

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

**Appendix 12.1.79 – Woodland Report Parcel  
20212, Gordon Castle**



## APPENDIX 12.1.790 Woodland Report. Parcel 20212, Gordon Castle

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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 20212, Gordon Castle. 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 12.1.79a: Parcel 20212 Location Map**. The Gordon Castle woodlands encompass a significant expanse across Fochabers within the Moray Council region. Forming a key component of the region's rural and ecological landscape. The estate contains a mix of ancient, commercial and riparian woodlands, managed for both conservation and timber production.
- 2.1.2 The woodland is a mixed native woodland riparian habitat, situated on the west bank of the River Spey, 2 km southwest of Fochabers within the Moray Council region (NJ 332271 567151). The unclassified U19E and B9105 run along the west of the woodland.

## 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) 2002<sup>1</sup> and The Electricity Act 1989<sup>2</sup>. 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

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

<sup>2</sup> UK Gov (1989). Electricity Act 1989. Available at: [Electricity Act 1989](#)

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.

- 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 Proposed OHL Alignment). 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 70 m in width is required throughout the broadleaved woodland within Woodland Parcel 20212 and taking into account the requirements of the conductor blowout assessment. The OC is illustrated in **Figure 12.1.79b: Parcel 20212 Proposed Felling Requirement**.

## 3.2 Access Track Route Design

- 3.2.1 There are no proposed tracks impacting the areas of woodland within this ownership.

# 4 Woodland Characteristics

## 4.1 Woodland Composition and Site Conditions

- 4.1.1 The woodlands were surveyed in December 2024. The OC will intersect a mixed native woodland riparian habitat with species including Downy birch (DBI) and willow (WL).
- 4.1.2 The woodlands are designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>3</sup> under the EU Habitats Directive and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>4</sup> under UK law. As part of the River Spey SAC and SSSI<sup>5,6</sup>, these designations highlight the importance of maintaining and enhancing broadleaved riparian woodlands. These woodlands serve as vital habitats for priority species, including Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussels, and otters. They also play a critical role in preventing soil erosion, maintaining water temperature stability, and enhancing flood resilience.
- 4.1.3 Given this designation, any works in the area must align with best-practice habitat management and mitigation strategies to minimise environmental impact.
- 4.1.4 The ownership contains a section of the Proposed OHL Alignment between towers CB14-1B and CB14-2B. There are no access tracks proposed.
- 4.1.5 The landscape character is characterised by the coastal farmlands of Moray & Nairn.

<sup>3</sup> JNCC Website (N.D). SAC site list and standard data forms. Available at: [Special Areas of Conservation](#)

<sup>4</sup> UK Gov (2013, updated 2024). Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land. Available at: [Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>5</sup> NatureScot, (2005). RIVER SPEY SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC) CONSERVATION ADVICE PACKAGE. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/special-area-conservation/8365/conservation-advice-package.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> NatureScot (2011). RIVER SPEY Site of Special Scientific Interest SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/site-special-scientific-interest/1699/site-management-statement.pdf>

- 4.1.6 The section of Proposed OHL Alignment is mainly sheltered with a Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring score (DAMS) of approximately 10<sup>7,8</sup>.
- 4.1.7 The Ecological Site Classification<sup>9</sup> describes the site as having a warm, sheltered and moist climate. The soils have a very moist moisture status and a medium nutrient status.
- 4.1.8 The Soil Map of Scotland<sup>10</sup> identifies the soils as being predominantly mineral alluvial soils.
- 4.1.9 Considering the crops, quantities and location, harvesting using hand felling is recommended. Extraction across the pasture can be done using small scale machinery to limit impact on the soil. The unclassified U19E and B9105 run along the west of the woodland. The U19E is classed as a Consultation Route by the Timber Transport Forum.<sup>11,12</sup>

## 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.

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<sup>7</sup> Forest Research (2025). Available at: <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

<sup>8</sup> The Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring (DAMS) is a system used to assess wind exposure in forestry and land management. It provides a numerical score that quantifies the level of exposure a site experiences based on factors such as elevation, topography, and aspect (the direction a slope faces). The DAMS score helps foresters predict wind risk, which is crucial for understanding tree stability, growth potential, and the likelihood of windthrow (trees being uprooted or broken by wind). The scoring system ranges from 0 to 24, with higher scores indicating more exposure to wind.

<sup>9</sup> Ecological Site Classification, Available at: <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

<sup>10</sup> National Soil Map of Scotland. Available at: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/soil-maps/national-soil-map-of-scotland/>

<sup>11</sup> The Timber Transport Forum. Introduction to Agreed Routes Map. Available at: <https://timbertransportforum.org.uk/agreed-routes-map/introduction-to-agreed-routes-map/>

<sup>12</sup> Roads which are key to timber extraction but, for a variety of reasons, are not up to Agreed Route Standard. Consultation with the Local Authority is required before any timber haulage takes place and it may be necessary to limit the amount, timing or frequency of timber haulage, or to specify lower impact vehicles to prevent damage. All minor roads (B, C and unclassified roads) should be treated as Consultation Routes by default unless covered by one of the other categories (e.g. Severely Restricted Route).

Photo 1: View from NJ 334641 567362 from the east bank of the River Spey. The low growing habitat of the species present lends itself to selective felling rather than removal.



## 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 Forestry Chapter 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 the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)<sup>13</sup> for the implementation of the works required.
- 5.1.2 Considering the open grown nature of trees there is limited risk of windblow.

## 6 Woodland Management Impact

- 6.1.1 To balance habitat conservation with infrastructure requirements, it is proposed to selectively fell this section of woodland rather than conduct full-scale felling. This approach aims to maintain the ecological integrity of the woodland while ensuring compliance with safety and operational requirements.
- 6.1.2 The Proposed OHL Alignment furthermore 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 FISA 804 "Electricity at Work: Forestry"<sup>14</sup>).

<sup>13</sup> Scottish Forestry (2024). UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/sustainable-forestry/uk-forestry-standard-ukfs> (Accessed 15 August 2025).

<sup>14</sup> Forest Industry Safety Accord (2020), FISA 804 Electricity at Work: Forestry. Available at: <https://ukfisa.com/Safety/Safety-Guides/fisa-804>

6.1.3 The total loss of Native Broadleaved woodland resulting from the proposed alignment is 0.00 ha.

## 7 Mitigation Opportunities

### 7.1 Woodland Mitigation Measures

- 7.1.1 One mitigation measure is the process of Selective Felling, focused on mature trees with high ecological value, ensures that reduction is carried out in a manner that retains structural diversity.
- 7.1.2 Another is the Retention of Deadwood and Pruned Material, meaning that where possible, pruned branches and deadwood should be left on-site to enhance biodiversity, providing habitat for insects, fungi, and small mammals.

### 7.2 Restructuring

- 7.2.1 There are no restructuring opportunities within the woodland.

### 7.3 Restocking

- 7.3.1 As no management felling is recommended there will not be a restock obligation on the landowner.

## 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 CB14-1B and CB14-2B. They detail the areas designated for clear felling, within the OC and forest design considerations.

**Table 8.1: Woodland removal for Infrastructure, within OC**

| Item                                   | Woodland Type                     | Area (ha)   |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Operational corridor selective felling | Native Broadleaved Woodland (70m) | 0.81        |
| <b>Total area</b>                      |                                   | <b>0.81</b> |

**Table 8.2: Compensatory Planting**

| Item                       | Woodland Type | Area (ha)   |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Compensatory Planting Area |               | 0.00        |
| <b>Total area</b>          |               | <b>0.00</b> |

**Table 8.3: Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure**

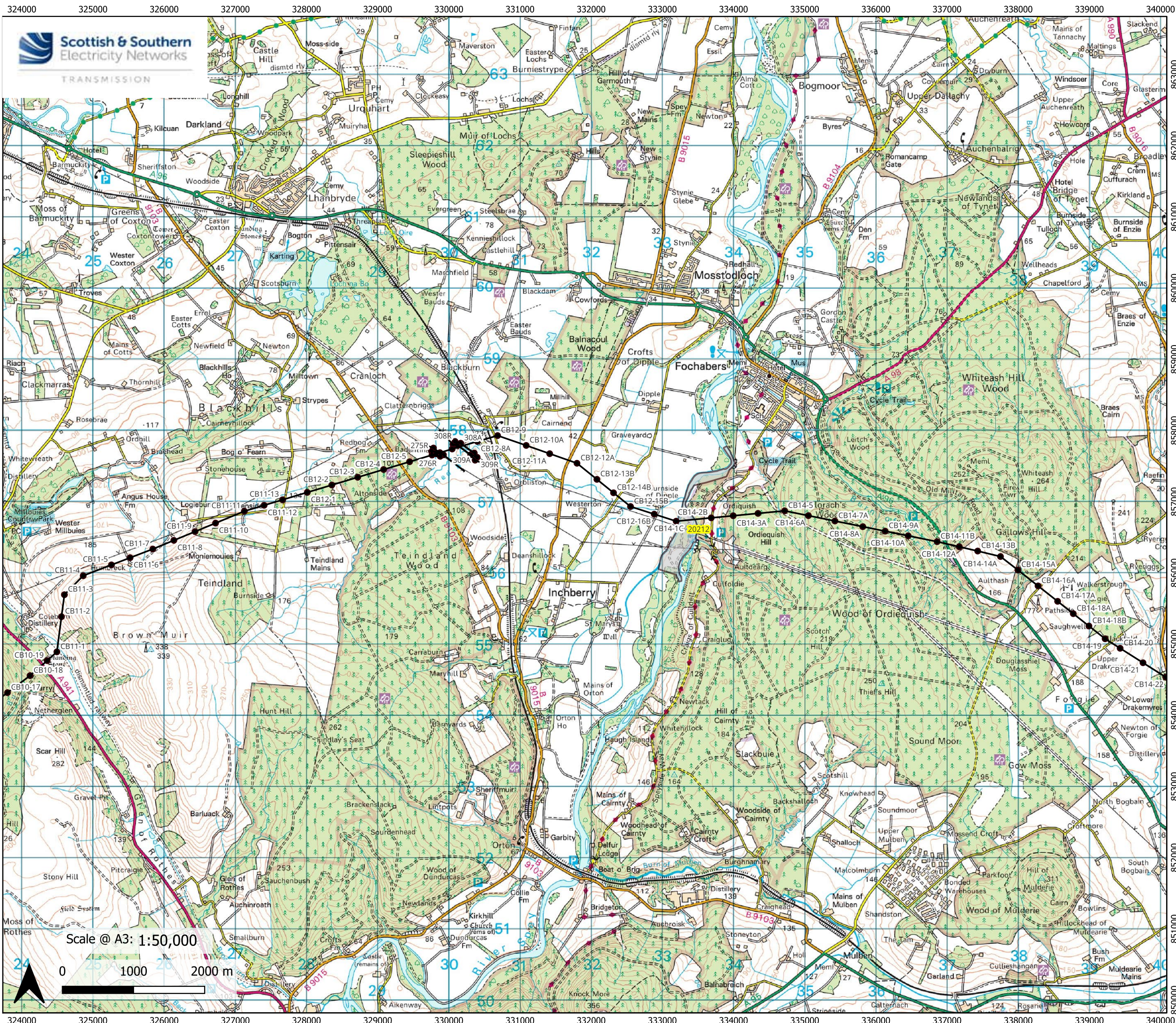
| Item                                   | Area (ha)   |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|
| Total Loss of Woodland Area            | 0.00        |
| Total Compensatory Planting Area       | 0.00        |
| <b>Total Net Loss of Woodland Area</b> | <b>0.00</b> |

**Table 8.4: Woodland removal for Management Felling, outwith OC**

| Item                                  | Woodland Type | Area (ha)   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Management Felling                    |               | 0.00        |
| Replanting / Restocking Opportunities |               | 0.00        |
| <b>Net Loss of Woodland Area</b>      |               | <b>0.00</b> |

## 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). However, in this case, the woodland within the OC will be **selectively felled** rather than completely removed, ensuring that woodland cover is retained. As such, there will be **no net loss of woodland**, and compensatory planting is not required for these works. See **Appendix 12.3: Compensatory Planting 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 0.00 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 offsite compensatory planting within the same local authority area. It is proposed that full details of the areas subject to this offsite compensatory planting is notified to Scottish Forestry prior to energising the Proposed OHL Alignment.



# Legend

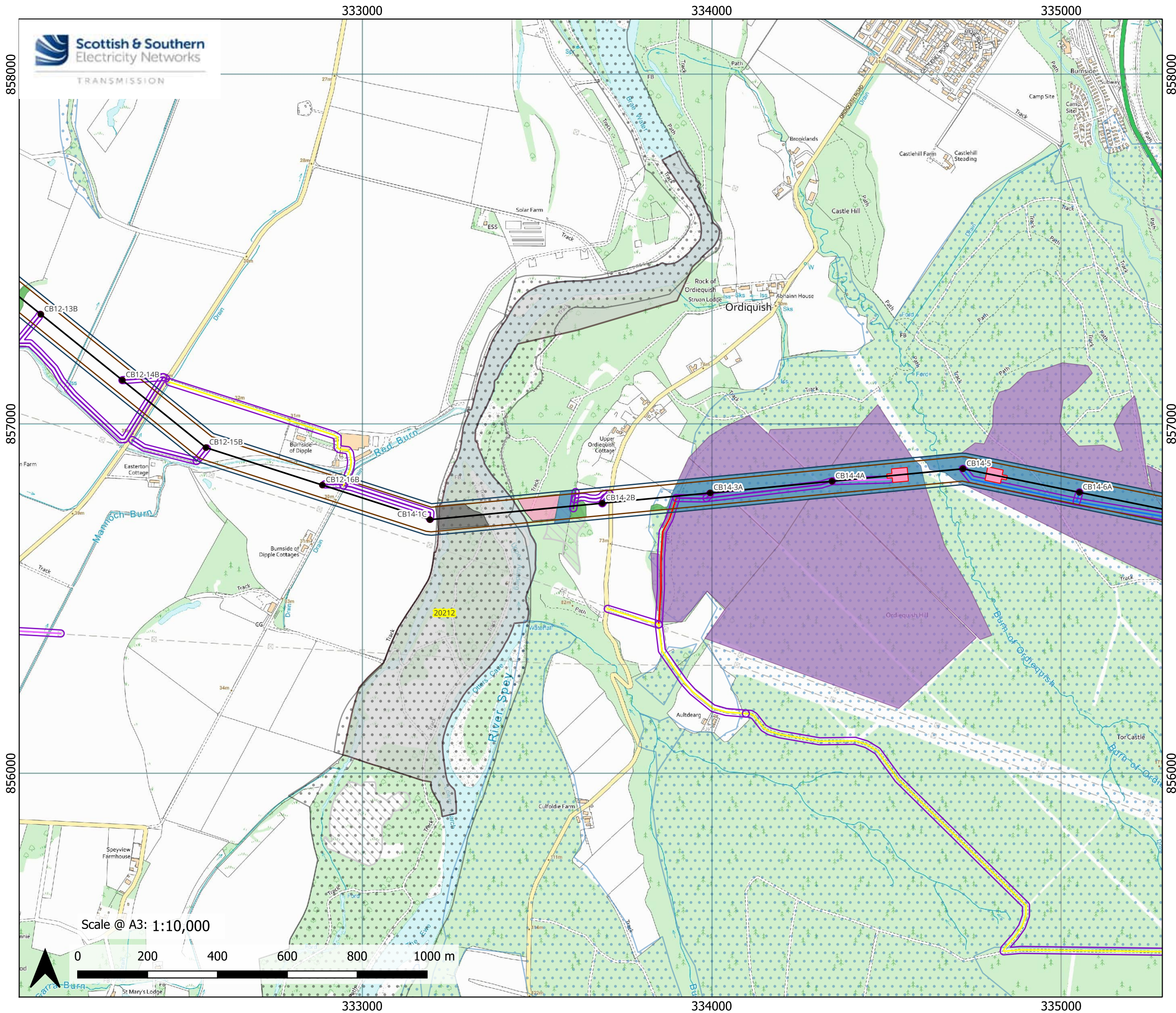
- Proposed Tower - 400 kV
- Proposed OHL Alignment - 400 kV
- ▭ Landownership Boundary/Parcel

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Project:  
Beaulieu to Blackhilllock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV  
OHL Project

Title:  
**Figure 12.1.79a** Parcel 20212 Location Map

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 - Very Poor Condition
- Proposed Access - ATV or Temporary Trackway
- Proposed Access - Permanent
- Proposed Access - Temporary

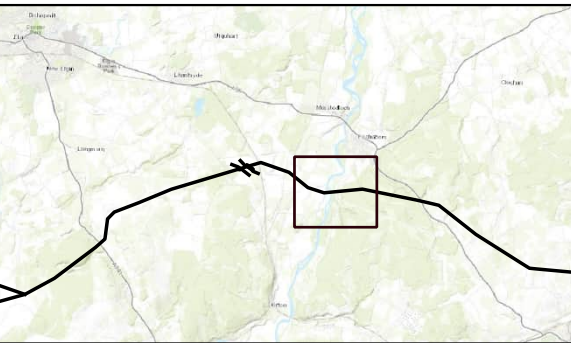
## Proposed Felling Requirements

- Native Woodland Operational Corridor Felling
- Mixed Conifer Operational Corridor Felling
- Mixed Conifer Management Felling
- Mixed Conifer Selective Felling
- Native Woodland Selective Felling

- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Native Woodland Survey Scotland (NWSS)

## Ancient Woodland Inventory

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



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Project:  
Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV  
OHL Project

Title: **Figure 12.1.79b** Parcel 20212 Proposed  
Felling Requirements

Drawn by: LA