Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Blarghour 132 kV Wind Farm Connection

Consultation Document

February 2026

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)	The term 'Ordnance Datum' refers to the height of mean sea level. Therefore Above Ordnance Datum, means above the height of mean sea level.
Alignment	A centre line of an overhead line route, along with location of key angle structures.
Alignment (Indicative Proposed)	An alignment for the overhead line identified following public consultation that is taken forward to EIA and detailed design.
Preferred Alignment	An alignment for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of alignment options.
Proposed Alignment	An alignment taken forward to consent application. It comprises a defined centre line for the overhead line and includes an indicative support structure (tower or pole) schedule, also specifying access arrangements and any associated construction facilities.
Amenity	The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape, and visual quality. Also includes the impact of SSEN Transmission's works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction activities.
Ancient Woodland	Woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) Scotland, which has been in continuous existence since before 1750 in Scotland and is important for biodiversity and cultural identity. Ancient semi-natural woodland is Ancient Woodland composed of mainly locally native trees and shrubs that derive from natural seed fall or coppice rather than from planting.
Angle Tower	Support structure (tower or pole) which allows a change in direction of the overhead line.
Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ)	These are areas of regional importance in terms of their landscape quality.
Barrier and Collision Effects	Barrier effect is where the development creates an obstacle to regular movements of birds (e.g. to and from breeding sites or migration routes). Collision effects are where the proposed development poses a risk of harm to birds through direct contact.
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
Centre Line	The linear connection between the central point of each support structure along the length of the overhead line.
Circuit	Overhead line or underground cable consisting of multiple conductors, to carry electric current.
Commercial Forestry	Planting, maintaining and growing trees for commercial timber production.
Conductor	A metallic wire strung from structure to structure, to carry electric current.
Consultation	The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views and, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies, or programmes of action.
Corridor	A linear area which allows a continuous connection between the defined connection points.
Desk-based Assessment	A desktop appraisal using existing information (e.g. from online sources, mapping and through information requests to relevant organisations).
European Protected Species	European protected species are those species listed on: • Habitats Regulations 1994 Schedule 2 – European protected species of animal • Habitats Regulations 1994 Schedule 4 – European protected species of plants They comprise species of plants and animals protected by law throughout the European Union.

Term	Definition
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process set down in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 used to systematically identify, predict and assess the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.
Gardens and Designed Landscape (GDL)	The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes lists those gardens or designed landscapes which are considered by a panel of experts to be of national importance.
Geographical Information Systems (GIS)	A spatial system that creates, manages, analyses, and maps all types of data.
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Landscape character is defined as the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape. It is these patterns that give each locality its 'sense of place', making one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).
Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS)	LNCSs identify locally important natural heritage that could be affected by development.
Major Crossing	Major crossings include other electric lines of 132kV and above, railways, rivers/loch (200m+), navigable watercourses, motorways and other major roads, and major pipelines.
Micrositing	The process of positioning individual structures to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints. A limit of deviation of 100m horizontal and 20% vertical for towers, and a 50m limit of deviation for tracks is proposed for this project.
Minor Crossing	Minor crossings include all road crossing and minor watercourses not considered major. Private tracks and driveways may also be considered where the need for access to be maintained is present, or where relatively high traffic volumes are anticipated.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation, or alleviation of adverse impacts.
National Scenic Area (NSA)	A national level designation applied to those landscapes considered to be of exceptional scenic value.
Operational Corridor	The area needed for the safe operation and maintenance of the Overhead Line.
Ordnance Survey (OS)	Ordnance Survey is the national mapping agency for Great Britain.
Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or trident wood poles.
Proposed Development	The construction and operation of the 132 kV overhead line and underground cable to connect the Blarghour Wind Farm to the proposed Creag Dhubh Substation.
RAG	Red/Amber/Green, rating applied for the comparative appraisal.
Report on Consultation Document	A report that documents the result of a consultation process.
Route	A linear area of approximately 1 km width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points.
Preferred Route	A route for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of route options.
Proposed Route	A route taken forward following stakeholder consultation to the alignment selection stage of the overhead line routeing process.

Term	Definition
Routeing	The work undertaken which leads to the selection of a proposed alignment, capable of being taken forward into the consenting process under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Semi-natural Woodland	Woodland that does not obviously originate from planting. The distribution of species will generally reflect the variations in the site and the soil. Planted trees must account for less than 30% of the canopy composition.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Areas of land and water that are designated for their natural heritage in terms of: • flora – i.e. plants • fauna – i.e. animals • geology – i.e. rocks • geomorphology – i.e. landforms • a mixture of these natural features SSSI's form a set of nationally important natural areas in the UK. SSSIs in Scotland are notified by NatureScot under powers granted by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.
Sky-lining	The process of positioning an overhead line along the top of an elevated area.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	SACs in Scotland are designated by Scottish Ministers under the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). They are areas which have been identified as best representing the range and variety within the European Union of habitats and (non-bird) species listed on Annexes I and II to the Directive.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area designated under the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 74/409/EEC) to protect important bird habitats. Implemented under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
SSEN Transmission	Scottish and Southern Energy Networks Transmission.
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SSEN Transmission works.
Study Area	The area within which the corridor, route and alignment study takes place.
Substation	Part of the electrical transmission and distribution system that transforms voltage from high to low, or the reverse, before switching to another electricity network.
Terminal Pole	A pole required where the line terminates either at a substation or at the beginning and end of an underground cable section.
The National Grid	The electricity transmission network in Great Britain.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.
VP	Vantage Point
Wild Land Area (WLA)	Those areas comprising the greatest and most extensive areas of wild characteristics within Scotland.
Wirescape Impact	A landscape dominated by overhead wires.

PREFACE

This Consultation Document has been prepared by ERM on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission), to seek comments from all interested parties on the Blarghour Wind Farm Connection project.

This Consultation Document is available online at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/blarghour-wind-farm-connection-project/.

Public consultation face to face event detailing the proposals described in this document will be held at the following time:

Thursday 5 March, from 2pm - 7pm, Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray, PA32 8XT.

Comments on this document should be sent to:

Caitlin Marini
Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Transmission
1 Waterloo St
Glasgow
G2 6AY
Email: Caitlin.Marini@sse.com
Mobile: 07901135758

All comments are requested by **2 April 2026**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SSEN Transmission is proposing to construct and operate a 132 kV overhead line (OHL) to connect the consented Blarghour Wind Farm to the Creag Dhubh Substation, which is currently under construction (the 'proposed development'). The developer of Blarghour Wind Farm has been granted consent (ECU00005267) by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. An application was subsequently submitted to vary the original consent to an 84 MW wind farm (ECU00004754).

Three route options have been identified to achieve the connection and these have been appraised against environmental, engineering and economic criteria. This Consultation Document invites comments from all interested parties on the three route options under consideration.

From an environmental perspective Route 2 is preferred by a small margin. Route 2 has a lower potential for impact to cultural heritage features including the setting of Inveraray Garden and Designed Landscape and non-designated heritage assets. Route 2 runs along the A819 for a shorter distance with lower potential for visual impacts on road users and residential properties. Route 2 does not contain woodland listed on the ancient woodland inventory but may provide a barrier effect and collision risk to eagles using the area.

From an engineering perspective, Route 3 offers the best balance of safety, compliance, and programme certainty, with all major risks well understood and effectively mitigated. Route 3 benefits from greater existing access provisions and reduced constraints in respect to the existing 132 kV Inveraray – Taynuilt double circuit OHL.

From an economic perspective Route 3 is preferred as it has the lowest capital cost.

The overall Preferred Route for the connection between the consented Blarghour Wind Farm and the consented Creag Dhubh Substation is Route 3, achieved through consideration and balancing of environmental, engineering and economic appraisals of the route options. Careful design of alignment options within the route will be required to minimise impacts on ancient woodland, visual and heritage receptors.

Face to face consultation events will be held at Loch Fyne Hotel on **Thursday 5th March** between 2pm and 7pm. Meetings will be arranged with statutory and other stakeholders. The responses received, and those sought from statutory consultees and other key stakeholders will inform further consideration and design of the Preferred Route leading to the identification of a Proposed Route to take forward to the alignment and consenting stages.

Please submit your comments to Caitlin Marini, Community Liaison Manager, SSEN Transmission, 1 Waterloo St, Glasgow, G2 6AY (Caitlin.marini@sse.com). All comments are requested by 2nd April 2026.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this Document

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (hereafter referred to as 'SSEN Transmission'), operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc is the electricity transmission licence holder in the north of Scotland and has a duty under Section 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 to 'develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical system of electricity transmission and to facilitate competition in the generation and supply of electricity.' SSEN Transmission also has obligations to offer non-discriminatory terms for connection to the transmission system, both for new generation and for new sources of electricity demand.

SSEN Transmission, as part of these duties, is proposing to construct and operate a new 132 kilovolt (kV) single circuit overhead line (OHL) to connect the consented Blarghour Wind Farm (ECU00004754) to the wider electricity network (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development will extend approximately 11 km and be comprised of Trident 'H' poles. The OHL will connect from the proposed substation within Blarghour Wind Farm to the Creag Dhubh Substation, which is currently under construction.

This document presents the findings of an environmental, engineering and cost appraisal of the three route options identified by SSEN Transmission and describes the process by which a Preferred Route for the OHL has been selected. The Preferred Route is considered to provide the optimal opportunity to achieve an economically viable, technically feasible and environmentally sound alignment within it. This Consultation Document invites comments from all interested parties on the three route options under consideration (**Figure 1**).

1.2 Document Structure

This Consultation Document comprises the following sections:

- Section 1: Introduction;
- Section 2: The need for the proposals – describes the project need, the project overview, and consultation history;
- Section 3: Route selection process – describes the process for selecting the route, based on environmental, engineering and economic considerations;
- Section 4: Description of routes – describes the identification of route options and provides a summary of each route option (1, 2 and 3);
- Section 5: Comparative appraisal – a summary of the environmental, engineering and economic topics, followed by a comparative analysis summary and a description of the Preferred Route; and
- Section 6: Consultation on the proposals – invites comments on the preferred option process, the identification of Preferred Route and next steps.

1.3 Next Steps

As part of the consultation exercise, comments are sought from members of the public, statutory consultees, and other stakeholders on the Preferred Route option put forward in this report.

A Report on Consultation will be published after the consultation period has ended, which will document the consultation responses received, and the decisions made considering these responses to select a Proposed Route. The Proposed Route will go forward to Alignment Selection, Stage 3.

Further engineering and environmental studies will be undertaken to identify a Preferred Alignment within the Proposed Route. Consultation on a Preferred Alignment will be undertaken in Summer 2026.

Upon completion of the alignment selection process a Proposed Alignment will be selected and further technical and environmental assessment will be undertaken. This will culminate with an application to Scottish Ministers for consent for the construction and operation of an OHL under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.

The intention is to submit the application for consent in Q4 2026.

Proposed Study Area
Route 1
Route 2
Route 3

0 250 500 750 1,000 1,250
Metres

N

SCALE: See Scale Bar	VERSION: A01
SIZE: A3	DRAWN: DN
PROJECT: 0780330	CHECKED: SC
DATE: 26/01/2026	APPROVED: KG

Figure 1
Area of Search

ERM

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

PROJECTION: British National Grid

Path: \\vmukspgisfs01\Data\London\Projects\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026\Maps\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route Consultation Mapping.aprx / 0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Area of Search - A01

2. THE PROPOSALS

2.1 Need for the Project

The developer of Blarghour Wind Farm has been granted consent by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. An application was subsequently submitted to vary the original consent to an 84 MW wind farm (ECU00004754), which has a contracted connection date of March 2029. SSEN Transmission has a statutory duty under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 to connect the new development to the transmission network by the contracted connection date.

2.2 Project Overview

The type of technology solution proposed and appraised for this connection are routes comprised of Trident 'H' poles terminating within each substation compound via a downlead.

Generally, the height, including extensions, for the Trident 'H' poles is 11-17 m. The selection of the type of supports suitable for the OHL (wood or steel pole) are being considered separately to the OHL routeing process. The final designation of support type is generally dependent on three main factors: altitude, weather and the topography of the route. The size of supports and span lengths will also vary depending on these factors, with supports being closer together at higher altitudes to withstand the effects of greater exposure to high winds, ice and other weather events. The support configuration, height and the distance between supports will therefore only be fully determined after a detailed engineering alignment study.

The proposed Trident 'H' poles will support three conductors (wires) on three insulators positioned at the top of the pole. A typical design for a Trident 'H' pole structure can be seen in **Photograph 2.1**.

Photograph 2.1: Indicative Trident 'H' Pole

2.3 Construction Activities

Key tasks during construction will involve:

- Establishment of suitable laydown areas for material and installation of temporary track solutions as necessary;
- Establishment of temporary construction compounds / welfare units;
- Upgrades to existing tracks and potentially new tracks where required;
- Delivery of structures and materials to site; and
- Assembly and erection of Trident 'H' pole structures and stays.

Installation of the Trident 'H' poles will involve the following tasks:

- Excavation of a suitable area for the Trident 'H' poles, and backfilling after installation of the pole;
- In some pole locations, it may be necessary to add imported hardcore backfill around the pole foundations to provide additional stability in areas where the natural sub soils have poor compaction qualities;
- In some pole locations where shallow bedrock is present, it may be necessary to break or remove rock to accommodate pole foundations;
- Conductors will be installed on the poles using full tension stringing to prevent the conductor coming into contact with the ground; and
- Remedial works will be carried out to reinstate the immediate vicinity of permanent infrastructure and the footprint of any temporary infrastructure, returning any ground disturbed to pre-existing use.

2.3.1 Forestry Removal

Any woodland removal which may be required prior to the construction work will be identified and described once an alignment has been identified for the OHL. Any removal of sections of commercial forest will be undertaken in consultation with Scottish Forestry and affected landowners. After felling, any timber removed that is commercially viable will be sold and the remaining forest material dealt with in a way that delivers the best practicable environmental outcomes and is compliant with waste regulations.

An operational corridor will be required to enable the safe operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development. This will vary depending on the type of woodland (based on species present) in proximity to the Proposed Development. In areas of native woodland, it is usually possible to provide a narrower operational corridor due to a reduced risk of trees falling on the OHL.

2.3.2 Access During Construction

The access strategy has not yet been determined. A more detailed plan for access during construction will be prepared once a Proposed Alignment has been identified. Where possible, existing access tracks will be used and upgraded as required. New access tracks may be required and where there is a justified long-term requirement they will be left in place.

Where ground conditions permit, it is preferable to construct the infrastructure without an access track (e.g. on dry and level pasture). Temporary matting may be used in sensitive areas subject to an assessment of gradients and ground conditions. Preference will be given to lower impact access solutions including the use of low ground pressure tracked personnel vehicles and temporary track solutions in boggy / soft ground areas to reduce any damage to, and compaction of, the ground.

New access tracks (permanent or temporary) to angle / tension pole positions would be desirable for operational and maintenance purposes and for storm control. Tracks may be floated over areas of peat, or may use cut and fill approaches, subject to ground conditions and gradients.

2.3.3 SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Ambition

SSEN Transmission is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment by minimising the potential impacts from their construction and operational activities. As part of this approach, SSEN Transmission has made commitments within its Sustainability Strategy (2018) and Sustainability Plan (2019) for new infrastructure projects to:

- Ensure natural environment considerations are included in decision making at each stage of a project's development;
- Utilise the mitigation hierarchy to avoid impacts by consideration of biodiversity in project design;
- Positively contribute to the UN and Scottish Government Biodiversity strategies by achieving an overall 'No Net Loss' on new infrastructure projects gaining consent in 2020 onwards and achieving Net Gain on projects gaining consent in 2025 onwards; and
- Work with the supply chain to gain the maximum benefit during asset replacement and upgrades.

The design and evolution of this project will be carried out in line with these commitments.

3. ROUTE SELECTION PROCESS

3.1 Guidance Documents

The approach to route selection is informed by the following SSEN Transmission guidance:

- Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132kV or above, SHE Transmission, 2020 (PR-NET-ENV-501)
- Biodiversity Net Gain Flow Chart, Guidance and Project Toolkit (FC-NET-ENV-500)

The guidance develops a process which aims to balance environmental, engineering and economic considerations throughout a staged route options process.

The principal routeing stages are:

- Stage 0: Routeing Strategy Development;
- Stage 1: Corridor Selection;
- Stage 2: Route Selection; and
- Stage 3: Alignment Selection.

The procedures note that, depending on the scale of the project or character of the area, it may be possible to combine Stages 1 and 2. In this case, given the relatively short distance and small study area, Stages 1 and 2 have been combined. In practice, this has been achieved by moving from Stage 0 to Stage 2, with no evaluation of alternative corridors completed.

The guidance develops a process which aims to balance environmental, technical and economic considerations throughout the route options process. In consideration of these principles, the method of identifying an environmentally Preferred Route option in this study has involved the following four key tasks:

- Identification of the baseline;
- Identification of alternative route options;
- Environmental, engineering and economic analysis of route options; and
- Identification of a preferred route option.

3.2 Route Selection History

A previous Preferred Route (Stage 2) and Preferred Alignment (Stage 3) for the Proposed Development were investigated between 2021 and 2023. The Preferred Alignment was presented at a public consultation event held in August 2023, following detailed environmental and technical assessment. Following the August 2023 consultation, detailed pre-construction ground investigation works for the Inveraray to Creag Dhubh Substation 275 kV OHL (ECU00003442) caused micro-siting amendments to 275 kV OHL alignment. As a result, the shared corridor for the proposed Blarghour Wind Farm Connection and the Inveraray to Creag Dhubh 275 kV OHL was narrowed, triggering new technical constructability considerations and environmental constraints. These considerations meant that the previously Preferred Alignment could not be progressed, and the project returned to Stage 2 Route Selection in 2025. The 2025 Route Selection process resulted in the identification of the newly proposed Route 3, which is now being formally consulted on.

3.3 Main Considerations

Route options were identified following appraisals, which considered the constraints identified during the desk-based baseline studies. The following has been taken into account during route selection (Stage 2) and will be considered in more detail at the next stage - alignment selection (Stage 3).

- Avoid, if possible, major areas of highest amenity value (including those covered by national and international designations and other sensitive landscapes);
- Avoid by deviation, smaller areas of high amenity value;
- Try to avoid sharp changes of direction and reduce the number of larger angle poles required;

- Avoid sky lining the route in key views and where necessary, cross ridges obliquely where a dip in the ridge provides an opportunity;
- Target the route towards open valleys and woods where the apparent height of poles will be reduced and views broken by trees (avoid slicing through landscape types and try to keep to edges and landscape transitions);
- Consider the appearance of other lines in the landscape to avoid a dominating or confusing wirescape impact; and
- Consider technical issues related to clearances, connectivity, outages, maintenance, and faults.

3.4 Baseline Conditions

The following information sources have informed the desk-based baseline study to identify potential environmental constraints within and adjacent to the route options. The study area applied for natural heritage features was 20 km, for landscape and visual 15 km, and cultural heritage 2 km (Figure 1).

- Identification of environmental designated sites and other constraints, utilising GIS datasets available via Site Link and other sources. These include:
    - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
    - Special Protection Areas (SPA);
    - Proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPA);
    - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
    - National Scenic Area (NSA);
    - Wild Land Areas (WLA);
    - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserves;
    - Land capability for agriculture;
    - Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI);
    - Geological Conservation Review Sites;
    - Carbon-rich soil, deep peat and priority peatland habitats; and
    - Areas at risk of flooding (SEPA flood map[1]).
- Identification of archaeological designations and other recorded sites, utilising GIS datasets available via Historic Environment Scotland Data Services and Local Historic Environment Teams. These include:
    - World Heritage Sites (WHS) and buffers;
    - Scheduled Monuments;
    - Category A, B and C listed buildings; and
    - Gardens and Designed Landscapes.
- Review of The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 (2024)[2] to identify local policies and further environmental constraints and opportunities, such as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQ), core paths or other locations important to the public;
- Review of landscape character assessments of relevance to the Study Area;
- Review of Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping (1:50,000 and 1:25,000) and online GIS data sources from OS Open Data) and aerial photography (where available) to identify other potential constraints such as settlement, properties, walking routes, cycling routes etc.;
- Extrapolation of OS Vectormap GIS data to identify further environmental constraint including locations of watercourses and waterbodies, roads classifications and degree of slope; and
- Review of other local information through online and published media such as tourism sites.

1 http://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm

2 The Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 (2024)

3.4.1 Vantage Point Surveys

Vantage Point (VP) surveys are being undertaken across the Study Area. The VP surveys commenced April 2025 and are due to complete in March 2026. The VP surveys are being conducted according to industry standard methods[3] and in consultation with NatureScot, to understand the interaction between birds and potential OHLs along the route.

3.5 Appraisal Method

Appraisal of route options has involved systematic consideration against the following environmental, engineering and economic topic areas.

3.4.1 Environmental

- **Natural Heritage** - Designations, Protected Species, Habitats, Ornithology and Hydrology / Geology.
- **Cultural Heritage** - Designations and Cultural Heritage Assets.
- **People** - Settlements, Visual and Physical Effects.
- **Landscape** - Designations and Character).
- **Land Use** - Agriculture, Forestry and Recreation.

Environmental sensitivity has been considered qualitatively, based on professional judgement and utilising the Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating. It has been applied to each topic area indicating potential impacts. This rating is based on a four-point scale as described in **Table 1** below. SSEN Transmission guidance "Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines of 132 kV or above" has been followed.

Table 1: Environmental RAG Rating for Comparative Analysis.

Most Preferred  **Least Preferred**	**No Impact**	
	Lower Impact	High potential to accommodate the required infrastructure within the context of the consideration appraised
	Moderate Impact	Moderate potential to accommodate the required infrastructure within the context of the consideration appraised
	Higher Impact	Low potential to accommodate the required infrastructure within the context of the consideration appraised

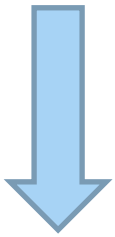
3.4.2 Engineering

- **Infrastructure crossings** – Major Crossings and Road Crossings.
- **Environmental design** – Elevation, Atmospheric Pollution, Contaminated Land and Flooding.
- **Ground conditions** – Terrain and Peat.
- **Construction / Maintenance** – Access.
- **Proximity** – Clearance Distance, Communication Masts and Metallic Pipelines.

Engineering sensitivity has been considered qualitatively, based on professional judgement and utilising the RAG rating. It has been applied to each topic area indicating potential impacts. This rating is based on a four-point scale as described in **Table 2** below. SSEN Transmission guidance "Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines of 132 kV or above" has been followed.

3 Scottish Natural Heritage (2025). Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms. Available from https://www.nature.scot/doc/recommended-bird-survey-methods-inform-impact-assessment-onshore-windfarms [Accessed September 2025].

Table 2: Engineering RAG Rating for Comparative Analysis.

Most Preferred  **Least Preferred**	**No Impact**	
	Lower Impact	High potential to accommodate the required infrastructure within the context of the consideration appraised.
	Moderate Impact	Moderate potential to accommodate the required infrastructure within the context of the consideration appraised.
	Higher Impact	Low potential to accommodate the required infrastructure within the context of the consideration appraised.

3.4.3 Cost

Appraisal of route options has involved systematic consideration against capital cost including construction, diversions, public road improvements, felling and land assembly.

To allow comparative appraisal a RAG rating has been applied using the criteria described in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Cost RAG Rating for Comparative Analysis.

Red	**Amber**	**Green**
>140% of least cost option	120-140% of least cost option	< 120% of least cost option

4. DESCRIPTION OF ROUTES

4.1 Identification of Route Options

This Consultation Document summarises the appraisal of the three route options, Route Options 1, 2 and 3. The appraisal uses the criteria set out in **Section 3** to identify a Preferred Route option.

4.1.1 Route 1

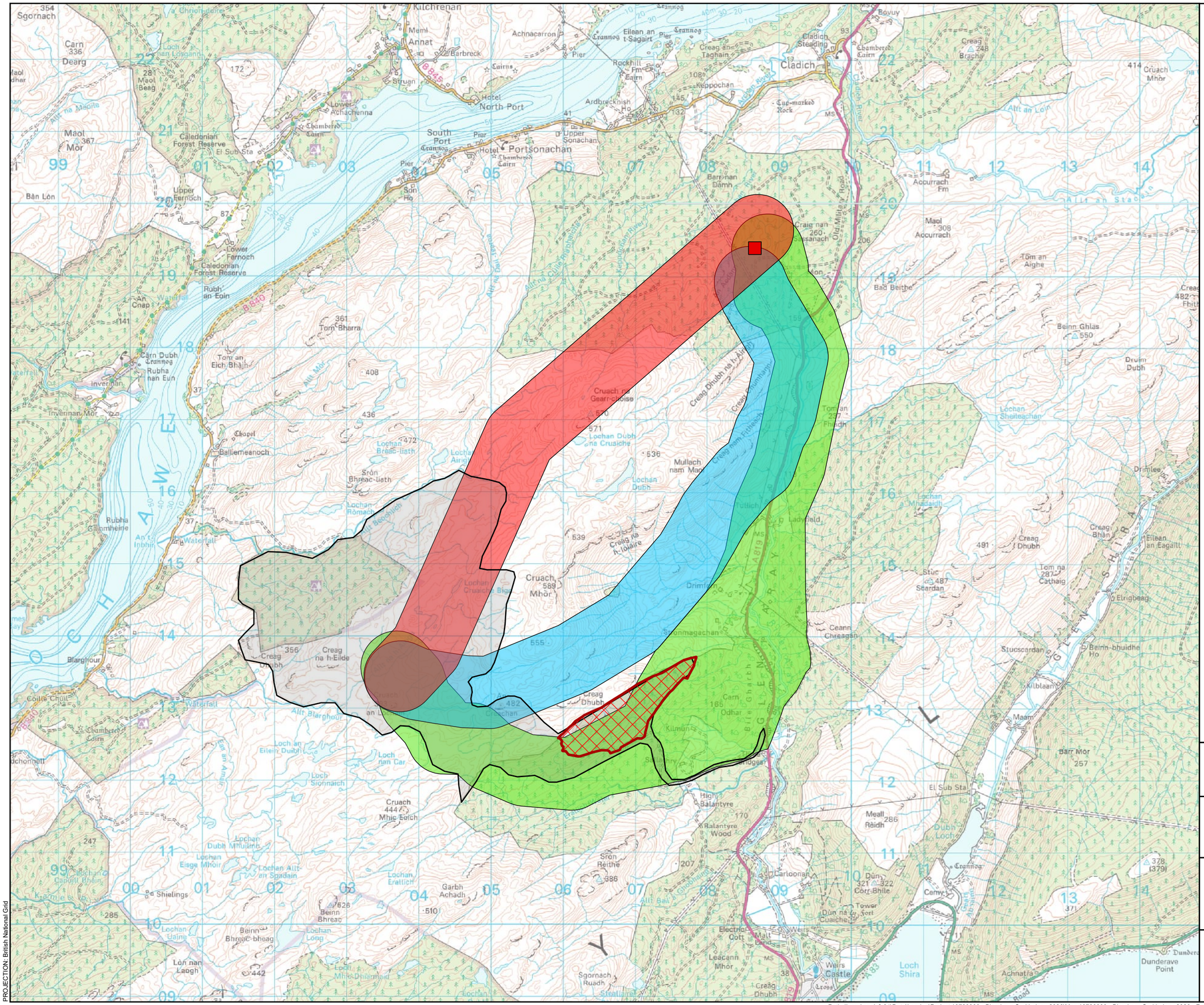
Heads north east from the consented Blarghour Wind Farm Substation for approximately 8 km, following the Cruach Mhor ridge line to Creag Dhubh Substation.

4.1.2 Route 2

Heads east from the proposed Blarghour Wind Farm Substation for approximately 1 km before pivoting to the north east towards Drimfern for approximately 3 km. The route then continues north for approximately 5 km, following a similar route to the existing Inveraray – Taynuilt OHL running alongside the A819, before terminating at Creag Dhubh Substation.

4.1.3 Route 3

Route 3 travels south east for approximately 3 km before turning north towards the A819 for approximately 3 km. The route aligns closely with the A819, crossing the road at Tullich and continuing parallel to the A819 in a northerly direction for approximately 4 km. It then crosses the A819 once more to the north west, near Old Military Road, before terminating at the Creag Dhubh Substation after approximately 1 km.



SCALE: See Scale Bar	VERSION: A01
SIZE: A3	DRAWN: DN
PROJECT: 0780330	CHECKED: SC
DATE: 26/01/2026	APPROVED: KG

Figure 2
Route Options

ERM

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

PROJECTION: British National Grid

Path: \\vmukspgisfs01\Data\London\Projects\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026\Maps\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route Consultation Mapping.aprx / 0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Routeing - A01

5. ENVIRONMENTAL, ENGINEERING AND COST APPRAISAL

5.1 Introduction

This section presents a summary of the environmental, engineering and economic appraisal of the route options.

5.2 Route 1

5.2.1 Environmental Baseline and Appraisal

Route 1 passes through an area of open craggy upland / moorland and commercial forestry, within a medium - large scale landscape, avoiding the smaller scale, more intimate landscape scale of Glen Aray. The connection to a proposed new substation at Creag Dhubh, west of the A819 and south of Cladich, is also situated in commercial forestry. Approximately half of Route 1 is located within an undesignated landscape. The northern section of Route 1 is located within the North Argyll Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ). The landscape is lightly settled, with no residential properties / settlements. This route option is situated centrally within the Craggy Upland LCT, and distant from visual receptors for long sections of the route, with potential for longer distant views from the local road network to the north west and north and potentially visible on the skyline.

Route 1 does not pass through any internationally, nationally, locally or non-statutory designated sites. The proximity to the Glen Etive and Loch Fyne SPA means there is potential for barrier and collision impacts to golden eagle (Qualifying Interest of the SPA) as they travel to and from this designated site.

Baseline ornithology surveys conducted by ERM in 2025 have recorded breeding evidence of golden eagles within the established disturbance distance for the species of 1000 meters[4]. The Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA and Important Bird Area (IBA) are located approximately 950 meters to the east at their closest point. The primary qualifying interest of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA is the breeding population of golden eagles. The potential risks of breeding disturbance, barriers, and collision impacts on golden eagles in relation to the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA, as well as within the broader context of the Argyll West and Islands Natural Heritage Zone (NHZ 14) population and transient birds is high. The preliminary data reveals that these birds were both in flight and / or perched along Route 1. The construction and operational phases of Route 1 may cause breeding disturbance and have the potential to adversely affect the integrity of The Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA. No other sites designated for ornithological features that could be compromised have been identified. No other designated sites are located within a likely zone of influence of Route 1.

Route 1 crosses woodland, grassland and blanket bog habitats which may include GWDTE habitats. There will be direct impacts to these habitats from pole placement and access track construction. Indirect effects may also be experienced due to nearby construction activities e.g. disturbance to water supply, erosion of peat or deposition of dust. No areas of woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) are located within Route 1. Areas listed on the Native Woodland Survey Scotland (NWSS) are not found within Route 1.

The route passes over one WFD watercourse (Allt Beochlich) in the centre of the route, and a tiny margin of the route in the south passes over the Allt Blarghour which is also a WFD designated watercourse. Numerous unnamed but OS mapped watercourses are crossed by the route. The extent of river flooding within Route 1 based on the SEPA Flood Maps is comparatively less than Routes 2 and 3.

Scotland's Soils Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping indicates that Route 1 is predominantly situated across Class 2 peatland. There is also a localised area of Class 3 peatland in the central section of Route 1 and Class 5 peatland in the northern extents of the route.

There are no designated heritage assets within Route 1. There is one scheduled monument and one Category B listed building within 2.5 km of Route 1 that will require an assessment of potential change to the landscape in long-distance from the assets, which has the potential to introduce an impact on the setting. There are no known non-designated

[4] Goodship, N.M. and Furness, R.W. (MacArthur Green) Disturbance Distances Review: An updated literature review of disturbance distances of selected bird species. NatureScot Research Report 1283.

assets within Route 1 or within 250 m of the Route. Route 1 encompasses no features listed on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

The environmental appraisal of Route 1 is provided in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Route 1 Environmental RAG Impact Rating.

RAG Impact Rating - Environmental	OHL Route 1		
Natural Heritage	Designations	International	L
		Regional	L
	Protected Species	European Species	L
		UK Species	L
	Habitats	Annex I	H
		GWDTE	M
		BNG	L
	Ornithology	Schedule 1	H
		BOCC	L
	Hydrology	Drinking Water	M
		Aquifier	M
		Surface Water	M
Cultural Heritage	Designations	WHS SM GDL Battlefields	L
		Sites and Monuments	L
	Assets		L
People	Dwellings		L
Landscape	Designations		M
	Character		M
	Visual		L
Land Use	Agriculture		L
	Forestry		M
	Recreation	Footpaths and Cycle Routes	L
		Highland Sports	L
Planning	Proposals		M
	Policy		H

5.2.2 Engineering Baseline and Appraisal

Route 1 follows the original high-elevation corridor along the Cruach Mhor ridgeline. While it presents moderate impacts for most engineering criteria, it is fundamentally constrained by its sustained high altitude and challenging terrain. The route traverses areas with significant elevation (average 425 m AOD, maximum 520 m), which increases wind and ice loading on structures, necessitating shorter spans or stronger, more expensive steel pole structures. Although the RAG ratings for peat and rock are low, Route 1 is heavily impacted by extensive Class 1 and 2 peatland, which covers approximately two-thirds of the alignment. This not only complicates construction but also introduces long-term maintenance challenges due to ground instability and environmental sensitivity. Access is another major constraint, as there are very few existing tracks or roads along the route, making both construction and future maintenance logistically difficult and costly. Despite some favourable headline RAG scores, these real-world engineering and operational factors

render Route 1 not viable. The cumulative risks associated with elevation, peat, and lack of access outweigh any theoretical advantages, and there are limited opportunities for effective mitigation.

The engineering appraisal of Route 1 is provided in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Route 1 Engineering RAG Impact Rating.

RAG Impact Rating – Engineering	OHL Route 1	
Environmental Design	Altitude	H
	Coastal	M
Topography	Terrain	L
	Waterbodies	L
	Slope	H
Ground Conditions	Peat	H
	Rock	H
	Flooding	M
Access	Road Networks	H
	Access Tracks	H
Existing Infrastructure	Roads	L
	Clearance	L
Existing Network	Connectivity	H
	Outages	H
Operational	Maintenance	H
	Flexibility	H
	Faults	H

5.2.3 Economic Appraisal

The approximate construction cost of the route has been calculated based on a standard per km rate derived from SSEN Transmission's experience of similar projects. Route 1 has the highest capital cost of the three route options due to a number of factors, including but not limited to: high altitudes with specialist pole structures required as such, undulating topography and peatland areas. Operations (inspection and maintenance) have been allocated an amber rating due to the access difficulties and high altitudes of Route 1. Overall, Route 1 has a red RAG rating due to the capital cost.

The cost appraisal of Route 1 is provided in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Cost RAG Rating for Route 1

RAG Impact Rating – Cost	OHL Route 1
Capital	H
Diversions	L
Public Road Improvement	L
Tree Felling	L
Land Assembly	L
Consent Mitigations	L
Inspections	M

RAG Impact Rating – Cost	OHL Route 1
Maintenance	M
Total Cost	H

Route 1

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Carbon and Peatland Class 1

Carbon and Peatland Class 2

Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCs)

Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)

Antiquity

1a

1b

2a

2b

3

Scheduled Monument

Garden and Designed Landscape

Wild Land

Area of Panoramic Quality

Core Path

HER - Lines

HER - Points

Listed Building - Category A

Listed Building - Category B

Listed Building - Category C

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500

Metres

N

SCALE: See Scale Bar	VERSION: A01
SIZE: A3	DRAWN: DN
PROJECT: 0780330	CHECKED: SC
DATE: 26/01/2026	APPROVED: KG

Figure 3
Route 1 Constraints

ERM

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

PROJECTION: British National Grid

Path: \\vmukspgisfs01\Data\London\Projects\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026\Maps\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route Consultation Mapping.aprx / 0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route 1 Constraints

5.3 Route 2

5.3.1 Environmental Baseline and Appraisal

Route 2 passes through an area of open craggy upland / moorland and commercial forestry, within a medium - large scale landscape, and the smaller scale landscape of Glen Aray. The connection to a proposed new substation at Creag Dhubh, west of the A819, south of Cladich, is also situated in commercial forestry. Approximately a quarter of Route 2, is located within the North Argyll APQ. The landscape is lightly settled, with very few residential properties / settlements. Route 2 is situated centrally within the craggy upland, and distant from visual receptors for approximately half of the route, with potential for longer distance views from the local road network to the north west and north. Within Glen Aray, there is the potential for views of Route 2 from the local road network, where the route is out with forestry, and viewed alongside an existing OHL. It should be noted that where Route 2 follows the A819, there is existing and proposed (in construction) electrical infrastructure, elements of which are composed of steel lattice towers, which will likely limit the visual intrusion of newer smaller infrastructure (pole-based line).

Route 2 passes through the internationally designated Glen Etive and Loch Fyne SPA. There is potential for barrier and collision impacts to golden eagle (Qualifying Interest of the SPA) as they travel to and from this designated site, there may be a physical loss of habitat from the designated site if the final design is situated within it.

Two known golden eagle territories are situated near Route 2 and considering that eagles are likely to fly and hunt in these remote areas, along with the elevation of Route 2 there is a risk that Route 2 may lead to a loss of suitable hunting habitat within each territory during both the construction and operational phases. These potential impacts pose a risk to the integrity of The Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA and the favourable conservation status within Argyll West and Islands (NHZ 14). No other sites designated for ornithological features that could be at risk have been identified, and no other designated sites fall within a likely zone of influence from Route 2.

An area of land within the AoS is proposed as part of the Blarghour Wind Farm to be subject to a Land Management Plan (LMP). The purpose of the LMP is to manage the habitats present within the area to promote the local golden eagle population. Route 2 is situated high on the hillside at its southern end and as such may lead to barrier effects or risk of collision for eagles flying between the LMP area and the SPA.

Route 2 crosses woodland, grassland and blanket bog habitats which may include GWDTE habitats. There will be direct impacts to these habitats from pole placement and access track construction. Indirect effects on habitats may also be experienced due to nearby construction activities e.g. disturbance to water supply, erosion of peat or deposition of dust. NWSS-listed woodlands are located within Route 2, but no AWI sites are present in this route.

The route passes over two WFD watercourses: the Allt Blarghour and River Aray. Numerous unnamed but OS mapped watercourses are crossed by the route. The extent of river flooding within Route 2 based on the SEPA Flood Maps is generally associated with the River Aray in the north of the route.

Scotland's Soils Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping indicates that Route 2 is situated in areas of Class 2, 3, 5 and 0 (mineral soils).

There are no designated heritage assets within Route 2. There is one Inventoried Garden & Designed Landscape and two Category B Listed Buildings within 2.5 km of Route 2 that will require an assessment of potential change to the landscape in long-distance from the assets, which has the potential to introduce an impact on the setting. For Route 2, there are three known non-designated assets within 250 m of the route. Route 2 encompasses 12 features (11 points and one linear feature) listed on the HER.

The environmental appraisal of Route 2 is provided in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Route 2 Environmental RAG Impact Rating.

RAG Impact Rating – Environmental	**OHL Route 2**		
Natural Heritage	Designations	International	M
		Regional	L

RAG Impact Rating – Environmental	OHL Route 2		
	Protected Species	European Species	L
		UK Species	L
	Habitats	Annex I	M
		GWDTE	M
		BNG	H
	Ornithology	Schedule 1	H
		BOCC	L
	Hydrology	Drinking Water	M
		Aquifier	M
		Surface Water	M
Cultural Heritage	Designations	WHS SM GDL Battlefields	M
		Sites and Monuments	L
	Assets		M
People	Dwellings		L
Landscape	Designations		M
	Character		M
	Visual		M
Land Use	Agriculture		L
	Forestry		M
	Recreation	Footpaths and Cycle Routes	L
		Highland Sports	L
Planning	Proposals		M
	Policy		M

5.3.2 Engineering Baseline and Appraisal

Route 2 was developed as a more practical corridor, extending east from Blarghour towards Drimfern before turning north to follow the A819 corridor to Creag Dhubh. This route offers improved terrain and access conditions compared to Route 1, supporting wood pole construction. However significant challenges remain with Route 2. The route presents the steepest maximum gradient (approximately 21.1%), which exceeds the preferred threshold for wood pole lines and introduces a higher risk of landslips and ground instability. While the RAG ratings for most criteria are moderate or low, the combination of steep slopes and limited access increases health and safety risks for construction operatives and maintenance teams . Feedback from early contractor engagement is that these conditions are such that it would not be possible to safely construct the Proposed Development within Route 2. Flooding is also a concern, with around 14% of the route lying within a 1-in-200-year flood zone. Although some of these risks can be mitigated through micro-siting and targeted engineering solutions, the overall risk profile is more difficult to reduce to ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practicable) compared to other options.

The engineering appraisal of Route 2 is provided in **Table 8**.

Table 8: Route 2 Engineering RAG Impact Rating.

RAG Impact Rating – Engineering	OHL Route 2	
Environmental Design	Altitude	H
	Coastal	M
Topography	Terrain	L
	Waterbodies	L
	Slope	H
Ground Conditions	Peat	H
	Rock	H
	Flooding	H
Access	Road Networks	H
	Access Tracks	H
Existing Infrastructure	Roads	L
	Clearance	L
Existing Network	Connectivity	M
	Outages	H
Operational	Maintenance	H
	Flexibility	H
	Faults	H

5.3.3 Economic Appraisal

The approximate construction cost of this route option has been calculated based on a standard per km rate derived from SSEN Transmission's experience of similar projects.

Route 2 has a lower capital cost than Route 1, however, due to requiring partial steel structures the Route still has a substantial cost. Operations (inspection and maintenance) have been allocated a green rating due to proximity to the A819 and general ease of access routes with respect to other OHL infrastructure projects within the vicinity. No public road improvements or tree felling is expected on Route 2. Route 2 has an amber RAG rating for diversions as the existing 132 kV Inveraray – Taynuilt double circuit OHL may have to be temporarily diverted to accommodate the Blarghour Wind Farm Connection OHL route.

The cost appraisal of Route 2 is provided in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Cost RAG Rating for Route 2.

RAG Impact Rating – Cost	OHL Route 2
Capital	M
Diversions	M
Public Road Improvement	L
Tree Felling	L
Land Assembly	L
Consent Mitigations	L

RAG Impact Rating – Cost	OHL Route 2
Inspections	L
Maintenance	L
Total Cost	M

Route 2

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Carbon and Peatland Class 1

Carbon and Peatland Class 2

Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCs)

Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)

Antiquity

1a

1b

2a

2b

3

Scheduled Monument

Garden and Designed Landscape

Wild Land

Area of Panoramic Quality

Core Path

HER - Lines

HER - Points

Listed Building - Category A

Listed Building - Category B

Listed Building - Category C

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500

Metres

N

SCALE: See Scale Bar	VERSION: A01
SIZE: A3	DRAWN: DN
PROJECT: 0780330	CHECKED: SC
DATE: 26/01/2026	APPROVED: KG

Figure 4
Route 2 Constraints

ERM

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

PROJECTION: British National Grid

Path: \\vmukspgisfs01\Data\London\Projects\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026\Maps\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route Consultation Mapping.aprx / 0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route 2 Constraints

5.4 Route 3

5.4.1 Environmental Baseline and Appraisal

Route 3 passes through an area of open craggy upland / moorland and commercial forestry, within a medium - large scale landscape, avoiding the smaller scale, more intimate landscape scale of Glen Aray. It passes south along the hillside of Glen Aray before passing west through commercial forests up through the hills. The northern section of Route 3 is located within the North Argyll APQ. The landscape is lightly settled, with few residential properties / settlements. Route 3 is situated centrally within the craggy upland, and distant from visual receptors for approximately half of the route, with potential for longer distant views from the local road network to the north west and north. Within Glen Aray, there is the potential for views of Route 3 from the local road network, where the route is out with forestry, and viewed alongside an existing OHL. It should be noted that within Glen Aray there is existing and proposed (in construction) electrical infrastructure, elements of which are composed of steel lattice towers, which will likely limit the visual intrusion of newer smaller infrastructure (pole-based line).

Route 3 passes through the internationally designated Glen Etive and Loch Fyne SPA. Whilst this route encroaches into the edge of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA, is considered less likely to result in impacts on golden eagle (Qualifying Interest of the SPA) on account of the location within the SPA being close to the busy A819 and scattered settlements. The part of the SPA close to the A819 and local properties is likely subject to a greater level of disturbance by people and road users, resulting in eagles likely avoiding this area. There may be a physical loss of habitat from the designated site if the final design is situated within it.

Baseline ornithology surveys conducted by ERM in 2025 have documented breeding evidence of golden eagles out with the established disturbance distance for the species of 1000 m. Preliminary findings suggest that although Route 3 crosses the boundary of the SPA, golden eagle activity is naturally buffered or protected by the local topography and elevation gradient. Route 3 is further away from any known sensitive breeding locations and is situated below sensitive flight locations by as much as 500 m (within the valley adjacent to the A819). Given the flight activity, the construction and operational phases of Route 3 are less likely to cause breeding disturbance and adversely impact the integrity of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA than other route options. Route 3 is less likely to lead to a loss of suitable hunting habitat within golden eagle territories. No other sites designated for ornithological features and with the potential to be compromised have been identified. No other designated sites fall within a likely zone of influence of Route 3.

Route 3 encompasses an area of land, proposed as part of the Blarghour Wind Farm development to be subject to a Land Management Plan (LMP) (**Figure 2**). The purpose of the LMP is to manage the habitats present to promote golden eagles. Route 3 allows sufficient space to enable future alignment options to pass the LMP area lower in Glen Aray to avoid potential barrier effects or risk of collision for eagles flying between the LMP area and the SPA.

Route 3 crosses woodland and grassland habitats which may include GWDTE habitats. There will be direct impacts to these habitats from pole placement and access track construction. Peatland habitats are potentially avoidable for the majority of Route 3 and as such impacts to these habitats are only likely in the far south of the route on the approach to the proposed Blarghour Wind Farm Substation. Within Route 3 there are a number of recorded areas of Ancient Woodland as per the AWI. These include Ancient Woodland (Antiquity 1a and 2a), Long-established woodlands of plantation origin (LEPO) (Antiquity 1b and 2b), and other woodlands on Roy woodland sites (Antiquity type 3). Depending on the location of the final alignment, there may be a loss of woodland cover and fragmentation effects on remaining woodland pockets. Indirect effects on habitats may also be experienced due to nearby construction activities e.g. disturbance to water supply, erosion of peat or deposition of dust. Woodlands listed on the NWSS are also present within Route 3.

The route passes over three WFD watercourses: the Allt Blarghour, Erralich Water, and River Aray. Numerous unnamed but OS mapped watercourses are crossed by the route. The extent of river flooding within Route 3 based on the SEPA Flood Maps is generally associated with the River Aray and is present through the majority of the route.

Scotland's Soils Carbon and Peatland 2016 mapping indicates that Route 3 is situated in areas of Class 2, 3, 5 and 0 (mineral soils).

There are two designated heritage assets which clip the southern edge of Route 3, Inveraray Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00223) and Category B listed Glen Aray School and Outhouse (LB11523) which is located in Route 3. There are a total of 13 designated assets located within 2.5 km of Route 3 (inclusive of GDL00223 and LB11523) that may require an assessment of potential change to the landscape in long-distance from the assets, which has the potential to introduce an impact on the setting. There are 26 known non-designated assets within Route 3 and an additional six non-designated assets within 250 m of the route. This includes prehistoric assets such as cairns and portions of the historic Military Road from Tyndrum to Inveraray (now mostly aligned to the A819).

The environmental appraisal of Route 3 is provided in **Table 10**.

Table 10: Environmental RAG Rating for Route 3.

RAG Impact Rating - Environmental	OHL Route 3		
Natural Heritage	Designations	International	H
		Regional	L
	Protected Species	European Species	L
		UK Species	L
	Habitats	Annex I	M
		GWDTE	M
		BNG	L
	Ornithology	Schedule 1	M
		BOCC	L
	Hydrology	Drinking water	M
		Aquifier	M
		Surface water	M
Cultural Heritage	Designations	WHS SM GDL Battlefields	H
		Sites and Monuments	M
	Assets		H
People	Dwellings		M
Landscape	Designations		M
	Character		M
	Visual		M
Land Use	Agriculture		L
	Forestry		M
	Recreation	Footpaths and cycle routes	L
		Highland sports	L
Planning	Proposals		M
	Policy		M

5.4.2 Engineering Baseline and Appraisal

Route 3, following the refined A819 corridor, is the preferred engineering option due to its superior access and constructability. Running adjacent to the A819 and existing tracks, it offers logistical advantages and a gentler terrain

with an average gradient of 3.7% and a maximum of 17.6%, making it ideal for continuous wood pole trident construction. While altitude and terrain risks are rated high, they are manageable and outweighed by the route's accessibility. Key constraints include peat and flooding, with approximately 41% of the alignment crossing Class 1 and 2 peatland and over 30% within flood zones; however, these are predictable and mitigable through SSEN measures such as bog shoes, reinforced foundations, micro-siting, and temporary stone access tracks. Impacts on road networks and property clearances, particularly near the A819, require early coordination and careful design but remain controllable. The Drimfern area to the south provides flexibility for landowner engagement and environmental avoidance without compromising technical feasibility, though it introduces minor design complexity due to potential interaction with the proposed Inverary to Creag Dhubh Substation 275 kV overhead line Large Onshore Transmission Infrastructure (LOTI) project and existing Blarghour Wind Farm habitat management zones, foreshadowing potential construction and access constraints. However, this is offset by benefiting by the access proposed by the LOTI project. Overall, Route 3 offers the best balance of safety, compliance, and programme certainty, with all major risks well understood and effectively mitigated.

The engineering appraisal of Route 3 is provided in **Table 11**.

Table 11: Engineering RAG Rating for Route 3.

RAG Impact Rating – Engineering	OHL Route 2a	
Environmental Design	Altitude	M
	Coastal	M
Topography	Terrain	L
	Waterbodies	H
	Slope	H
Ground Conditions	Peat	H
	Rock	H
	Flooding	H
Access	Road Networks	L
	Access Tracks	L
Existing Infrastructure	Roads	L
	Clearance	H
Existing Network	Connectivity	M
	Outages	H
Operational	Maintenance	M
	Flexibility	M
	Faults	M

5.4.3 Economic Appraisal

The approximate construction cost of this route option has been calculated based on a standard per km rate derived from SSEN Transmission's experience of similar projects.

Route 3 has the lowest capital cost of the three route options and is rated as green as the cost difference between the different route options is substantial. Operations (inspection and maintenance) have been allocated a green rating due to proximity to the A819 and general ease of access routes with respect to other OHL infrastructure projects within the vicinity.

The cost appraisal of Route 3 is provided in **Table 12**.

Table 12: Cost RAG Rating for Route 3.

RAG Impact Rating – Cost	OHL Route 3
Capital	L
Diversions	M
Public Road Improvement	L
Tree Felling	L
Land Assembly	L
Consent Mitigations	L
Inspections	L
Maintenance	L
Total Cost	L

Route 3

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Carbon and Peatland Class 1

Carbon and Peatland Class 2

Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCs)

Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)

Antiquity

1a

1b

2a

2b

3

Scheduled Monument

Garden and Designed Landscape

Wild Land

Area of Panoramic Quality

Core Path

HER - Lines

HER - Points

Listed Building - Category A

Listed Building - Category B

Listed Building - Category C

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500

Metres

N

SCALE: See Scale Bar	VERSION: A01
SIZE: A3	DRAWN: DN
PROJECT: 0780330	CHECKED: SC
DATE: 26/01/2026	APPROVED: KG

Figure 5
Route 3 Constraints

ERM

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks TRANSMISSION

PROJECTION: British National Grid

Path: \\vmukspgisfs01\Data\London\Projects\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026\Maps\0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route Consultation Mapping.aprx / 0780330 - Blarghour Ornithology 2026 - Route 3 Constraints

5.5 Comparison of Routes and Preferred Option

5.5.1 Comparison of Routes 1, 2 and 3

A comparison of the three route options has identified similar RAG scoring across many environmental topics. On balance, Route 2 is considered to be the environmentally Preferred Route selected in preference of Route 3.

Whilst all route options have cultural heritage features within the 2 km Study Area that may experience effects to setting, Route 3 is closer to these and partially clips the boundary of the GDL (GDL00223 Inveraray Castle) and also contains 26 Non-Designated Assets that would require to be avoided if practicable. Route 2 presents a less constrained route avoiding a greater number of these assets, passing by the GDL at a greater distance than Route 3 and is likely screened by topographical features and woodland to a greater degree than Route 3.

Route 3 would be visible from the A819 and follows the road alignment for a greater distance than Route 2 meaning it is more exposed and will likely have a higher visual impact on road users. It should be noted that within Glen Aray there is existing and proposed (in construction) electrical infrastructure, elements of which are composed of steel lattice towers, which will likely limit the visual intrusion of newer smaller infrastructure (pole-based line). Route 3 contains more residential properties, and the potential for visual impacts is higher.

Route 3 is the only route to encompass areas of woodland listed on the AWI (category 1a, 2a ,2b and 3). Route 1 and 2 contain no AWI. AWI is an ecologically diverse resource for which there is a presumption against its loss with certain categories (1a and 2a) considered irreplaceable as they are technically very difficult to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed.

Route 2 and 3 have similar potential to impact blanket bog and peatland habitats. Peat depths in Route 2 are likely greater than Route 3, based on initial probing data. Route 1 passes through the greatest volume of peat. Peatland is a material consideration under NPF4 and there is a presumption against its loss, given its value as a carbon sink.

Route 3 whilst encroaching the edge of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA to a greater extent than Route 2, is considered less likely to result in impacts on golden eagle on account of the location within the SPA being close to the busy A819 and scattered settlements. The part of the SPA close to the A819 and local properties is likely subject to a greater level of disturbance by people and road users, resulting in eagles likely avoiding this area. The location of Route 3 in Glen Aray means it is likely to be less of a risk of collision as it is naturally buffered or protected by the local topography, elevation gradient and presence of taller electrical infrastructure, suggesting golden eagles are more likely to fly over it, as identified in preliminary flight activity survey results.

The Blarghour Wind Farm development is to be subject to a LMP. The purpose of the LMP is to manage the habitats present within the area to promote the local golden eagle population. Route 2 may potentially lead to barrier effects or risk of collision for eagles flying between the LMP area and the SPA and therefore pose a negative impact on the objectives of the LMP. Whilst Route 3 encompasses the Blarghour Wind Farm LMP area, sufficient space is afforded within the route option to allow future alignments to pass the LMP area lower in Glen Aray to avoid potential barrier effects or risk of collision for eagles flying between the LMP area and the SPA.

All route options scored similarly in the hydrology appraisal, however it is noted that there is a greater flood extent and more WFD watercourses associated with Route 3.

The potential for greater cultural heritage constraints, the presence of woodland listed on the AWI and closer proximity to residential properties mean Route 2 is preferred in comparison to Route 3 and is the environmentally preferred route option.

However, from an engineering perspective, Route 2 presents a health and safety risk to construction operatives, particularly in relation to working on steep and potentially unstable ground and the risk of disturbance-induced peat or ground movement. In addition, constrained access creates an ongoing operational risk for inspection and fault response.

Route 1 is not practically deliverable. The route is characterised by sustained high elevation, extensive interaction with Class 1 and Class 2 peatland, a lack of viable access, and a reliance on more complex construction solutions, including significant lengths of steel trident structures. These constraints materially increase construction risk, restrict

opportunities for mitigation through micro-siting, and create unacceptable whole-life inspection and maintenance challenges.

As a result Route 3 offers the best balance of safety, compliance, and programme certainty, with all major risks well understood and effectively mitigated. Route 3 benefits from significantly improved access, including numerous existing tracks within 1 km of the alignment and close adjacency to the A819, generally shallower terrain (average gradient ~3.7%, maximum ~17.6%), and full suitability for continuous wood pole trident construction along its length.

From an economic perspective Route 3 is preferred as it has the lowest capital cost.

Overall, after a comparative appraisal of Routes 1, 2, and 3, and consideration of environmental, engineering and cost considerations, Route 3 is the preferred route option.

5.5.2 Selection of Preferred Route

The Preferred Route for the connection between the Blarghour Wind Farm and Creag Dhubh Substation is Route 3. This is because Route 3 offers the best balance of safety, compliance, and programme certainty, with all major risks well understood and effectively mitigated. Route 3 benefits from greater existing access provisions and reduced constraints in respect to the 132 kV Inveraray – Taynuilt double circuit OHL. These elements all contribute to a route option which is lower in cost providing better value to customers.

Careful design of an OHL alignment within Route 3 will be required to minimise impacts on ancient woodland, visual receptors, heritage receptors and to minimise impacts on golden eagles using the area. Although Route 2 is the preferred alignment from an environmental perspective, it has been assessed as unsafe to construct and would pose an ongoing operational risk for inspection and fault response.

6. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL

6.1 Introduction

SSEN Transmission places great importance on, and is committed to, consultation and engagement with all parties and stakeholders likely to have an interest in proposals for new projects such as this. Stakeholder engagement is an essential part of an effective development process.

The proposals detailed in this report have been developed through environmental and technical analysis of the route options. The potential for environmental effects remains and further assessment and design will be important in giving detailed consideration to the development and integration of mitigation measures to address significant environmental effects identified.

When providing comment and feedback, SSEN Transmission would be grateful for your consideration of the questions below. We are keen to receive your views and comments in regards to the following:

- Do you feel sufficient information has been provided to enable you to understand what is being proposed and why?
- Which of the three options would you consider the best option for SSEN Transmission to develop? Please provide an explanation of your answer.
- Which of the three options would you consider the least preferable option for SSEN Transmission to develop? Please provide an explanation of your answer.
- Are there any potential risks or benefits associated with this project, that you believe have not been included in the Consultation Document?
- Do you have any other comments on the Proposed Development?

6.2 Next steps

A series of events will be held in March 2026 (see Preface) and meetings will be arranged with statutory and other stakeholders. The responses received, and those sought from statutory consultees and other key stakeholders will inform further consideration and design of the Preferred Route leading to the identification of a Proposed Route to take forward to the alignment and consenting stages.

Please submit your comments to:

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All comments are requested by **2nd April** 2026.