

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

**Appendix 12.1.92 – Woodland Report Parcel 5200,
Backmuir**



Appendix 12.1.92 – Woodland Report Parcel 5200, Backmuir

1	Introduction.....	2
2	Woodland Property.....	2
3	Development Requirements.....	2
3.1	400kV Overhead Line Infrastructure Requirements	2
3.2	Access Track Route Design.....	3
4	Woodland Characteristics.....	3
4.1	Woodland Composition and Site Conditions	3
4.2	Photo Record – Operational Corridor Assessment.....	4
5	Windblow Risk.....	6
6	Woodland Management Impact.....	6
7	Mitigation Opportunities.....	6
7.1	Woodland Mitigation Measures.....	6
7.2	Restructuring.....	6
7.3	Restocking	6
8	Net Effect / Summary.....	7
9	Compensatory Planting	7

Appendix Figures

Figure 12.1.92a: Parcel 5200 Location Map

Figure 12.1.92b: Parcel 5200 Proposed Felling Requirements

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 5200, Backmuir. 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 hectare (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 12.1.92a: Parcel 5200 Location Map**. The Backmuir Woodlands, are several parcels of mixed conifer and native broadleaved woodland planted in 2006 across agricultural ground, primarily for sporting purposes. With several pheasant pens and feeding sites situated within them. The woodland is situated 3 km southeast of Keith, within the Moray council district (NJ 455901 475498).

3 Development Requirements

3.1 400kV 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)¹ 2002 and The Electricity Act² 1989. 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 and 70m within the native broadleaved woodland within Woodland Parcel 5200 and taking into account the requirements of the conductor blowout assessment. The OC is illustrated in **Figure 12.1.92a: Parcel 5200 Location Map**.

3.2 Access Track Route Design

- 3.2.1 Proposed tracks in this section area are within the OC, cross agricultural ground and make use of existing infrastructure.

4 Woodland Characteristics

4.1 Woodland Composition and Site Conditions

- 4.1.1 The woodland was surveyed in January 2025. The woodland in and around the Operational Corridor (OC) consists of mixed plantations of Sitka spruce (SS), Scots pine (SP) and larch (L) with a mix of native broadleaves interspersed and along the forest edges. These include Sessile oak (SOK), hazel (HAZ), Common alder (CAR) and willow (WL).
- 4.1.2 Between towers CB16-13 to CB61-14, the native broadleaved woodlands were planted as game cover in 2006 under the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) Case no. 31900692. Several of the plantations hold active pheasant pens and feeding stations.
- 4.1.3 The section of woodland situated between towers CB16-14 to CB16-15 consists of a semi-mature plantation comprising Sitka spruce (SS), Scots pine (SP), and larch (L). This area will be affected by the OC operations. The overall quality of the woodland in this section is poor, with noticeable constraints on tree growth. Factors such as soil conditions, past management practices, and potential exposure to environmental stressors may have contributed to its suboptimal development. The impact of the OC on this area presents an opportunity to reassess its long-term viability and consider potential replanting or habitat restoration measures to enhance future productivity and biodiversity.
- 4.1.4 The woodland sits on a north facing gradual slope, exposure is moderately exposed with a Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring (DAMS) of 12³, indicating some susceptibility to wind forces, but not classified as highly exposed.

³ Forest Research (2025). Available at: <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

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

- 4.1.5 The Ecological Site Classification⁴ describes the site as having a cool, moderately exposed and wet climate. The soils have a fresh moisture status and a very poor nutrient status.
- 4.1.6 The Soil Map of Scotland⁵ identifies the soils as being predominantly peaty gleyed podzols. These soils are moderately to poorly drained, which can influence rooting depth and tree stability. The presence of gleying indicates potential seasonal waterlogging, which may impact wind firmness.
- 4.1.7 There are no environmental designations within the Parcel.
- 4.1.8 The section of OHL cross through the woodland between towers CB16-13 to CB16-15.
- 4.1.9 There is a good network of roads through the landholding. They will require upgrading to facilitate timber haulage.
- 4.1.10 Considering the quality and quantity of the material and the landform, operations can largely be carried out by a combination of harvester / forwarder and mulching.
- 4.1.11 Timber will be hauled through the neighbouring forest to the east into Coachford onto the A96. This is classed as an Agreed Route by the Timber Transport Forum^{6,7}.

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.

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.

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

⁷ Agreed Routes can be used for timber haulage without restriction (other than as regulated by the Road Traffic Act 1988). "A" roads (e.g. the A9) are assumed to be Agreed Routes unless covered by one of the other TTG classifications (e.g. Consultation Route).

Photo 1: View from NJ 456567 475527 looking north toward tower CB16-14 showing the semi-mature mixed SP/NBL plantation to be mulched.



Photo 2: View from NJ 455071 472881 looking south. Showing poor quality edge of SS/LP plantation to be felled within OC.



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 out with 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) for the implementation of the works⁸ required.
- 5.1.2 Considering the exposure and maturity of the crop, there is a low risk of windblow as a result of the felling of the OC.

6 Woodland Management Impact

- 6.1.1 While tree felling within the OC will result in a slight reduction in the total area of woodland, this loss is marginal and should not significantly affect overall forest management, or access at a larger scale.
- 6.1.2 The infrastructure built for this section of the OHL could provide a benefit to the landowner for future forest management as it could provide long term access. As part of construction works, dedicated crossing points and long-term access opportunities should be discussed with the landowner(s).
- 6.1.3 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 Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) 804 "Electricity at Work: Forestry"⁹).
- 6.1.4 The total loss of Native Broadleaved woodland resulting from the proposed alignment is 1.01 hectares (ha).

7 Mitigation Opportunities

7.1 Woodland Mitigation Measures

- 7.1.1 No opportunities for mitigation were found in this ownership.

7.2 Restructuring

- 7.2.1 The section of woodland within this ownership is single aged and will likely be felled all at once. 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 woodland structure.

7.3 Restocking

- 7.3.1 It is anticipated that native broadleaved regeneration is likely to occur within the Operational Corridor, as a result of its proximity to existing seed sources.

⁸ Scottish Forestry (2024). UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/sustainable-forestry/uk-forestry-standard-ukfs>

⁹ Forest Industry Safety Accord (2020), FISA 804 Electricity at Work: Forestry. Available at: <https://ukfisa.com/Safety/Safety-Guides/fisa-804>

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 CB16-13 to CB16-15. 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)
Operational corridor felling	Semi-mature Conifer Plantation (90m)	0.59
Operational corridor felling	Native Broadleaved Woodland (70m)	1.01
Total area		1.60

Table 8.2: Compensatory Planting

	Woodland Type	Area (ha)
Compensatory Planting Area	Semi-mature Conifer Plantation	0.59
Compensatory Planting Area	Native Broadleaved Woodland	1.01
Total area		1.60

Table 8.3: Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure

Item	Area (ha)
Total Loss of Woodland Area	1.60
Total Compensatory Planting Area	1.60
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area	0.00

Table 8.4: Woodland removal for Management Felling, outwith OC

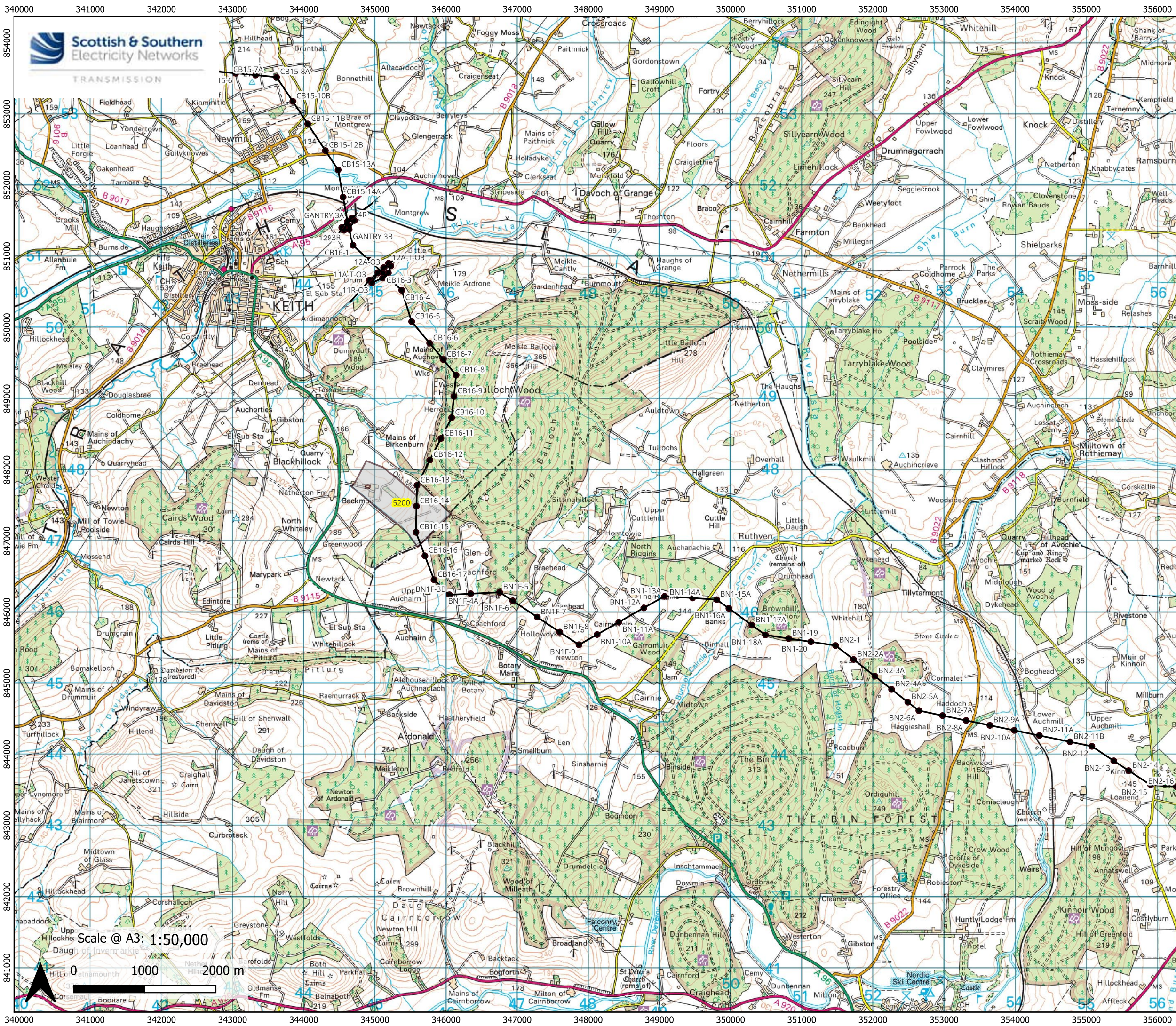
Item	Woodland Type	Area (ha)
Management Felling		0.00
Replanting/Restocking Opportunities		0.00
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.00

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)¹⁰. 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 1.60 ha.

¹⁰ 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>

- 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 OHL.



Legend

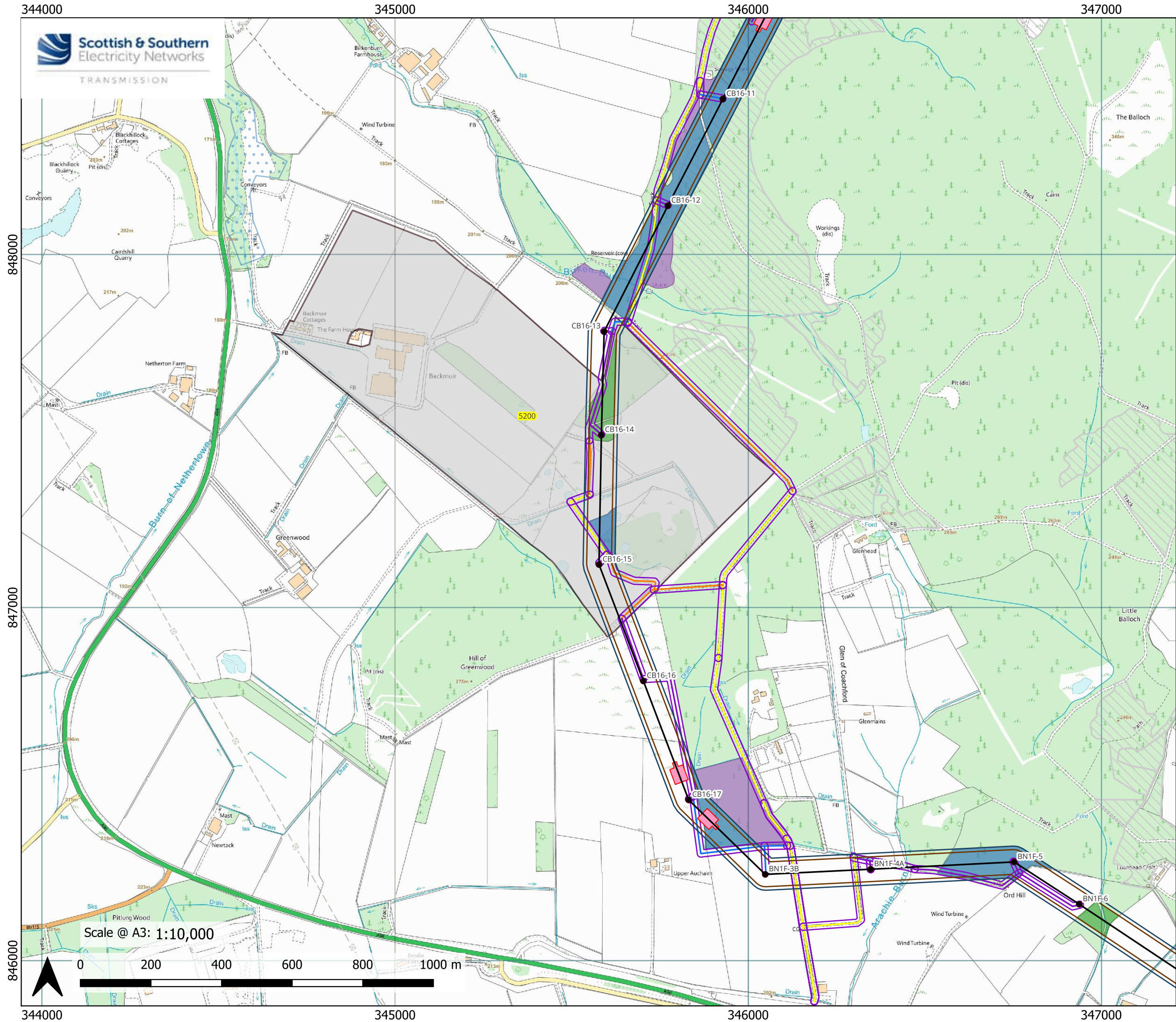
- Proposed Tower - 400 kV
- Proposed OHL Alignment - 400 kV
- ▭ Landownership Boundary/Parcel

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO.
Crown copyright and database right 2025 all rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number 010002432.
SSEN Transmission take no responsibility for the release or accuracy of latest version Basemaps from Ordnance Survey

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

Title:
Figure 12.1.92a Parcel 5200 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 – Poor Condition
- Proposed Access – Permanent
- Proposed Access – Temporary

Proposed Felling Requirements

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

Ancient Woodland Inventory

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

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO.
Crown copyright and database right 2025 all rights reserved.
Ordnance Survey Licence number 0100022432.
SSEN Transmission take no responsibility for the release or accuracy of latest version Basemaps from Ordnance Survey

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

Title: **Figure 12.1.92b** Parcel 5200 Proposed Felling Requirements

Drawn by: LA