Access – Upgrade – Poor Condition
- Proposed Access – ATV or Temporary Trackway
- Proposed Access – Permanent
- Proposed Access – Temporary
- Proposed Access – Temporary Floated

Proposed Felling Requirements

- Native Woodland Operational Corridor Felling
- Mixed Conifer Operational Corridor Felling
- Mixed Conifer Management Felling
- Native Woodland Selective Felling
- Native Woodland Survey Scotland (NWSS)

Ancient Woodland Inventory

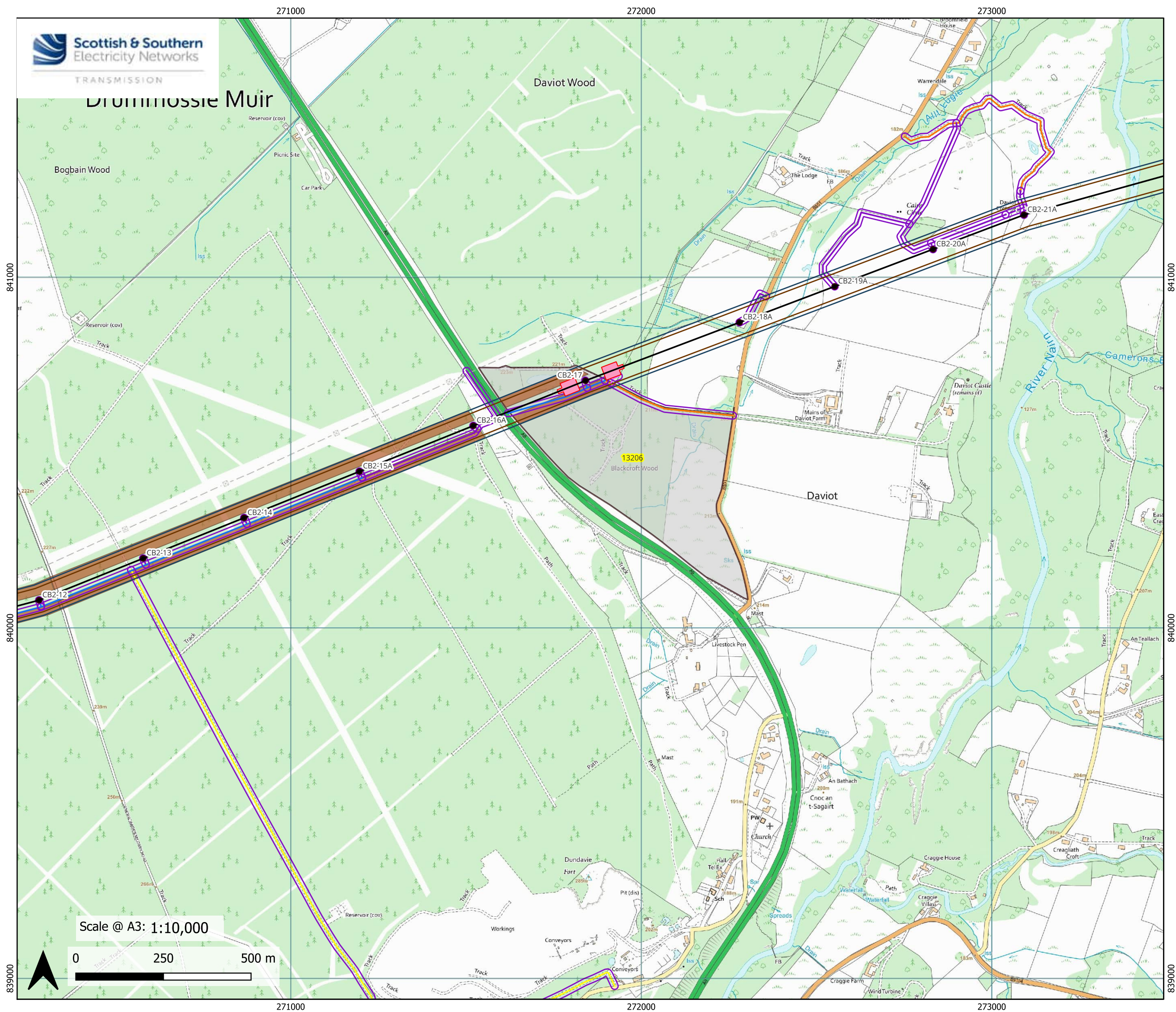
- Ancient (of semi-natural origin)
- Long-Established (of plantation origin)
- Landownership Boundary/Parcel

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Title: **Figure 12.134b** Parcel 13206 Proposed Felling Requirements

Drawn by: LA



Legend

- Proposed Tower - 400 kV
- Proposed OHL Alignment - 400 kV
- Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)
- 70m Operational Corridor - Broadleaved Woodland
- 90m Operational Corridor - Commercial Woodland
- Access Track 20m Buffer

Proposed Access Tracks

- Existing Access – Upgrade – Good/Fair Condition
- Existing Access – Upgrade – Poor Condition
- Proposed Access – ATV or Temporary Trackway
- Proposed Access – Permanent
- Proposed Access – Temporary
- Proposed Access – Temporary Floated
- Landownership Boundary/Parcel
- Forest Edge Planting Locations

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Title:
Figure 12.1.34c Parcel 13206 Proposed Planting Areas

Drawn by: LA