

Cambushinnie 400 kV Overhead Line Tie-In

Planning statement

May 2025



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ("the Applicant") who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission ("SSEN Transmission") has submitted an application under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") along with a request that Ministers issue a direction that planning permission is deemed to be granted under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for consent to construct and operate overhead line infrastructure which would form the Cambushinnie 400 kV tie-in (OHL), and associated ancillary development (hereafter referred to as "the Proposed Development").
- 1.1.2 SSEN Transmission is proposing to upgrade the existing Beauly-Denny 275 kV circuit to operate at 400 kV to mirror the ratings of the existing 400 kV circuit which already operates at this voltage. This upgrade does not require any works to be done to the existing OHL infrastructure, other than new tie-ins, but requires alterations to existing substations at Beauly, Fasnakyle, Fort Augustus, Tummel, Errochty, Kinardochy and Braco West, which connect into the existing line. Works are required at each of the substations with differing scopes and requirements, and therefore consenting types and timescales also differ.
- 1.1.3 The Proposed Development would be expected to become operational in 2029, subject to outage and commissioning sequences and would likely require regular monitoring and maintenance throughout its lifespan. It is anticipated that the Proposed Development would operate in perpetuity. The design life of the individual components is considered to be approximately 45 years or more, however, these will be maintained or repaired as part of a regular maintenance and monitoring regime. Consequently, as the Proposed Development would support ongoing transmission of electricity in the wider area, it is considered permanent, and decommissioning is not considered.
- 1.1.4 The energy regulator, Ofgem, approved the need for these projects as part of its Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) framework decision. The project, alongside several other major network upgrades planned in the north of Scotland, forms part of a Great Britain wide programme of works that are required to meet UK and Scottish Government energy targets. There is a strong expectation from Government and Ofgem, that these projects will be delivered by 2030. Specifically, these projects are needed to deliver the Government's 2030 renewable targets as set within the British Energy Security Strategy (BESS) (April 2022).
- 1.1.5 SSEN Transmission has a licence obligation to invest in its existing assets to maintain network health and conditions, thereby improving operational flexibility and resilience.
- 1.1.6 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion was requested from the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) and was returned on 29 April 2024 confirming that the Proposed Development is not considered to be EIA Development. The Application has prepared a voluntary Environmental Assessment (EA) which assessed the effects of the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.7 This Planning Statement considers the case for approval in land use planning policy terms at the national (National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and local (Perth & Kinross wide) level, with reference to the statutory Development Plan and national planning and energy policy, all of which supports the delivery of electricity infrastructure that will assist in the delivery of the Government's legally binding 'Net Zero' commitments and which will ensure security of supply to customers.
- 1.1.8 The Proposed Development is categorised as National Development under the provisions of NPF4, National Development 3 'Strategic Renewables Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' (Scotland Wide) and forms a vital element in the delivery of network and grid infrastructure to support Net Zero ambitions.

1.2 Site Location and Description

- 1.2.1 The Site Location is shown in Figure 1.1 below (Figure 2_1 in EA Report).
- 1.2.2 Figures 1.2 (EA Report Figure 2_2) and 1.3 (EA Report Figure 2_3) shows the Temporary OHL Arrangement and the Final OHL Arrangement respectively.
- 1.2.3 The Limit of Deviation (LoD) shown defines the maximum extent within which the Proposed Development can be built and is defined as the Site within the EA and this Report. The figure also denotes the proposed Final Arrangement (referenced as Figure 2-3 within the EA Report)

Figure 1.1: Site Location

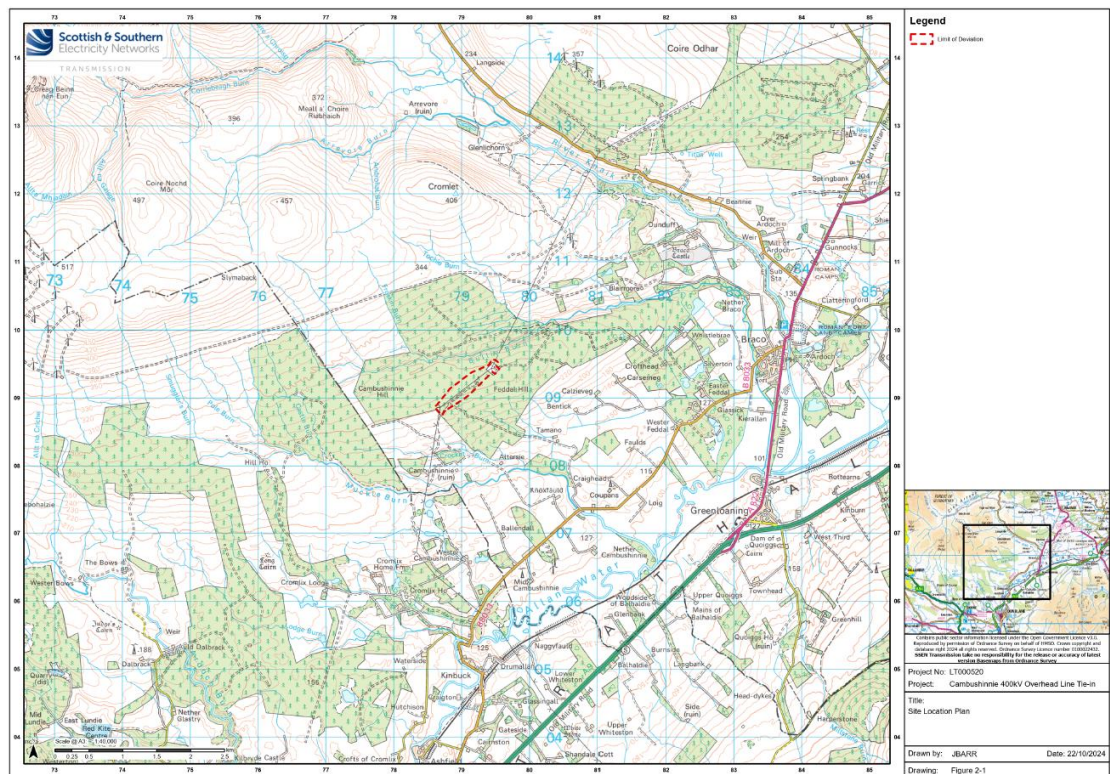


Figure 1.2: Temporary OHL Proposed Arrangement

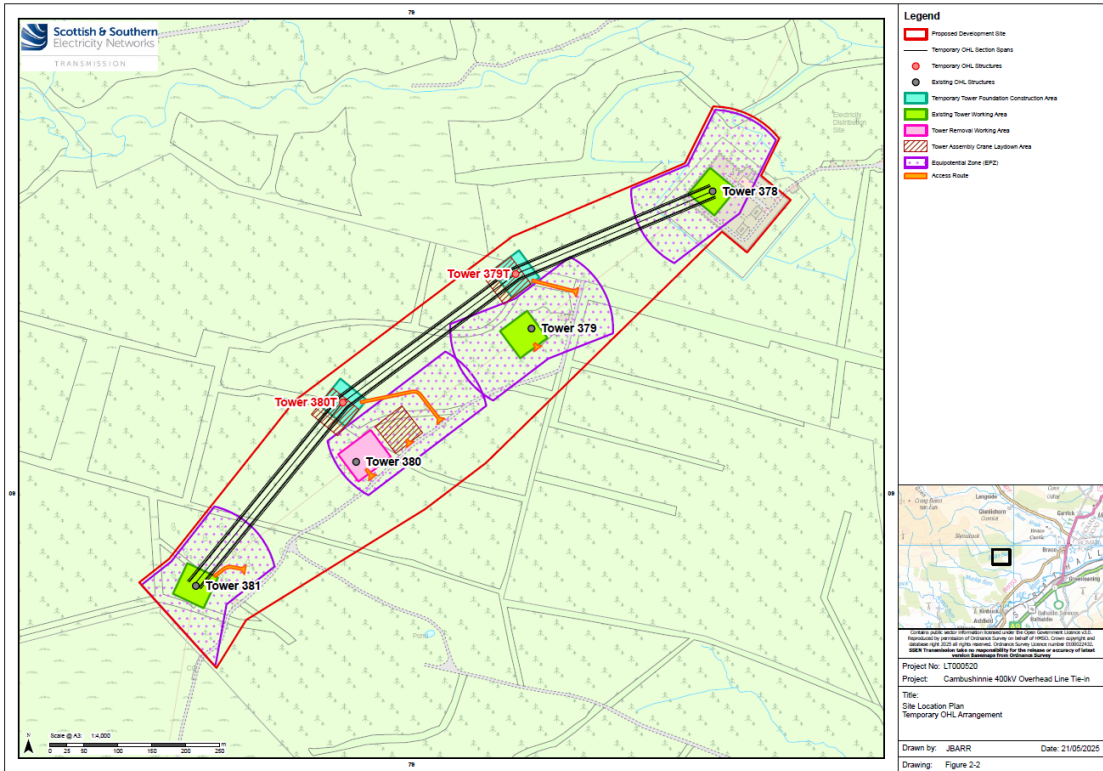
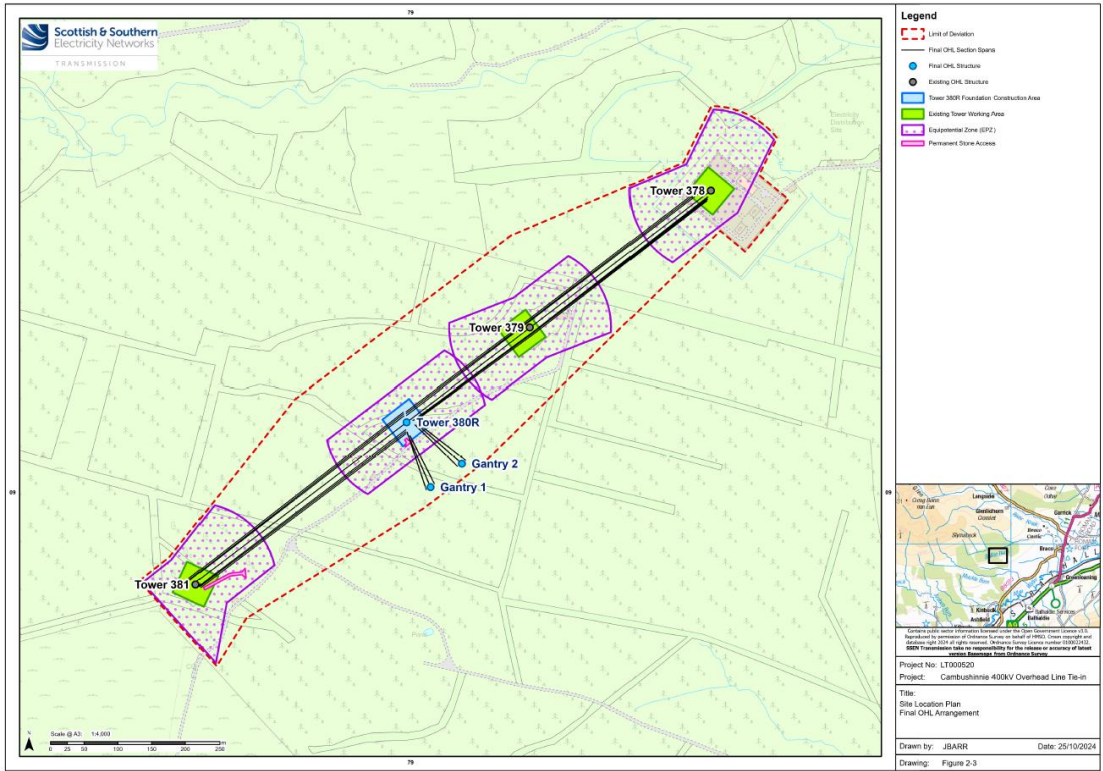


Figure 1.3: Final OHL Proposed Arrangement



1.3

Background to the Proposed Development

1.3.1

The Applicant is the electricity transmission licence holder across the North and East of Scotland and has a duty under Section 9 of the 1989 Act to:

- > Develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical system of electricity transmission and;
- > To facilitate competition in the generation and supply of electricity.

- 1.3.2 The Proposed Development is therefore required to fulfil the statutory and licence obligations on the Applicant as the transmission licence holder. These obligations related to developing the transmission network to provide adequate transmission capacity and to provide connections to customers who wish to connect to and use the transmission system to participate in the national wholesale electricity market.
- 1.3.3 The Electricity Systems Operation (ESO)'s Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design (HND) identified the requirement to reinforce the onshore corridors between Beaully and Peterhead, Beaully and Spittal in Caithness, and an offshore subsea cable between Spittal and Peterhead as well as the need to upgrade the 275kV Beaully-Denny circuit. It outlined that these reinforcements would provide the capacity required to take power from large-scale onshore and offshore renewable generation (mainly wind farms) to the northeast mainland of Scotland. From there, it could be transported to demand centres in England via a subsea cable. The Proposed Development is required to enable these connections.
- 1.3.4 In December 2022, the independent energy regulator for Great Britain, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), approved the need for the upgrade of the existing Beaully-Denny 275kV circuit as part of the ASTI framework as a Great Britain wide programme of investments. Ofgem's decision approved all of SSEN Transmission's Pathway to 2030 projects, which includes the Proposed Development. It also set out the regulatory framework under which these projects will be taken forward.
- 1.3.5 The Proposed Development is required to tie-in the OHL to the proposed Cambushinnie 400 kV substation, subject to a separate Town and Country Planning (Scotland) application submitted to Perth & Kinross Council (PKC).
- 1.3.6 This project, alongside several other major network upgrades planned in the north of Scotland, is therefore part of a Great Britain wide programme of works that are required to meet UK and Scottish Government energy targets. There is a clear expectation from Government and the energy regulator, Ofgem, that these projects will be delivered by 2030. More specifically, these projects are needed to deliver Government 2030 renewable energy targets set out in the British Energy Security Strategy.

1.4 The Proposed Development

- 1.4.1 A full description of the Proposed Development is provided in Chapter 2 of the EA Report and is summarised below for the purposes of this Planning Statement.

The Proposed Development

- 1.4.2 The Proposed Development will consist of a temporary layout arrangement for construction, and a permanent layout arrangement for operation and will comprise the following elements:
- > Two temporary towers (380T and 379T) to allow for short term OHL diversion during the construction of a new terminal tower 380R;
 - > Construction of one new permanent terminal tower (380R);
 - > Dismantling of redundant tower T380; and
 - > Temporary access routes to permanent and temporary towers except at T378.
- 1.4.3 The OHL Tower design would consist of a 400 kV steel lattice design. The permanent new terminal tower 380R will be a maximum height of 62.42 m above ground level.
- 1.4.4 The temporary diversion towers 379T and 380T are anticipated to measure heights of approximately 52 m and 49 m respectively.

Limit of Deviation

- 1.4.5 The Proposed Development includes a number of elements which for construction will need some flexibility in final siting to reflect localised land, engineering and environmental constraints. To enable that flexibility, the Proposed Development includes LoDs. The LoD is the area either side of the proposed OHL components as described above, within which micro-siting will take place.
- 1.4.6 The horizontal LoD parameters are set at 50 m either side of the proposed OHL components.
- 1.4.7 The vertical LoD will be 6 m.
- 1.4.8 Any permanent access tracks will require a 50 m LoD. Any spurs of access tracks (perpendicular to the main track) that link into the wayleave (the voluntary agreement between a landowner upon whose land an OHL is to be constructed and SSEN Transmission) will also require a 50 m LoD.

Construction

- 1.4.9 A detailed description of the construction process for the Proposed Development is contained within the EA and is not repeated here.
- 1.4.10 Construction working hours are anticipated to typically be restricted to 0700 to 1900 Monday to Friday, and 0800 to 1300 on Saturday, with only some continuous activities carried out by exception. These working hours would be subject to approval from PKC.
- 1.4.11 During the commissioning phase there may be a requirement for short term 24 hours a day, seven days a week working, and potential for out of hours working. These working hours are subject to approval from PKC.
- 1.4.12 Construction traffic would utilise the A822 public road between the A9 trunk road and a proposed new haul road. This would be used for construction vehicle access between the A822 south of Braco village and the existing site access track and would cross the B8033.. The haul road development will be subject to its own separate planning application to PKC.

Reinstatement

- 1.4.13 Following commissioning, all temporary construction areas would be reinstated.

Landscape Mitigation Measures and Biodiversity Enhancement

- 1.4.14 Landscape and visual mitigation measures, including native woodland planting and peatland seeding to provide a degree of visual screening and / or to help integrated the Proposed Development into the surrounding landscape have been proposed.
- 1.4.15 These measures would also seek, in addition to mitigation, to provide habitat, biodiversity and opportunities for ecological enhancement. A landscape and habitat management plan is provided in Appendix F of the EA. The plan is also included in the associated Cambushinnie Substation EA and includes measures for both the OHL and substation developments together.

Operational Infrastructure

- 1.4.16 The following permanent operational facilities are required:
- > Lighting – the Proposed Development would not be illuminated at night during normal operation;
 - > Permanent Access – it is anticipated that vehicle access to the Site would be via the existing public road network and dedicated access track.

- 1.4.17 Deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is sought for the works that are required as part of the Proposed Development, or in order to facilitate its construction and operation.

1.5 The Statutory Framework

The Electricity Act 1989

- 1.5.1 As the Transmission Licence holder in the North and East of Scotland, the Applicant has a duty under section 9(2) of the 1989 Act to facilitate competition in the generation and supply of electricity. The Applicant is obliged to offer non-discriminatory terms for connection to the transmission system both for new generation and for new sources of electricity demand.
- 1.5.2 The Applicant is also required under section 9(2) of the 1989 Act to ensure that the transmission system is developed and maintained in an economical, coordinated and efficient manner in the interests of existing and future electricity consumers.
- 1.5.3 Separately, it is also the Applicant's duty to consider the possible environmental impacts of new electric lines and to do what can 'reasonably be done' to mitigate adverse impacts, in line with section 38 of, and Schedule 9 to, the 1989 Act. In terms of its statutory duties and licence obligations, the Applicant must therefore balance technical, cost (economic) and environmental factors.
- 1.5.4 The application is made to the Scottish Ministers under section 37 of the 1989 Act together with a request that Ministers issue a direction confirming that the development benefits from deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).
- 1.5.5 The Scottish Ministers are obliged to consider whether the Applicant has demonstrated that it has complied with its duties under sub-paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 9 of the 1989 Act. The Scottish Ministers must also have regard to the desirability of the matters specified in Schedule 9.
- 1.5.6 Applications made under Section 37 of the 1989 Act need to have regard to the provisions of Schedule 9 which relates to the preservation of amenity and fisheries.
- 1.5.7 Schedule 9, sub-paragraph 3(2) of the 1989 Act, requires a licence holder and the Scottish Ministers to have regard to:
- "(a) the desirability of the matters mentioned in paragraph (a) of sub-paragraph (1) above; and (b) the extent to which the person by whom the proposals were formulated has complied with his duty under paragraph (b) of the sub-paragraph."*
- 1.5.8 The matters referred to in Schedule 9 sub-paragraph 3(1)(a) and (b) of the 1989 Act apply to the Applicant as a licence holder. The matters set out in Sub paragraph 3(1)(a) to which regard must be had are:
- ".... the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; "*
- 1.5.9 Sub-paragraph 3(1)(b) requires relevant parties to:
- ".....do what he reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects"*
- 1.5.10 At sub-paragraph 3(3), the Applicant is [required to...] *"avoid, so far as possible, causing injury to fisheries or to the stock of fish in any waters."*
- 1.5.11 In considering the overall statutory and regulatory framework within which the Proposed Development should be assessed, the statutory Development Plan is a material

consideration which should be taken into account alongside all other relevant material considerations.

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

- 1.5.12 Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) (the “1997 Act”) provides that on granting a consent under section 36 or 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 in respect of any operation or change of use that constitutes development, or any development ancillary to the operation or change of use to which the consent relates, the Scottish Ministers may direct that planning permission shall be deemed to be granted, subject to any conditions as may be specified in the direction.
- 1.5.13 Section 25 of the 1997 Act states that:
- “Where, in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination is, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, to be made in accordance with that plan”.*
- 1.5.14 Section 57(2) of the 1997 Act makes no reference to the provisions of section 25 which requires regard to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan. The Courts have confirmed that section 57(3) does not apply section 25 to a decision to make a direction to grant deemed planning permission pursuant to section 57(2)¹.
- 1.5.15 The Scottish Ministers will determine the application having regard to the statutory duties in Schedules 8 and 9 of the 1989 Act, and to material considerations. The statutory Development Plan and national policy are nevertheless both important material considerations in the determination of applications under section 37 of the 1989 Act.
- 1.5.16 Accordingly, the purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide an assessment of the Proposed Development in the context of relevant national and local planning and energy policies and other material considerations. As such it is important to establish:
- > What are the relevant energy and national planning policy considerations relevant to the Proposed Development?
 - > What Development Plan policies are relevant to the proposal which provide a local policy framework for the consideration of environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development?

1.6 Key Facts

- 1.6.1 Key facts relevant to this application are:
- > The Proposed Development is identified as a National Development (ND) under the provisions of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) ND3 under the class of development noted at (b) as “*new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more*”.
 - > ND3 supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid. The Socio-economic assessments as part of a wider ‘needs case’ form an integral part of the justification for development of Scotland’s ‘Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure.’ This infrastructure is designated as a National Development and explicitly supported by NPF4 under the provisions set out in Policy 11(a)(ii) (Energy).
 - > The Statement of Need for the Proposed Development as contained in NPF4 is as follows:

“A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets. Certain types of renewable

¹ William Grant & Sons Distillers Limited, Court of Session [2012] CSOH 98.

electricity generation will also be required, which will include energy storage technology and capacity, to provide the vital services, including flexible response, that a zero-carbon network will require. Generation is for domestic consumption as well as for export to the UK and beyond, with new capacity helping to decarbonise heat, transport and industrial energy demand. This has the potential to support jobs and business investment, with wider economic benefits.

The electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity to consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. Delivery of this national development will be informed by market, policy and regulatory developments and decisions.

Additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale is fundamental to achieving a net zero economy and supports improved network resilience across Scotland”.

- > The Proposed Development will facilitate capturing renewable energy potential as well as delivering wider social and economic benefits.
- > The Proposed Development is a critical reinforcement of the transmission network to connect consented wind development and increase transmission capacity overall to ensure transmission across the UK, and security of supply and to deliver electricity UK wide.
- > The Proposed Development will deliver nationally important network and grid infrastructure required to deliver the Government’s legally binding targets for Net Zero emissions and renewable energy electricity generation targets and policy objectives.
- > The Proposed Development will be delivered in such a way that it is environmentally acceptable and will include a co-ordinated scheme of environmental mitigation to ensure the long-term protection of the local and wider environment and to deliver development which is sustainable.

1.7 Structure of Statement

1.7.1 This Statement seeks to address the pertinent land use planning policy matters relevant to the determination of the application, to aid decision makers in their assessment and conclusions on the proposal.

1.7.2 This Statement is structured as follows:

- > **Chapter 2** sets out the up-to-date position with regard to the renewable energy policy and emissions reduction legislative framework and includes reference to the Scottish Government’s Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan;
- > **Chapter 3** sets out the benefits of the Proposed Development;
- > **Chapter 4** appraises the Proposed Development against the most up to date element of the Development Plan, namely the relevant provisions of NPF4;
- > **Chapter 5** appraises the Proposed Development against the relevant provisions of the three applicable Local Development Plans and related guidance; and
- > **Chapter 6** examines the planning balance and presents overall conclusions.

2. The Renewable Energy Policy & Legislative Framework

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This Chapter refers to the renewable energy policy and emissions reduction legislative framework with reference to relevant international, UK and Scottish provisions. The framework of international agreements and obligations, legally binding targets and climate change global advisory reports is the foundation upon which national energy policy and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reduction law is based. This underpins what can be termed the need case for renewable energy and associated transmission infrastructure from which the Proposed Development can draw a high level of support.
- 2.1.2 The Proposed Development requires to be considered against a background of material UK and Scottish Government energy and climate policy and legislative provisions, as well as national planning policy and advice. These taken together provide very strong support for onshore wind in principle.
- 2.1.3 It is evident that there is clear and consistent policy support at all levels, from international to local, for the deployment of renewable energy generally, to combat the global climate crisis, diversify the mix of energy sources, achieve greater security of supply, and to attain legally binding emissions reduction targets.
- 2.1.4 The Proposed Development, reinforcing grid and increasing capacity and security of supply, would make a valuable contribution to help Scotland and the UK meet its renewable energy and electricity production targets, while supporting emissions reduction to combat climate change in the current Climate Emergency.
- 2.1.5 UK and Scottish Government renewable energy policy and associated renewable energy and electricity targets are important considerations. It is important to be clear on the current position as it is a fast-moving topic of public policy. The context of international climate change commitments is set out. This is followed by reference to key UK level statutory and policy provisions and then a detailed description of relevant Scottish Government statutory and policy provisions is set out.

2.2 International Commitments

The Paris Agreement (2015)

- 2.2.1 In December 2015, 196 countries adopted the first ever universal, legally binding global climate deal at the Paris Climate Conference (COP21). The Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change sets out a global action plan towards climate neutrality with the aims of stopping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C.
- 2.2.2 It is clear that moving to a low carbon economy is a globally shared goal and will require absolute emission reduction targets. The UK Government's commitment under the Paris Agreement links to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) advice to both the UK and Scottish Governments on 'net zero' targets which have now, at both the UK and Scottish levels, been translated into new legislative provisions and targets for both 2045 (Scotland) and 2050 (UK).
- 2.2.3 The Paris Agreement does not itself represent Government policy in the UK or Scotland. However, the purpose of domestic and renewable energy and GHG reduction targets is to meet the UK's commitment in the Paris Agreement.

United Nations - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

- 2.2.4 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations Body for assessing the science related to climate change.
- 2.2.5 The IPCC prepares comprehensive assessment reports about the state of scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its impacts and future risks and options for reducing the rate at which climate change is taking place. IPCC reports are commissioned by the worlds' Governments and are an agreed basis for COP² negotiations.
- 2.2.6 The IPCC's Special Report on Warming of 1.5°C, published in 2018, was a key piece of evidence for the CCC's recommendation to the UK Government for a 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emission target. The IPCC's reports since 2018 have provided an up-to-date estimate of how close global temperatures are to 1.5°C of warming above pre-industrial levels and the remaining volume of global cumulative carbon dioxide that could be emitted to be consistent with keeping global warming below any particular threshold (such as the 1.5°C and 2°C levels referred to in the Paris Agreement).
- 2.2.7 The IPCC's 6th Assessment Report was published in March 2023. The Summary for Policymakers Report³ at page 10 states that it is likely that warming will exceed 1.5°C during the 21st Century and make it harder to limit warming to 2°C. It states (page 12):
- 2.2.8 *"Continued greenhouse gas emissions will lead to increasing global warming, with the best estimate of reaching 1.5°C in the near term in considered scenarios and modelled pathways. Every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards (high confidence). Deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions would lead to a discernible slowdown in global warming within around two decades, and also to discernible changes in atmospheric composition within a few years (high confidence)".*
- 2.2.9 Page 24 of the Summary states *"There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all (very high confidence)".*

COP 28, Dubai 2023

- 2.2.10 The United Nations Climate Change Conference (Conference of the Parties - COP28) closed on 13 December 2023. The UN press release of the same date states that the agreement reached "Signals the 'beginning of the end' of the fossil fuel era by laying the ground for swift, just and equitable transition, underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled up finance."
- 2.2.11 The statement adds:
- "The stocktake recognises the science that indicates global greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut 43% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels, to limit global warming to 1.5°C. But it notes parties are off track when it comes to meeting their Paris Agreement goals.*
- The stocktake calls on parties to take actions towards achieving, at a global scale, a tripling of renewable energy capacity and doubling of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. The list also includes accelerating efforts towards the phase down of unabated coal power, phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, and other measures that drive the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, with developed countries continuing to take the lead."* (underlining added)

UN Emissions Gap Report (2024)

- 2.2.12 The UN Emissions Gap Report (October 2024) and its 'key messages' summary provides the annual independent science-based assessment of the gap between the pledged GHG reductions, and the reductions required to align with the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties (COP).

³ A Summary of the main 6th Assessment Report.

- 2.2.13 The Report states that against the background of GHG emissions reaching new highs and climate impacts intensifying globally, nations are preparing what are termed Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for submission in early 2025, ahead of COP30 in Brazil.
- 2.2.14 The Report states that in order to avoid the present trajectory of temperature increase far beyond 2°C over the course of this century:
- 2.2.15 *“Nations must use COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, as the launch pad to increase ambition and ensure the NDCs collectively promise to almost halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. They must then follow up with rapid delivery of commitments, building on actions taken now. If they do not do so, the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C will be gone within a few years and the 2°C target will be in danger”.*
- 2.2.16 The Report states (on page 1) that there must be *“unprecedented cuts to greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to keep 1.5°C alive”*.
- 2.2.17 In order to put the challenge of emissions reduction in context, the key messages document (on page 2), sets out that if only current NDCs are implemented and no further ambition is shown in the new pledges to come, *“the best we could expect to achieve is catastrophic global warming of up to 2.6°C over the course of the century”*.

COP 29, Baku 2024

- 2.2.18 The 29th UN Climate Conference hosted in Baku, Azerbaijan concluded on November 24 2024. New financial goals at COP 29 will build on the significant strides on global action at COP 27, which agreed a historic Loss and Damage Fund, and COP 28, which delivered a global agreement to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a swift and fair manner as well as triple renewable energy and boost climate resilience. Unlike COP 27 and 28 however, COP 29 reached an agreement on carbon markets which will help countries deliver their respective climate plans on a quicker and cheaper basis, as well as make faster progress in halving global emissions.

2.3 UK Climate Change & Energy Legislation & Policy

The Climate Emergency

- 2.3.1 A critical part of the response to the challenge of climate change was the Climate Emergency which was declared by the Scottish Government in April 2019 and by the UK Parliament in May 2019. The declaration of Climate Emergency needs to be viewed in the context in which it was declared (advice from the CCC) and in response to commitments under the Paris Agreement and what followed from it as a result of the declaration (new emissions reduction law).

The Climate Change Act 2008 & Carbon Budgets

- 2.3.2 The Climate Change Act 2008 (“the 2008 Act”) provides a system of carbon budgeting. Under the 2008 Act, the UK committed to a net reduction in GHG emissions by 2050 of 80% against the 1990 baseline. In June 2019, secondary legislation was passed that extended that target to at least 100% against the 1990 baseline by 2050, with Scotland committing to net zero by 2045.
- 2.3.3 The 2008 Act also established the CCC which advises the UK Government on emissions targets, and reports to Parliament on progress made in reducing GHG emissions.
- 2.3.4 The CCC has produced six four yearly carbon budgets, covering 2008 – 2037. These carbon budgets represent a progressive limitation on the total quantity of GHG emissions to be emitted over the five-year period as summarised in Table 2.1 below. Essentially, they are five yearly caps on emissions.
- 2.3.5 These legally binding ‘carbon budgets’ act as stepping-stones toward the 2050 target. The CCC advises on the appropriate level of each carbon budget and once accepted by

Government, the respective budgets are legislated by Parliament. All six carbon budgets have been put into law and run up to 2037.

Table 2.1: Carbon Budgets and Progress⁴

Budget	Carbon budget level	Reduction below 1990 levels	Progress on Budgetary Period
1 st carbon budget (2008 – 2012)	3,018 MtCO ₂ e	26%	-27%
2 nd carbon budget (2013 – 2017)	2,782 MtCO ₂ e	32%	-42%
3 rd carbon budget (2018 – 2022)	2,544 MtCO ₂ e	38% by 2020	-50% ⁵
4 th carbon budget (2023 – 2027)	1,950 MtCO ₂ e	52% by 2025	n/a
5 th carbon budget (2028 – 2032)	1,725 MtCO ₂ e	57% by 2030	n/a
6 th carbon budget (2033 – 2037)	965 MtCO ₂ e	78% by 2035	n/a
7 th carbon budget (2038 – 2042)	535 MtCO ₂ e	87% by 2040	n/a
Net Zero Target	100%	By 2050	

Source: CCC

- 2.3.6 The Sixth Carbon Budget (CB6) requires a reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions of 78% by 2035 relative to 1990 levels. This is seen as a world leading commitment, placing the UK “decisively on the path to net zero by 2050 at the latest, with a trajectory that is consistent with the Paris Agreement” (CB6, page 13).
- 2.3.7 Page 23 of CB6 refers to the devolved nations and sets out that UK climate targets cannot be met without strong policy action across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Key points from CB6 include:
- > The CCC is clear in setting out that new demand for electricity will mean that electricity demand will rise 50% to 2035 and doubling or even trebling by 2050.
 - > CB6 needs to be met and that will need more and faster deployment of renewable energy developments than has happened in the past.
 - > The related ‘Methodology Report’ from the CCC advice, states that in all scenarios for the carbon budget and looking ahead to 2050, the CCC sees new onshore wind generation being deployed by 2050. They set out that their modelling reflects this by almost doubling onshore wind capacity to 20-30 GW in all scenarios by 2050.
- 2.3.8 Following the Sixth Carbon Budget, the UK Government announced on 20 April 2021 that it would set the world’s most ambitious climate change target into law (by the Carbon Budget Order 2021 (the Order)⁶) to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This effectively brings forward the UK’s previous commitment of an 80% reduction by 2050 by 15 years.

⁴ Source: CCC.

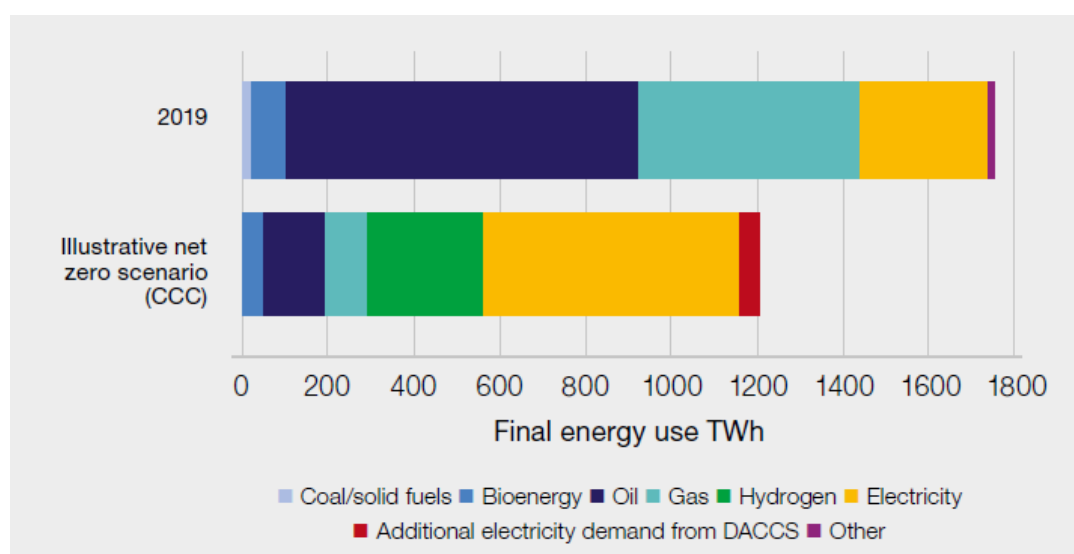
⁵ Confirmed by CCC in ‘Final Statement for the Third Carbon Budget’ May 2024. By the end of the period in 2022, UK net GHG emissions were 50% lower than the base year emissions.

⁶ The Order sets the carbon budget for the 2033-2037 budgetary period at 965 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. The net UK carbon account is defined in section 27 of the Climate Change Act 2008.

The UK Energy White Paper (December 2020)

- 2.3.9 The Energy White Paper 'Powering our Net Zero Future', published on 14 December 2020, represents a sea change in UK policy, and highlights the importance of renewable electricity.
- 2.3.10 It sets out that "*electricity is a key enabler for the transition away from fossil fuels and decarbonising the economy cost-effectively by 2050*". A key objective is to "*accelerate the deployment of clean electricity generation through the 2020s*" (page 38).
- 2.3.11 Electricity demand is forecast to double out to 2050, which will "*require a four-fold increase in clean electricity generation with the decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of our net zero target*" (page 42).
- 2.3.12 This anticipated growth of renewable electricity is illustrated in the graph below – **Figure 2.1**.

Figure 2.1: Illustrative UK Final Energy Use in 2050⁷



- 2.3.13 Whilst offshore renewables are expected to grow significantly, the White Paper also sets out that "*onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind. We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions in all demand scenarios*" (page 45).

The British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022)

- 2.3.14 The British Energy Security Strategy ("the Strategy") was published by the UK Government on 7 April 2022. The Strategy focuses on energy supply and states that in the future nuclear will have an expanded role and that renewables have an important role. The foreword states, *inter alia*:

"this government will reverse decades of myopia and make the big call to lead again in a technology the UK was the first to pioneer, by investing massively in nuclear power...."

Accelerating the transition away from oil and gas then depends critically on how quickly we can roll out new renewables...."

The growing proportion of our electricity coming from renewables reduces our exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets. Indeed, without the renewables we are putting on the grid today, and the green levies that support them, energy bills would be higher than they are now. But

⁷ Source: Energy White Paper page 9 (2020). Energy white paper: Powering our net zero future - GOV.UK

now we need to be bolder in removing the red tape that holds back new clean energy developments and exploit the potential of all renewable technologies.”

- 2.3.15 Reducing Scotland's and the wider UK's dependency on hydrocarbons has important security of supply, electricity cost and fuel poverty avoidance benefits. Those actions already urgently required in the fight against climate change are now required more urgently for global political stability and insulation against dependencies on rogue nation states.

Climate Change Committee Report to UK Parliament (2024)

- 2.3.16 The CCC published the report 'Progress in Reducing Emissions 2024 Report to Parliament' in July 2024 ("the CCC Report"). The Executive Summary (page 8) states:

“the previous Government signalled the slowing of pace and reversed or delayed key policies. The new Government will have to act fast to hit the country's commitments.

The cost of key low-carbon technologies is falling, creating an opportunity for the UK to boost investment, reclaim global climate leadership and enhance energy security by accelerating take-up. British-based renewable energy is the cheapest and fastest way to reduce vulnerability to volatile global fossil fuel markets. The faster we get off fossil fuels, the more secure we become.”

- 2.3.17 The CCC Report makes it clear that urgent action is needed to get on track for the UK's 2030 emissions reduction target. In this regard it states (page 8):

“The UK has committed to reduce emissions in 2030 by 68% compared to 1990 levels, as its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement. It is the first UK target set in line with Net Zero. Now only six years away, the country is not on track to hit this target despite a significant reduction in emissions in 2023. Much of the progress to date has come from phasing out coal generated electricity, with the last coal-fired power station closing later this year. We now need to rapidly reduce oil and gas use as well.”

- 2.3.18 And further (page 9):

“Our assessment is that only a third of the emissions reductions required to achieve the 2030 target are currently covered by credible plans. Action is needed across all sectors of the economy, with low carbon technologies becoming the norm.”

- 2.3.19 The UK should now be in a phase of rapid investment and delivery, however the CCC notes in the CCC Report that all indicators for low carbon technology roll out are “off track, with rates needing to significantly ramp up.” In this regard in terms of renewable technologies it states (page 9):

- > Annual offshore wind installations must increase by at least three times;
- > Onshore wind installations will need to double; and
- > Solar installations must increase by five times.

- 2.3.20 Chapter 2 of the CCC Report confirms that the third Carbon Budget was met (covering the period 2018 to 2022), however “future carbon budgets will require an increase in the pace and breadth of decarbonisation. It is imperative that an ambitious path of emissions reduction is maintained towards Net Zero” (Page 33).

- 2.3.21 Section 2.3 of the CCC Report addresses emissions reductions required for future Carbon Budgets. Paragraph 2.3.1 states that:

“emissions reductions across most sectors will need to significantly speed up to be on track to meet the UK's climate targets in the 2030s, and therefore the long term target of Net Zero by 2050. Emissions reductions will need to outperform the legislated Fourth Carbon Budget for the UK to be on a sensible path to achieve its 2030 NDC, the Sixth Carbon Budget and Net Zero.”

2.3.22 Chapter 3 of the CCC Report examines indicators of current delivery progress and at page 50 it references a number of key points including *inter alia*:

“Required pace – substantial progress is needed on a range of key indicators over the rest of this decade, to get the UK on track to meet its 2030 emissions targets. Low carbon technologies need to quickly become the default options in many areas...”

Renewable energy capacity has been growing steadily. However, roll-out rates will need to increase, compared to those since the start of this decade, to deliver the capacity needed by the end of the decade. Annual installations of offshore wind will need to more than treble, onshore wind more than double and solar increase by a factor of five.”

2.3.23 With regard to the Fourth Carbon Budget (2023-2027) it states (page 70) that although credible plans cover almost all of the emissions reductions required to meet it, *“this budget was set before the UK’s Net Zero target was legislated. The UK will need to reduce emissions by double the amount implied by the target to be on a sensible path to Net Zero...”*

2.3.24 With regard to the 2030 NDC and Sixth Carbon Budget (for the period 2023 to 2037) the CCC Report states that credible plans cover only around a third of emissions reductions needed to meet the UK’s 2030 NDC and a quarter of those needed to meet the Sixth Carbon Budget. It adds (page 70) *“that 2030 NDC is now only six years away. While our assessment of the policies and plans to deliver it has improved slightly, there remains significant risks to achieving these goals.”*

Labour Government & Commitment to Renewables (2024)

2.3.25 The recent UK Government change at Westminster and a Labour administration for the UK is of relevance in terms of the new UK Government policy approach to Net Zero. The Labour Party Manifesto states that it has *“a national mission for clean power by 2030”* and it explicitly states that this is achievable *“and should be prioritised”*. The Manifesto sees the clean energy transition as a huge opportunity to generate growth and also to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. This objective is set out as Labour’s *“second mission”* for the UK.

2.3.26 Energy policy is reserved to Westminster and although the Scottish Government has progressed its own energy policy in parallel with its full devolved authority over the planning system in Scotland, UK Government policy is an important material consideration.

2.3.27 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero issued a Statement on 8 July 2024 which included references to doubling UK onshore wind capacity from its current level of approximately 15 GW to a planned capacity of 30 GW by 2030.

UK Government: Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (2024)

2.3.28 In addition, a key new material consideration is the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, issued by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) in December 2024. It sets out (page 9) that Britain needs to install *“clean sources of power at a pace never previously achieved”*.

2.3.29 It further adds (page 10):

“clean power by 2030 will herald a new era of clean energy independence and tackle three major challenges: the need for secure and affordable energy supply, the creation of essential new energy industries supported by skilled workers in their thousands, the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit our contribution to the damaging effects of climate change. Clean power by 2030 is a sprint towards these essential goals”.

2.3.30 The document adds that *“Meeting the clean power 2030 goal is key to accelerating to net zero, not only in eliminating emissions that currently come from electricity generation, but also via the application of clean power in the buildings, transport and industry sectors... The shift to a clean power system by 2030 forms the backbone of the transition to net zero, as we move to an economy much more reliant on electricity”.*

- 2.3.31 Page 74 of the Action Plan states that “*Meeting the renewable capacity set out in the DESNZ ‘clean power capacity range’ is achievable but will require deployment at a sharply accelerated scale and pace*”.

2.4 Climate Change & Renewable Energy Policy: Scotland

The Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)

- 2.4.1 The Scottish Energy Strategy (SES) was published in December 2017. The SES preceded the important events and publications referred to above but nevertheless sets out that onshore wind is recognised as a key contributor to the delivery of renewable energy targets – specifically 50% energy from renewable sources to be attained by 2030. The SES did not and could not take account of what may be required in terms of additional renewable generation capacity to attain the new legally binding ‘net zero’ targets so it is out of date in that respect.
- 2.4.2 The SES refers to “Renewable and Low Carbon Solutions” as a strategic priority (page 41) and states “*we will continue to champion and explore the potential of Scotland’s huge renewable energy resource, its ability to meet our local and national heat, transport and electricity needs – helping to achieve our ambitious emissions reduction targets*”.

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019

- 2.4.3 Against this backdrop, the Scottish Government has set legal obligations to decarbonise and reduce emissions. Most notably, the Scottish Government has a statutory target to achieve “net zero” by 2045. It is clear that to have any hope of achieving the net zero target, much needs to happen by 2030.
- 2.4.4 When it was enacted, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 set world leading greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, including a target to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 amended the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to set the even more ambitious interim targets. However, the provisions setting out those interim targets were repealed by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024, which replaced them with a system of targets based on carbon budgets which are to be set every five years. This is further referenced below.
- 2.4.5 The Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy made a Statement to the Scottish Parliament on 18 April 2024 with regard to the report to the Scottish Parliament prepared by the CCC, ‘Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland’ (March 2024). The Statement focussed on the implications the CCC report contained for Scottish emission reduction targets as set out in legislation, namely as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

CCC Report to Scottish Parliament – Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland (March 2024)

- 2.4.6 The CCC produced a report to the Scottish Parliament entitled ‘Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland’ in March 2024. The related press release of the same date states that Scotland’s 2030 climate goals are no longer credible. It states:
- “Continued delays to the updated Climate Change Plan and further slippage in promised climate policies mean that the Climate Change Committee no longer believes that the Scottish Government will meet its statutory 2030 goal to reduce emissions by 75%. There is no comprehensive strategy for Scotland to decarbonise towards Net Zero.*
- The Scottish Government delayed its draft Climate Change Plan last year despite the 2030 target being only six years away. This has left a significant period without sufficient actions or policies to reach the target; the required acceleration in emissions reduction in Scotland is now beyond what is credible.”*
- 2.4.7 The CCC calls in the report for Scotland’s Climate Change Plan to be published urgently in order that the CCC can assess it and identify the actions which will deliver on its future targets.

2.4.8 The press release states that there is a path to Scotland's post-2030 targets, but stronger action is needed to reduce emissions across the economy.

2.4.9 The main report (page 10) states that "*The Scottish Government should build on its high ambition and implement policies that enable the 75% emissions reduction target to be achieved at the earliest date possible.*"

Statement to Scottish Parliament (18 April 2024)

2.4.10 In light of the CCC Report, the Cabinet Secretary made a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 18 April 2024 entitled 'Climate Change Committee Scotland Report – Next Steps: Net Zero Secretary Statement'.

2.4.11 The key points in the statement include:

- > The Scottish Government has an "unwavering commitment to ending our contribution to global emissions by 2045 at the latest, as agreed by Parliament on a cross-party basis".
- > The Cabinet Secretary states that she is "announcing a new package of climate action measures which we will deliver with partners to support Scotland's transition to net zero" and the Statement goes out to reference these specific measures.
- > The Statement states set out that in terms of the policies for these measures that "they sit alongside extensive ongoing work that will be built upon through our next Climate Change Plan and Green Industrial Strategy."
- > The Cabinet Secretary states that, "The Climate Change Committee is clear that the 'UK is already substantially off track for 2030' and achieving future UK carbon budgets 'will require a sustained increase in the pace and breadth of decarbonisation across most major sectors'. Indeed, we do see climate backtracking at UK level."

2.4.12 The Cabinet Secretary added:

"And with this in mind, I can today confirm that, working with Parliament on a timetable, the Scottish Government will bring forward expedited legislation to address matters raised by the CCC and ensure our legislative framework better reflects the reality of long term climate policy making."

2.4.13 The Scottish Government has reiterated its commitment to achieving net zero by 2045. The approach to dealing with the position set out by the CCC in relation to the 2030 target being unachievable, has been to move to a multi-year carbon budget approach to measuring emissions reduction (instead of annual targets) which brings the Scottish Parliament in line with the Welsh and UK approaches.

The Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024

2.4.14 On 5 September 2024 the Scottish Government introduced the Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament. The Bill was passed on 5 November 2024 and received Royal Assent on 22 November 2024. The Act repeals the annual and interim emissions reduction target framework established under the 2009 Act and establishes a carbon budget approach to target setting, with budgets to be set through secondary legislation using the latest advice from the CCC once available to replace the concept of statutory annual and interim targets. It also makes provision for a new Climate Change Plan to be published that reflects the carbon budgets. As explained, the Act followed advice from the CCC that Scotland's interim emissions reduction target for 2030 could not be achieved. The Act does not change the existing statutory target of Net Zero emissions by 2045.

2.5 The Draft Energy Strategy & Just Transition Plan

2.5.1 The Scottish Government published a new Draft 'Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan' entitled 'Delivering a fair and secure zero carbon energy system for Scotland' on 10 January

2023. The new Strategy is to replace the one previously published in 2017. The consultation period ended in April 2023. As a draft document it can only be afforded limited weight. The draft document is however consistent with the adopted policy set out in NPF4 and the identification of the 2020s as a crucial decade for the large-scale delivery of renewable energy projects supporting urgent transition to net zero.

2.5.2 The Ministerial Foreword states:

"The imperative is clear: in this decisive decade, we must deliver an energy system that meets the challenge of becoming a net zero nation by 2045, supplies safe and secure energy for all, generate economic opportunities, and builds a just transition..."

The delivery of this draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan will reduce energy costs in the long term and reduce the likelihood of future energy cost crises....

It is also clear that as part of our response to the climate crisis we must reduce our dependence on oil and gas and that Scotland is well positioned to do so in a way that ensures we have sufficient, secure and affordable energy to meet our needs, to support economic growth and to capture sustainable export opportunities....

For all these reasons, this draft Strategy and Plan supports the fastest possible just transition for the oil and gas sector in order to secure a bright future for a revitalised North Sea energy sector focused on renewables."

2.5.3 The Foreword adds that the draft Strategy sets out key ambitions for Scotland's energy future including:

- > More than 20 GW of additional renewable electricity on and offshore by 2030.
- > Accelerated decarbonisation of domestic industry, transport and heat.
- > Generation of surplus electricity, enabling export of electricity and renewable hydrogen to support decarbonisation across Europe.
- > Energy security through development of our own resources and additional energy storage.
- > A just transition by maintaining or increasing employment in Scotland's energy production sector against a decline in North Sea production.

2.5.4 The draft Strategy states (page 7, Executive Summary) that the vision for Scotland's energy system is:

"...that by 2045 Scotland will have a flourishing, climate friendly energy system that delivers affordable, resilient and clean energy supplies for Scotland's households, communities and business. This will deliver maximum benefit for Scotland, enabling us to achieve a wider climate and environmental ambitions, drive the development of a wellbeing economy and deliver a just transition for our workers, businesses, communities and regions.

In order to deliver that vision, this Strategy sets out clear policy positions and a route map of actions with a focus out to 2030".

2.5.5 The draft Strategy specifically addresses energy networks (page 36) and states "Significant infrastructure investment in Scotland's transmission system is needed to ameliorate constraints and enable more renewable power to flow to centres of demand."

2.5.6 It states that National Grid has identified the requirement for over £21 billion of investment in British electricity transmission infrastructure to meet 2030 targets and that over half of this investment will involve Scottish transmission owners SPEN and SSEN Transmission (the Applicant).

2.5.7 The draft Strategy adds that: "the Scottish Government is working closely with network companies to support timely delivery of this infrastructure".

- 2.5.8 Reference is made to the ambitious business plans of transmission businesses which “reflect the scale and pace of delivery required to meet Scottish Government ambitions”.
- 2.5.9 Chapter 5 of the Strategy refers to ‘creating the conditions for a net zero energy system’. It states (page 125) that “*As we transition to a net zero energy system, renewables and other zero carbon technologies... will need to provide all the services required to ensure a secure energy system*”.
- 2.5.10 The Chapter goes on to reference in this regard energy markets and network regulation and with regard to network investment (page 126), it states that the Government is working closely with the network companies “to support timely delivery of required electricity network infrastructure”.
- 2.5.11 It further adds with regard to constraint costs that the Government will continue to work with National Grid ESO, transmission owners and Ofgem “*to explore opportunities to accelerate planned network investment to relieve constraints*”.
- 2.5.12 Therefore, a key aspect of the Energy Strategy in terms of network investment is the need for speed of delivery of infrastructure to ensure not only that need can be met, but that there can be energy security and resilience within the wider energy system.

2.6 The Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 2.6.1 The Scottish Government published a Green Industrial Strategy (GIS) in September 2024. The Executive Summary sets out the mission of the GIS, namely:
- "This Green Industrial Strategy's mission is to ensure that Scotland realises the maximum possible economic benefit from the opportunities created by the global transition to net zero".*
- 2.6.2 The GIS sets out five opportunity areas for Scotland where identified strengths are most likely to lead to growth and the potential to grow Scotland's exports. The sectors relate to Scotland's wind economy, carbon capture and storage, supporting the green economy by way of professional and financial services, growing the hydrogen sector and establishing Scotland as a competitive centre for clean energy intensive industries of the future.
- 2.6.3 Page 6 sets out that GIS forms a key part of the Government's broader National Strategy for Economic Transformation. It states that “*It also links explicitly to our Just Transition Plans which describe how the transition to net zero in the most emitting sectors will be achieved in a way that delivers economic, social and community benefits, including fair work, environmental preservation and reduced poverty and inequality.*”
- 2.6.4 Actions include *inter alia*:
- > Supporting investment to improve essential infrastructure, expanding supply chains and secure manufacturing opportunities;
 - > Developing and maintaining a pipeline of investment propositions backed by clear information about the timing and nature of renewable energy opportunities;
 - > Delivering planning and consenting systems which enable Scotland's net zero development pipeline; and
 - > Exploring the circularity opportunity in onshore wind.
- 2.6.5 Page 13 states clearly that the single goal of the GIS is to help Scotland realise economic growth opportunities from the global transition to net zero.
- 2.6.6 It is clear therefore that to progress the Government's objectives there needs to be clear support for new investment and growth in renewable energy. Realising the economic and social opportunities will only be achieved through the development and consenting of additional developments and related infrastructure.

2.7 Conclusions on the Renewable Energy Policy & legislative Framework

- 2.7.1 The Applicant's position is that the Proposed Development is strongly supported by the current renewable energy policy and legislative framework.
- 2.7.2 The trajectory, in terms of the scale and pace of action required to reduce emissions, grows ever steeper than before and it is essential that rapid progress is made through the 2020s. The rate of emission reductions must increase otherwise the legally binding target of Net Zero by 2045 will not be met.
- 2.7.3 It is clear from the UK Energy White Paper and the forecasts by the CCC that electricity demand is expected to grow substantially (scenarios vary but potentially by a factor of three or four) as carbon intensive sources of energy are displaced by electrification of other industry sectors, particularly heat and transport.
- 2.7.4 Whilst there has been a move away from annual emission reduction targets the overall target of Net Zero remains unchanged. Indeed, as set out in the Cabinet Secretary's Statement referenced above, the Government retains its "unwavering" commitment to attaining that legally binding target for Net Zero.
- 2.7.5 Decisions through the planning system must be responsive to the climate change policy imperative. Decision makers can do this by affording significant weight to the energy policy objectives, articulated above, in the planning balance.
- 2.7.6 By way of illustration, this was demonstrated recently in the decision by Scottish Ministers on 21 August 2024 to approve the Applicant's Creag Dhubh to Dalmally 275 kV Overhead Line Connection, in Argyll & Bute, where it is stated in the Ministers' Decision Letter at paragraph 78 that:
- "The Proposed Development will provide the resilience necessary to maintain secure and reliable supplies of energy to homes and business as our energy transition takes place. It will support the connection of significant amount of renewable energy generation to the national electricity system, making an important contribution to reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Scottish Ministers conclude that the proposed Development is supported by the Energy Strategy. The Draft Scottish Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan 2023 signals that strong support from the Scottish Government for upgrade transmission infrastructure remains".*
- 2.7.7 In the most recent renewable energy policy documents referred to, there is a consistent and what might be termed a 'green thread' which ties a number of related policy matters together: namely the urgent challenge of Net Zero and the need to substantially increase renewable energy capacity.
- 2.7.8 Overall, the Draft Energy Strategy forms part of the new policy approach alongside NPF4. These documents confirm the Scottish Government's policy objectives and related targets, reaffirming the crucial role that new electricity infrastructure will play in response to the climate crisis which is at the heart of all these policies.
- 2.7.9 The trajectory, in terms of the scale and pace of action required to reduce emissions, grows ever steeper than before and it is essential that rapid progress is made through the 2020s.

3. The Benefits of the Proposed Development

3.1 The Benefits: Summary

3.1.1 This chapter summarises the benefits that would arise from the Proposed Development:

Renewable Energy Transmission

- > The Proposed Development is required to fulfil the statutory and licence obligations on the Applicant as the transmission licence holder. To fulfil these obligations, the Applicant must develop the transmission network to provide adequate transmission capacity and to provide connections to customers who wish to connect to and use the transmission system to participate in the national wholesale electricity market.
- > The Proposed Development would deliver a new OHL tie-in to the proposed new Cambushinnie Substation which is part of the upgrade works required to enable the upgrade of the second circuit of the Beauly to Denny OHL to 400 kV to enable enhance capacity and security of supply.
- > The Proposed Development would enable the delivery of renewable generation which is defined as “essential infrastructure” in NPF4⁸.
- > The Proposed Development is nationally important and is consistent with the core aims of NPF4 National Development 3 which seeks to deliver additional generation from renewables and delivery enhanced transmission capacity to achieve a Net Zero economy and support network resilience in rural areas.

Security of Supply

- > The British Energy Security Strategy has been referenced in Chapter 2, and the recent Clean Power 2030 Action Plan. They provide an increase to the requirements for both the scale and the urgency of delivery of new low carbon generation capacity, by refocussing the requirement for low-carbon power for reasons of national security of supply and affordability, as well as for decarbonisation.
- > With this context, the delivery of grid infrastructure improvements to deliver significant benefits to consumers through decarbonisation, security of supply and enhanced capacity to transmit renewable energy is clear.
- > The Proposed Development, if consented, would provide a valuable contribution to security of supply for Scotland and for the wider Great Britain (GB) area. The Proposed Development would deliver a committed connection and enhance the grid network to enable transmission of existing and future renewable energy efficiently to the grid, safely and consistently.

Economic & Community Socio -Economic Benefits / Local Supply Chain Opportunities

- > The Applicant has in place Sustainable Procurement Codes and Supplier Guidance to oblige suppliers and contractors to maximise local employment, economic gain and social benefits as a result of the investment in new energy infrastructure in their area and sets out which measures are to be put in place to maximise opportunities for local people and businesses close to the site and in the wider region.

⁸ NPF4 Annex F, page 148.

- > A further obligation is that suppliers and contractors are expected to “*have in place education and employability programmes which promote the development of employee skills as well as local employment...*”
- > The Applicant’s guidance as a basic commitment in this regard requires ‘decent work and economic growth’ alongside addressing environmental obligations, with a key objective to ensure the economic value is shared with particular focus on local supply chains.

Biodiversity Enhancement

- > The greatest threat to biodiversity is climate change, and delivering an enhanced grid transmission network with enhanced capacity for renewable energy is a critical step to meet Net Zero.
- > The Proposed Development is consistent with the Applicant’s commitment in all projects subject of consenting to deliver 10% net biodiversity gain. This is further addressed below with regard to relevant NPF4 policy.

4. Appraisal against NPF4

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 NPF4 was approved by resolution of the Scottish Parliament on 11 January 2023 and came into force on 13 February 2023.
- 4.1.2 A Chief Planner's Letter was issued on 8 February 2023 entitled 'Transitional Arrangements for National Planning Framework 4'. It contains advice intended to support consistency in decision making ahead of new style Local Development Plans being in place.
- 4.1.3 The Letter confirmed with regard to the Development Plan that from 13 February 2023, NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) no longer represent Scottish Ministers' planning policy and should not form the basis for or be a consideration to be taken into account when determining planning applications.

4.2 Development Management

- 4.2.1 Section 13 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 Act (the "2019 Act") amends Section 24 of the 1997 Act regarding the meaning of the statutory Development Plan, such that for the purposes of the 1997 Act, the Development Plan for an area is taken as consisting of the provisions of:
- > The National Planning Framework; and
 - > Any Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 4.2.2 Therefore, the statutory Development Plan covering the site consists of NPF4 and the Perth and Kinross Local Development Plan 2 (PKCLDP2) (November 2019). PKCLDP2 is currently in the early stages of review with LDP3 targeted for adoption in late 2027.
- 4.2.3 The publication of NPF4 coincided with the implementation of certain parts of the 2019 Act. A key provision is that in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of an LDP, then whichever of them is the later in date will prevail. That will include where an LDP is silent on an issue that is now provided for in NPF4.
- 4.2.4 The Chief Planner's Letter also states with regard to Supplementary Guidance associated with LDPs which were in force before 12th February 2023 (the date on which Section 13 of the 2019 Act came into force) that they will continue to be in force and be part of the Development Plan.
- 4.2.5 PKC Supplementary Guidance – Renewable & Low Carbon Energy is prepared in draft. No reference to electricity grid infrastructure is provided in the document.

4.3 How NPF4 is to be used

- 4.3.1 Annex A (page 94) of NPF4 explains how it is to be used. It states:
- "The purpose of planning is to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest ... Scotland in 2045 will be different. We must embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities, build a wellbeing economy and create great places."*
- 4.3.2 Annex A states that NPF4 is required by law to set out the Scottish Ministers' policies and proposals for the development and use of land. It adds:

"It plays a key role in supporting the delivery of Scotland's national outcomes and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals⁹. NPF4 includes a long-term spatial strategy to 2045."

- 4.3.3 NPF4 contains a spatial strategy and Scottish Government development management policies to be applied in all consenting decisions, and it identifies national developments which are aligned to the strategic themes of the Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan¹⁰ (IIP).
- 4.3.4 NPF4 therefore for the first time, introduces centralised development management policies which are to be applied Scotland wide. It also provides guidance to Planning Authorities with regard to the content and preparation of LDPs.
- 4.3.5 Annex A adds that NPF4 is required by law to contribute to six outcomes. These relate to meeting housing needs, health and wellbeing, population of rural areas, addressing equality and discrimination and also, of particular relevance to the Proposed Development, *"meeting any targets relating to the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases, and, securing positive effects for biodiversity"*.

4.4 The National Spatial Strategy – Delivery of Sustainable Places

- 4.4.1 Part 1 of NPF4 sets out the Spatial Strategy for Scotland to 2045 based on six spatial principles which are to influence all plans and decisions. The introductory text to the Spatial Strategy starts by stating (page 3):
- "The world is facing unprecedented challenges. The global climate emergency means that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future impacts of climate change."*
- 4.4.2 The principles are stated as playing a key role in delivering the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework¹¹.
- 4.4.3 The Spatial Strategy is aimed at supporting the delivery of:
- > 'Sustainable Places': *"where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity"*;
 - > 'Liveable Places': *"where we can all live better, healthier lives"*; and
 - > 'Productive places': *"where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy"*.
- 4.4.4 Page 6 of NPF4 addresses the delivery of sustainable places. Reference is made to the consequences of Scotland's changing climate, and it states, *inter alia*:
- "Scotland's Climate Change Plan, backed by legislation, has set our approach to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, and we must make significant progress towards this by 2030...Scotland's Energy Strategy will set a new agenda for the energy sector in anticipation of continuing innovation and investment."*
- 4.4.5 The new Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan for Scotland (as referenced in NPF4) was published as a consultative draft on 10th January 2023 (see below).

⁹ The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals are set out at page 95 of NPF4 and include *inter alia* 'affordable and clean energy' and 'climate action'.

¹⁰ The Scottish Government's five-year Infrastructure Investment Plan (2021-22 to 2025-26) was published in February 2021. It set out a vision for Scotland's future infrastructure in order to support and enable an inclusive net zero emissions economy.

¹¹ The Scottish Government National Performance Framework sets out 'National Outcomes' and measures progress against a range of economic, social and environmental 'National Indicators'.

- 4.4.6 The National Spatial Strategy in relation to 'sustainable places' is described (page 7) as follows:
- "Scotland's future places will be net zero, nature-positive places that are designed to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, whilst protecting, recovering and restoring our environment.*
- Meeting our climate ambition will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place.*
- Every decision on our future development must contribute to making Scotland a more sustainable place. We will encourage low and zero carbon design and energy efficiency, development that is accessible by sustainable travel, and expansion of renewable energy generation."*
- 4.4.7 Six National Developments (NDs) support the delivery of sustainable places, one being 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure'.
- 4.4.8 A summary description of this ND is provided at page 7 of NPF4 as follows:
- "Supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply".*
- 4.4.9 Page 8 of NPF4 sets out 'Cross-cutting Outcome and Policy Links' with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It states:
- "The global climate emergency and the nature crisis have formed the foundations for the spatial strategy as a whole. The regional priorities share opportunities and challenges for reducing emissions and adapting to the long-term impacts of climate change, in a way which protects and enhances our natural environment."*
- 4.4.10 A key point in this statement is that the climate emergency and nature crisis are expressly stated as forming the foundations of the national spatial strategy, recognising that tackling climate change and the nature crisis is an overriding imperative which is key to the outcomes of almost all policies within NPF4.

4.5 National Developments

Overview

- 4.5.1 Page 97 of NPF4 sets out that 18 National Developments have been identified. These are described as:
- "significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the spatial strategy ... National development status does not grant planning permission for the development and all relevant consents are required".*
- 4.5.2 It adds that:
- "Their designation means that the principle for development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, businesses and investors. ... In addition to the statement of need at Annex B, decision makers for applications for consent for national developments should take into account all relevant policies".*
- 4.5.3 Annex B of NPF4 sets out the various NDs and related Statements of Need. It explains that NDs are significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver the Spatial Strategy. It states (page 99) that:
- "The statements of need set out in this annex are a requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and describe the development to be considered as a national development for consent handling purposes".*

National Development 3 “Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure”

4.5.4 Page 103 of NPF4 describes ND3 and it states:

"This national development supports renewable electricity generation, repowering, and expansion of the electricity grid.

A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources will be essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets. Certain types of renewable electricity generation will also be required, which will include energy storage technology and capacity, to provide the vital services, including flexible response, that a zero carbon network will require. Generation is for domestic consumption as well as for export to the UK and beyond, with new capacity helping to decarbonise heat, transport and industrial energy demand. This has the potential to support jobs and business investment, with wider economic benefits.

The electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity to consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. Delivery of this national development will be informed by market, policy and regulatory developments and decisions."

4.5.5 The location for ND3 is set out as being all of Scotland and in terms of need it is described as:

"Additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale is fundamental to achieving a net zero economy and supports improved network resilience in rural and island areas."

4.5.6 The designation of classes of development confirms that the Proposed Development is National Development being of a scale or type that otherwise would have been classified as major by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009. That is, paragraph (b) *new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132kV or more*".

4.5.7 The Proposed Development will further the delivery of the national Spatial Strategy. The Strategy requires a "large and rapid increase" in electricity generation and the delivery of an enhanced transmission network to enable this. It is recognised (NPF4, page 6) that "we must make significant progress" by 2030.

4.5.8 The Proposed Development could make a meaningful contribution to targets within this key timescale and that is a very important consideration.

4.6 National Planning Policy

4.6.1 Part 2 of NPF4 (page 36) addresses national planning policy by topic with reference to three themes formulated with the aim of delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places.

4.6.2 In terms of planning, development management and the application of the national level policies, NPF4 states:

"The policy sections are for use in the determination of planning applications. The policies should be read as a whole. Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is for the decision maker to determine what weight to attach to policies on a case by case basis. Where a policy states that development will be supported, it is in principle, and it is for the decision maker to take into account all other relevant policies".

4.6.3 In terms of "sustainable places" the relevant policies to the Proposed Development include the following:

- > Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis;
- > Policy 3: Biodiversity;

- > Policy 4: Natural Places;
- > Policy 5: Soils;
- > Policy 6: Forestry, Woodland and Trees;
- > Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places;
- > Policy 11: Energy; and
- > Policy 22: Flood Risk and Water Management.

4.6.4 These policies are addressed below.

4.6.5 The Chief Planner's Letter of 8th February 2023 provides advice in relation to applying NPF4 policy. It states that the application of planning judgement to the circumstances of an individual situation remains essential for all decision making, informed by principles of proportionality and reasonableness. It states:

4.6.6 *"It is important to bear in mind NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole. The intent of each of the 33 policies is set out in NPF4 and can be used to guide decision making. Conflicts between policies are to be expected. Factors for and against development will be weighed up in the balance of planning judgement."* (underlining added)

4.6.7 The Letter adds:

"It is recognised that it may take some time for planning authorities and stakeholders to get to grips with the NPF4 policies, and in particular the interface with individual LDP policies. As outlined above, in the event of any incompatibility between the provision of NPF and the provision of an LDP, whichever of them is the later in date is to prevail. Provisions that are contradictory or in conflict would be likely to be considered incompatible".

4.7 NPF4 Policy 1: Tackling the climate and nature crises

Policy 1 & Principles

4.7.1 The intent of Policy 1 is *"to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis"*.

4.7.2 Policy 1 directs decision makers that *"when considering all development proposals significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises."*

4.7.3 This is a radical departure from the usual approach to policy and weight and clearly denotes a step change in planning policy response to climate change. The matter of weight is no longer left entirely to the discretion of the decision maker. Significant weight should therefore be attributed to the Proposed Development's ability to provide an essential grid connection between upgraded and new substations, which is consistent with the intent of Policy 1 and would make a positive contribution by helping to attain its outcome of net zero.

4.7.4 The Chief Planner's Letter of 8th February 2023 refers to Policy 1. It states:

"This policy prioritises the climate and nature crises in all decisions. It should be applied together with the other policies in NPF4. It will be for the decision maker to determine whether the significant weight to be applied tips the balance in favour for, or against a proposal on the basis of its positive or negative contribution to the climate and nature crises."

4.7.5 This statement from the Chief Planner confirms that the decision maker must apply significant weight to the policy, but ultimately it is for the decision maker to decide if it is for or against the proposal. The Proposed Development's contribution is positive and therefore, applying significant weight in this case would result in a favourable outcome for the Proposed Development.

4.7.6 The term "Tackling" the respective crises in Policy 1 is also important – this means that decision makers should ensure an urgent and positive response to these issues and take

positive action. Furthermore, NPF4 (page 8) refers to cross cutting outcomes and states with regard to Policy 1 that the policy gives significant weight “*to the global climate emergency in order to ensure that it is recognised as a priority in all plans and decisions*”.

The Application of Policy 1

- 4.7.7 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, it would make a valuable contribution in relation to targets. It will directly further the policy intent and outcomes of Policy 1 and should be afforded significant positive weight in terms of tackling the climate and nature crises. The specific emission and carbon saving benefits associated with the transmission of renewable energy and the provision of that connection to grid to which is the purpose of the Proposed Development also needs to be recognised in the context of NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) which requires the ‘contribution’ that a development would make to targets to be taken into account.
- 4.7.8 Chapter 10 of the EA provides an assessment of the effects and mitigation considerations for the Proposed Development in relation to climate change.
- 4.7.9 A further important point is the need to recognise that the greatest threat to biodiversity is climate change. The principal and essential benefit of the Proposed Development is enabling a connection to a valuable contribution of renewable energy, to facilitate the earliest possible decarbonisation of the energy system and the achievement of Net Zero no later than 2045, in accordance with the objectives of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (as amended). The purpose of Net Zero is to protect biodiversity and the earlier it can be achieved, the greater the benefits to biodiversity.
- 4.7.10 The Reporter’s comments on this particular policy in the Sanquhar II Wind Farm Inquiry Report¹² are informative. At paragraph 2.48 of the Supplementary Report, the Reporter addresses NPF4 Policy 1 and states that:
- “tackling the nature crisis is required to be given significant weight alongside the climate crisis. There is no indication that one strand should be given greater priority over the other. That does not necessarily mean that an individual proposal must be shown to respond to both crises in equal measure, however. The two matters are also inextricably linked, with the nature crisis being, in part, exacerbated by climate change.”*
- 4.7.11 Furthermore, as explained below with reference to NPF4 Policy 3, biodiversity enhancement measures are proposed as part of the Proposed Development and the approach is set out within Chapter 5 (Ecology) of the EA Report. The Proposed Development will achieve positive effects for biodiversity if sufficient off-site measures are identified and implemented and as such the Proposed Development will leave the natural environment in a demonstrably better state than before development work began.

4.8 NPF4 Policy 11: Energy

Policy 11 & Principles

- 4.8.1 For the consideration of energy transmission proposals, Policy 11 ‘Energy’ (page 53) is the lead policy. Policy 11’s intent is set out as:
- “to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low carbon and zero emission technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage.”*
- 4.8.2 Policy Outcomes are identified as: “*expansion of renewable, low carbon and zero emission technologies*”.

¹² Sanquhar II Wind Farm, Section 36 Decision dated 31 August 2023, Supplementary Report of Inquiry dated 20 February 2023 (Case Reference WIN-170-2006) and Scottish Ministers’ Decision dated 31 August 2023.

4.8.3

Policy 11 is as follows:

“a) Development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported. These include:

- i. wind farms including repowering, extending, expanding and extending the life of existing wind farms;*
- ii. enabling works, such as grid transmission and distribution infrastructure;*
- iii. energy storage, such as battery storage and pumped storage hydro;*
- iv. small scale renewable energy generation technology;*
- v. solar arrays;*
- vi. proposals associated with negative emissions technologies and carbon capture; and*
- vii. proposals including co-location of these technologies.*

b) Development proposals for wind farms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas will not be supported.

c) Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.

d) Development proposals that impact on international or national designations will be assessed in relation to Policy 4.

e) In addition, project design and mitigation will demonstrate how the following impacts are addressed:

- i. impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, visual impact, noise and shadow flicker;*
- ii. significant landscape and visual impacts, recognising that such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy. Where impacts are localised and/ or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they will generally be considered to be acceptable;*
- iii. public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and scenic routes;*
- iv. impacts on aviation and defence interests including seismological recording;*
- v. impacts on telecommunications and broadcasting installations, particularly ensuring that transmission links are not compromised;*
- vi. impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction;*
- vii. impacts on historic environment;*
- viii. effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk;*
- ix. biodiversity including impacts on birds;*
- x. impacts on trees, woods and forests;*
- xi. proposals for the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration;*
- xii. the quality of site restoration plans including the measures in place to safeguard or guarantee availability of finances to effectively implement those plans; and*
- xiii. cumulative impacts.*

In considering these impacts, significant weight will be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

Grid capacity should not constrain renewable energy development. It is for developers to agree connections to the grid with the relevant network operator. In the case of proposals for grid infrastructure, consideration should be given to underground connections where possible.

f) Consents for development proposals may be time-limited. Areas identified for wind farms are, however, expected to be suitable for use in perpetuity”.

- 4.8.4 The intent and desired outcome of the policy is expressly clear – the expansion of renewable energy, through encouragement, promotion and facilitation, all of which the Proposed Development will help to deliver in providing the essential grid connection for a consented wind farm.
- 4.8.5 The wording of Policy 11 Paragraph (a)(ii) makes it clear that the policy supports new and replacement grid transmission and distribution infrastructure.

The application of Policy 11

- 4.8.6 **Paragraph c) of Policy 11** references socio-economic benefits being maximised, rather than simply being taken into account. It is relevant to note in regard to community benefit, guidance was issued via the Chief Planner's letter of 20 September 2024 which provides clarity on the application of Policy 11(c) and the role of community benefits alongside policy considerations on maximising economic impact. The Chief Planner states explicitly that *“We are, however, clear that these are voluntary agreements that sit independent of our planning and consenting systems, and NPF4 Policy 11 (c) does not alter this”*.
- 4.8.7 With regard to maximising socio-economic benefits, the Applicant has adopted a ‘Sustainable Procurement Code’ and a related ‘Sustainable Procurement Code – Supplier Guidance’ and these are relevant to take into account. The Sustainable Procurement Code (“the Code”) is applied to development projects that the Applicant progresses, and its principal purpose is to ensure that the Applicant's key values are supported, managed and where possible improved.
- 4.8.8 The Code sets out various obligations on suppliers and contractors covering climate action and in relation to providing affordable clean energy. The Code also addresses environmental obligations and sets out a clear commitment to “decent work and economic growth” (page 10). A key objective is to ensure that economic value is shared. Amongst the various specific obligations on the Applicant and suppliers is reference to local supply chains. In that regard, page 10 sets out that:
- “SSE has committed to being a global leader for a just energy transition to net zero, with a guarantee of fair work and commitment to paying fair tax and sharing economic value”.*
- 4.8.9 Furthermore, within the obligations on suppliers and contractors are provisions that require the formation of *“constructive local relationships so that communities have the opportunity to directly benefit from significant capital investments... and to have measures in place to maximise opportunities for local people and businesses close to SSE sites and the wider region”*.
- 4.8.10 A further obligation is that suppliers and contractors are expected to *“have in place education and employability programmes which promote the development of employee skills as well as local employment, including graduate programmes and apprenticeships”*.
- 4.8.11 As regards Local Supply Chains *“SSE is committed to ensuring that real economic and social benefits flow to local businesses as a result of its investment in new energy infrastructure. It aims to promote sustainable domestic employment, increased local content and more competitive domestic supply chains. It does this through engagement with its suppliers as well as government regulators and trade unions”*.

- 4.8.12 The related Supplier Guidance (“the Guidance”) document sets out with specific regard to local supply chains that suppliers and contractors are:
- > Required to have measures in place to maximise opportunities for local people, supply chains and economies surrounding SSE sites. There may be a requirement to provide evidence of site-specific plans to SSE;
 - > Encouraged to work closely with SSE to promote and support the development of competitive domestic and local supply chains;
 - > Required to provide details of spend with local suppliers and subcontractors, when requested by SSE (“local” is defined as either, within a 50-mile radius of the site or the Local Authority area, unless otherwise defined);
 - > Required to provide reporting of attributed spend with Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- 4.8.13 Specific reference to the Code and Guidance and these obligations would be set out in any invitation to tender for construction works for the Proposed Development. Therefore, there is clear evidence that beyond the capital spend for the Proposed Development and the direct, indirect and induced employment and economic benefits that would result, that the Applicant has policies and measures in place that seek to maximise the opportunity for socio-economic benefits as a result of the project.
- 4.8.14 It should also be noted that appointed contractors are required to inform the Applicant of the supply chain engaged.
- 4.8.15 **Paragraph d) of Policy 11** states that development proposals that impact on international and national designations “*will be assessed in relation to Policy 4*”. Policy 4 also deals with impacts in relation to local landscape designations. Therefore, the matter of the impacts of the Proposed Development in relation to such national and local designations is examined further below with specific regard to the provisions of Policy 4.
- 4.8.16 **Paragraph e) of Policy 11** states that project design and mitigation “*will demonstrate how*” impacts are addressed. These are listed in the quotation of the policy above and are addressed in turn below.

Impacts on Communities and Individual Dwellings

- 4.8.17 The Proposed Development has been assessed as having no significant adverse effects on properties or communities. As a result of embedded design mitigation and good practise siting and location, these effects are localised and commensurate with the scale of development proposed as part of the Proposed Development, and in the context of the renewable energy projects being delivered within the immediate and wider area. There would be no unacceptable impacts arising in relation to settlements or residential properties.

Noise

- 4.8.18 There is the potential for construction noise and vibration impacts depending on the proximity of receptors from static, quasi static and mobile plant items. However standard planning conditions and the use of the CEMP and the Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) can ensure that no unacceptable amenity impacts arise.

Landscape and Visual Considerations

- 4.8.19 Before examining the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, Part e(ii) of Policy 11 makes it clear and recognises that in terms of significant landscape and visual impacts, such impacts are to be expected for some forms of renewable energy and transmission infrastructure. This is a very different starting point compared to the position in the former SPP and there is a very clear steer that significant effects are to be expected, and where localised and/or subject to appropriate design mitigation, they should generally be acceptable.

Landscape Character

- 4.8.20 An assessment of landscape effect has been undertaken and it is considered that the potential change on the character of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) found within the study area would be limited given the nature of the Proposed Development which would largely involve replacement of an existing OHL tower with a new terminal tower, and associated connections.
- 4.8.21 The appraisal identified that the majority of LCTs will receive a negligible adverse level of effect during construction, with no discernible change and a natural level of effect during operation. Slightly greater change is anticipated for the Lowland Hills – Tayside LCT, within which the Proposed Development sits. The increase movement and activity during construction would result in a minor adverse level of effect, reducing to negligible adverse during operation, where there is assessed as being little perceptual change.
- 4.8.22 Cumulative change on the LCT for the Proposed Development is also anticipated to be negligible adverse in relation to both cumulative scenarios assessed.

Landscape Designations

- 4.8.23 No significant effects on landscape designations is predicted.

Visual Effects

- 4.8.24 In relation to visual amenity, the appraisal identified that each of the viewpoints would experience relatively limited change to a small part of the view, resulting in minor adverse level of effect at construction. At operation, the impressions of change would be reduced and although perceptible, it is not considered to influence the overall composition or impression of the view, and as such the level of effects are assessed as negligible adverse.

Cumulative Effects

- 4.8.25 Cumulative change on the LCT for the Proposed Development is also anticipated to be negligible adverse in relation to the cumulative scenarios assessed.
- 4.8.26 Cumulative change on each of the viewpoints is also anticipated to be negligible adverse in relation to the cumulative scenarios assessed.

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- 4.8.27 Land use impacts associated with the Proposed Development are anticipated to be temporary and localised and would typically result in a temporary disturbance to access or use of land or severance of land parcels. To reduce effects to non-significant levels a series of mitigation measures and management plans have been proposed to help mitigate and offset impacts. These include the implementation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), Outdoor Access Management Plan and Staff Travel Plan.

Aviation, Defence Interests and Telecommunications

- 4.8.28 The Proposed Development would not give rise to any negative effects on these topics.

Impacts on Road Traffic and Trunk Roads

- 4.8.29 Chapter 8 of the EA Report assesses the potential for significant traffic and movement environmental effects resulting from the Proposed Development. The assessment only considers the construction phase as the operational phase is unlikely to have a material impact on local roads as only occasional operational and maintenance traffic is expected. A Transport Statement is provided in Appendix I of the EA.
- 4.8.30 Construction traffic forecasts have been produced to provide a robust basis for the assessment of environmental effects.

- 4.8.31 Prior to mitigation temporary minor environmental effects are forecast for severance, non-motorised user amenity, non-motorised user delay and road vehicle and passenger delay. Mitigation in the form of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be conditioned and subsequently approved for relevant planning, roads and emergency authorities.
- 4.8.32 Post mitigation residual environmental effects associated with Proposed Development construction traffic are forecast to be direct, temporary negligible effect.
- 4.8.33 Cumulatively, the assessment considers two developments which are proposed in proximity of the Site. Both developments are Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) sites. For the purpose of the cumulative assessment, it has been assumed that construction traffic for those BESS will follow the same route for Car/LGV and HGV traffic as the Proposed Development.
- 4.8.34 Prior to mitigation temporary minor environmental effects are forecast. Mitigation in the form of a CTMP delivered post consent and prior to commencement of construction would reduce these effects to direct, temporary and negligible, therefore, not significant.

Historic Environment

- 4.8.35 Chapter 7 of the EA considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on cultural heritage from both construction and operation.
- 4.8.36 The appraisal of potential impacts is divided in the assessment into construction and operational phases.
- 4.8.37 The construction phase has the potential to result in permanent physical impacts on previously unrecorded heritage assets. The results of the appraisal have demonstrated that that majority of the Site has been subject to previous ground disturbance associated with Commercial Forestry which covers large areas of the upland sections of the Proposed Development. The review of previously recorded heritage assets, historic mapping and the walkover survey, did not identify any heritage assets within the Site, and as a result the potential for the discovery of previously unrecorded assets was considered to be low.
- 4.8.38 In the operational phase, impacts are limited to potential impacts on the setting of heritage assets.
- 4.8.39 While the Proposed Development will result in a change in the operational OHL, the changes are considered to be minimal and will not change the overall appearance of the OHL. Furthermore, the designated assets within the study area are all located a considerable distance from the Proposed Development with elements such as topography and existing planting / woodland / vegetation also limiting or removing most views from the designated assets towards the OHL.
- 4.8.40 No construction or operational impacts are therefore predicted, and no further works are recommended.

Hydrology, the Water Environment and Flood Risk

- 4.8.41 Chapter 9 of the EA assesses the potential effects relating to Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils in relation to construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 4.8.42 Subject to adoption of best practice construction techniques and a site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), no significant adverse effects on geology (including soils and peat) and the water environment have been identified. The CEMP includes provision for drainage management plans, to be agreed with statutory consultees and which would be used to safeguard water resources.
- 4.8.43 The appraisal has not identified any further requirement for additional mitigation measures. A Peat Management Plan and Peat Landscape Hazard Risk Assessment have been undertaken.

Biodiversity

4.8.44 Chapters 5 and 6 of the EA consider Ecology and Ornithology.

Ecology

4.8.45 Chapter 5 provides a detailed assessment of potential effects and sets out embedded and secondary mitigation measures required to protect key features as appropriate. As a result of such mitigation it is determined that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in any significant effects on ecology in isolation and cumulatively.

4.8.46 A range of mitigation measures that are standard and good practise for development of this type, and which are required to comply with environmental protection legislation would be implemented and are treated as embedded mitigation.

4.8.47 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would be prepared by the contractors and submitted for approval by PKC in consultation with relevant bodies. This will include General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs), engagement of a Ecological / Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW), pollution prevention measures, tree protection measures, peat management best practise and implementation of standard measures to protect mammals

4.8.48 Embedded mitigation measures in relation to sensitive ecological features include:

- > Priorities avoiding loss or other impacts on peatlands;
- > Soil stripping / peat excavation and storage to follow a process of soil management to ensure protection of turfs and soil horizons to allow for successful reinstatement and revegetation; and
- > Obtain appropriate licenses from NatureScot should protected habitats or breeding sites become known.

Ornithology

4.8.49 Chapter 7 considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on ornithology on Site and within the wider local area.

4.8.50 A range of mitigation measures which are good practice for development of this type, and which are required to comply with environmental protection legislation, will be implemented. These are treated as embedded mitigation measures.

4.8.51 Mitigation measures to protect sensitive ornithological features include:

- > Undertaking all vegetation clearance outside of the breeding bird season;
- > Where it must be undertaken in season, the area must be first checked by a qualified ecologist and a works exclusion zone must be implemented around any active bird's nest; and
- > If breeding birds are present, the ECoW can provide advice on measures to minimise the risk of disturbance being caused.

4.8.52 Five European designation sites within 10 km of the Site and one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2 km of the Site have been scoped out of further assessment.

4.8.53 There are not significant adverse effects predicted on ornithological receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. It is proposed that the installation of bird boxes on mature trees in the local area could be undertaken to deliver improvements for biodiversity.

4.8.54 As the Proposed Development itself will not result in any significant effects, cumulative effects are considered unlikely.

Balancing the Contribution of a Development and Conclusions on Policy 11

- 4.8.55 **Part e) ii) of NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy)** makes it clear and recognises that in terms of significant landscape and visual impacts, such impacts are to be expected for some forms of energy proposals. There is a very clear steer that significant effects are to be expected, and where localised and/or subject to design mitigation, they should generally be acceptable.
- 4.8.56 The Proposed Development is considered to be acceptable on balance in relation to all of Policy 11's environmental and technical topic criteria.
- 4.8.57 The second last paragraph **of Paragraph e) of Policy 11** is expressly clear that in considering any identified impacts of developments, significant weight must be placed on the contribution of the proposal to renewable energy generation targets and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. Chapter 10 of the EA assesses the effects and mitigation considerations for the Proposed Development in relation to Climate Change. In addition, the Policy recognises that landscape and visual impacts are to be expected but provided they are localised and / or appropriate design mitigation has been applied, they are likely to be considered acceptable.
- 4.8.58 The "contributions" are inextricably related to the increase in renewable capacity which the Proposed Development is required to provide transmission for and policy recognises that any identified impacts must be assessed in the context of these contributions.
- 4.8.59 In terms of contribution to targets, the proposal's contributions have been set out in Chapter 3 above and further detail is also contained in Chapter 10 of the EA. The importance of delivering grid infrastructure is a critical consideration and one which is provided strong support within NPF4 and National Development status. Assessments undertaken demonstrate that there are only limited adverse effects anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development.

4.9 NPF4 Policy 3: Biodiversity

Policy 3 & Principles

- 4.9.1 In summary, there are no unacceptable effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development in relation to biodiversity matters, nor in relation to nature conservation designations which NPF4 **Policies 3 and 4** address.
- 4.9.2 **Policy 3** requires developments to, wherever feasible, provide nature-based solutions that have been integrated and made best use of and for significant biodiversity enhancements to be provided.

Current Guidance Position

- 4.9.3 The **letter from the Chief Planner issued on 8 February 2023** refers to the application of new policy where specific supporting guidance / parameters for assessment are not yet available to aid assessments. The letter states:
- 4.9.4 *"recognising that currently there is not a single accepted methodology for calculating and / or measuring biodiversity 'enhancement' – we have commissioned research to explore options for development a biodiversity metric or other tool, specifically for use in Scotland. There will be some proposals which will not give rise for opportunities to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, and it will be for the decision maker to take into account the policies in NPF4 as a whole, together with material considerations in each case". (underlining added)*
- 4.9.5 Therefore, exactly how enhancement is to be measured in the longer-term is to be the subject of further guidance. Accordingly, the current position in relation to guidance summarised below, should not be regarded as settled or standard practice at this stage.
- 4.9.6 **NatureScot Guidance** was issued in Summer 2023 in support of NPF4 Policy 3 c). This states that the selection and design of enhancement measures will be a matter of judgment

based on the circumstances of the individual case but should take into account a number of considerations. These considerations include:

- > The location of the development site and the opportunities for enhancing biodiversity;
- > The character and scale of development;
- > The requirements and cost of maintenance and future management of the measures proposed;
- > The distinctiveness and scale of the biodiversity damaged or lost; and
- > The time required to deliver biodiversity benefits and any risks or uncertainty in achieving this.

- 4.9.7 The Scottish Government also published '**Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity**' in November 2023. Paragraph 1.1 states that it: *"Sets out the Scottish Minister's expectations for implementing NPF4 policies which support the cross cutting NPF4 outcome 'improving biodiversity'."*
- 4.9.8 The guidance refers to 'key terms' and with regard to 'enhancement', states at Paragraph 1.10:

"The terms 'enhance' and 'enhancement' are widely used in NPF4. In order for biodiversity to be 'enhanced' it will need to be demonstrated that it will be in an overall better state than before intervention, and that this will be sustained in the future. Development proposals should clearly set out the type and scale of enhancements they will deliver".
- 4.9.9 The guidance addresses development planning and, in terms of development proposals, references 'core principles.' At Paragraph 3.1 the guidance states that these principles can be followed when designing developments so that nature and nature recovery are an integral part of any proposal. Section 3.2 of the guidance states:

"Applying these principles will not only help to secure biodiversity enhancements, they can also help to deliver wider policy objectives including for green and blue infrastructure, open space, nature based solutions, nature networks and 30 x 30. Development proposals which follow these steps are also much more likely to result in more pleasant and enriching places to live, work and spend time."
- 4.9.10 The principles set out are as follows:
- > Apply the mitigation hierarchy;
 - > Consider biodiversity from the outset;
 - > Provide synergies and connectivity for nature;
 - > Integrate nature to deliver multiple benefits;
 - > Prioritise on-site enhancement before off-site delivery;
 - > Take a place-based and inclusive approach;
 - > Ensure long term enhancement is secured; and
 - > Additionality.
- 4.9.11 Notwithstanding the fact that the guidance is informal at this stage, these core principles have nonetheless been applied as appropriate to the Proposed Development.
- 4.9.12 Page 15 of the draft guidance makes specific reference to determining planning applications and, with regard to the policy context, Paragraph 4.1 makes it clear that NPF4 must be read and applied as a whole. Specific reference to NPF4 Policy 3 (Biodiversity) Part 3 b) is made and from Section 4.6 key points in the guidance include the following:

- > It is set out that NPF4 that does not specify or require a particular assessment approach or methodology to be used, although the policy makes clear that best practice assessment methods should be utilised;
 - > Assessments can be qualitative or quantitative (for example through use of a metric); and
- 4.9.13 It is stated that NatureScot is to shortly commence work to develop an adapted biodiversity metric suitable for use in supporting delivery of NPF4 Policy 3 b). The draft guidance states that further information will be provided on this work “in due course”.
- 4.9.14 Section 4.12 of the draft guidance states:
- “In the meantime, the absence of a universally adopted Scottish methodology/tool should not be used to frustrate or delay decision making, and a flexible approach will be required. Wherever relevant and applicable, and as indicated above, information and evidence gathered for statutory and other assessment obligations, such as EIA, can be utilised to demonstrate those ways in which the policy tests set out in NPF4 have been met. Equally, where a developer wishes to use an established metric or tool, the planning submission should demonstrate how Scotland’s habitats and environmental conditions have been taken into account. Where an established metric or tool has been modified, the changes made and the reasons for this should be clearly set out”.*
- 4.9.15 Section 4.14 of the draft guidance states that it will be for a planning authority to determine whether the relevant policy criteria have been met, taking into account the circumstances of the particular proposal. It adds:
- “NPF4 does not specify how much enhancement, or ‘net gain’ should be delivered, though biodiversity should clearly be left in a ‘demonstrably better state’ than without intervention. Rather, the selection and design of enhancements will be a matter of judgement based on the circumstances of the individual case, taking into account a range of considerations.”*
- 4.9.16 The draft guidance makes reference to the various considerations which are already set out in the NatureScot guidance issued in the Summer of 2023 with regard to NPF4 Policy 3 (as listed above).
- 4.9.17 The draft guidance also makes reference to off-site delivery of enhancement proposals and states at Paragraph 4.19 that:
- “Where the relevant policy tests cannot be met on site, off-site provision may be considered alongside on site. In these circumstances, off-site delivery should be as close as possible to the development site, with consideration being given firstly to the immediate landscape context and existing ecological value of the site.”*
- 4.9.18 In early 2024 **NatureScot consulted on ‘a Biodiversity Metric for Scotland’s Planning System’**. The consultation ended on 10 May 2024. The consultation paper outlines work that NatureScot has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop a biodiversity metric for Scotland’s planning system, to support delivery of NPF4 policy 3(b).
- 4.9.19 This consultation paper does not propose solutions or reach conclusions on specific aspects of the Scottish biodiversity metric to be developed, as these are yet to be fully assessed. While work on developing a Scottish biodiversity metric is ongoing, NatureScot highlight here the advice set out in the Scottish Government’s draft Planning Guidance on Biodiversity, as referenced above, namely that the absence of a universally adopted Scottish methodology / tool at the present time, should not be used to frustrate or delay decision making.
- 4.9.20 The commission’s final outputs are expected to include:
- > a Scottish biodiversity planning metric tool (to be hosted on the NatureScot website), which is based on current understanding of science and evidence, clear and transparent in its workings, accessible and easy to use by relevant professionals with outputs understandable by decision makers, and which informs siting and design of development as well as evidence-based decision making; and

- > a user guide supporting the metric (together with any supporting information).

The application of Policy 3

- 4.9.21 Notwithstanding the lack of policy guidance at national level in Scotland, there will be a permanent enhancement delivered through the Applicant's proposed enhancements to the natural habitat.
- 4.9.22 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a process which leaves nature in a better state than it started. Although it is an internationally recognised process and tool within the development industry, it is not a term that is widely used or implemented in Scotland at this time. SSEN Transmission has developed a BNG toolkit based upon the accepted Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) metric which aims to quantify biodiversity based upon the value of habitats for nature. It is an efficient and effective method for demonstrating whether development projects have been able to maintain or increase the biodiversity value of a development site after construction works.
- 4.9.23 Appendix E of the EA includes a BNG Report for the project.
- 4.9.24 The SSEN Transmission BNG project toolkit will be used to quantify the biodiversity value of the baseline habitats, the loss of units during works and the reinstatement of habitats in temporary working areas, and the compensation and enhancement proposals presented in the outline HMP. The Applicant is committed to delivering a 10% net gain for biodiversity as part of the Cambushinnie Substation and tie-in project. The Proposed Development would demonstrably deliver significant positive effects and strengthen nature networks and the connections between them, so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention consistent with the provisions of Policy 3.
- 4.9.25 It is important to keep in mind that the greatest threat to biodiversity is climate change. The principal and essential benefit of the Proposed Development is a significant contribution of energy transmission and security within a modern grid network with enhanced capacity, to facilitate the earliest possible decarbonisation of the energy system and the achievement of "net zero" no later than 2045, in accordance with the objectives of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (as amended). The purpose of net zero is to protect biodiversity and the earlier it can be achieved, the greater the benefits to biodiversity.

4.10 NPF4 Policy 4: Natural Places

Policy 4 & Principles

- 4.10.1 Policy 4, Paragraph c) deals with national landscape designations and has a similar approach in relation to the former SPP in terms of how a proposal that affects a National Park or NSA should be addressed.
- 4.10.2 Policy 4, Part c) states that:

*"Development proposals that will affect the National Park or National Scenic Area will only be supported where:

the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or

any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance."*
- 4.10.3 There are no national landscape interests that would be affected by the Proposed Development.
- 4.10.4 Policy 4, Paragraph d) deals with local landscape designations and contains a different policy approach to that which was contained within the former SPP. Policy 4 is as follows:

"Development proposals that affect a site designated as ...a local landscape area in the LDP will only be supported where:

Development will not have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been identified; or

Any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance”.

- 4.10.5 The policy now follows a similar construct to that which deals with national level designations. The first limb of the policy refers to significant effects on the “*integrity*” of the area or “*the qualities for which it has been identified*”.
- 4.10.6 The policy set out in the second limb of NPF4 Policy 4, Part d) provides that development proposals that affect a site designated as a local landscape area will only be supported where any significant adverse effects on the integrity of the area are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of at least local importance. It must be noted that:
- > this policy provision, reflects the wider NPF4 policy that adverse effects (including adverse landscape and visual effects outside of a National Park or National Scenic Area) must be balanced against the benefits of a proposed development;
 - > the second limb is independent of the first (“or”) and is to be applied where a decision-maker concludes that a proposed development will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of a local designation;
 - > NPF4, Policy 4, Part d) now expressly includes a balancing mechanism (“*clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits*”) and sets out the threshold to be used (“*of at least local importance*”).

The application of Policy 4

- 4.10.7 As explained above in the context of NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy), the EIA Report contains an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development and concludes there will be no significant effects on landscape character and no designations are impacted by the Proposed Development.
- 4.10.8 The Proposed Development would result in benefits of national importance and is considered to be in accordance with Policy 4.

4.11 NPF4 Policy 5: Soils

Policy 5 & Principles

- 4.11.1 In terms of soils, **Policy 5** states that where development on peatland or carbon rich soils or priority peatland habitat is proposed, a detailed site-specific assessment is required to identify baseline, likely effects and net effects. The policy intent is to protect carbon rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development. This is very similar to the policy position that was in SPP; however, a key difference is that essential infrastructure with a specific locational need is a type of development expressly envisaged to be acceptable in principle on peatlands (Paragraph c).

The application of Policy 5

- 4.11.2 The Site is shown to mainly comprise superficial deposits of Peat. Disturbance of soil, peat and made ground for the implementation of foundation excavations has the potential to release potential contamination and impact surrounding soil and groundwater. Particular care should be taken when excavating peat and organic material to minimise the release of carbon and any other potential contaminants. Management of peat will be undertaken in accordance with the appropriate GEMP. Appendix J of the EA includes a proposed Peat Management Plan which sets out how peat would be managed on site during construction and operation. The plan includes peat depth information.

4.11.3 As explained above with regard to NPF4 Policy 11, the Applicant has proposed an appropriate design, mitigation and restoration approach to peatland resources. Appropriate planning conditions can be attached to a grant of consent.

4.11.4 The Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy 5.

4.12 NPF4 Policy 6: Forestry, Woodland and Trees

Policy 6 & Principles

4.12.1 The policy intent is to protect and expand forests, woodland and trees. It states that development proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover will be supported.

4.12.2 Policy 6 Paragraph b) states that “*development proposals will not be supported where they will result in:*

“i. Any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition;

ii. Adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerow and individual trees of high biodiversity value, or identified for protection in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy;

iii. Fragmenting or severing woodland habitats, unless appropriate mitigation measures are identified and implemented in line with the mitigation hierarchy;

Iv. Conflict with Restocking Direction, Remedial Notice or Registered Notice to Comply issued by Scottish Forestry.”

4.12.3 **Policy 6 Paragraph c)** states that:

“Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered”.

The application of Policy 6

4.12.4 Forestry effects resulting from the Proposed Development would be on trees intended for clear-felling and newly regenerating, previously clear-felled areas, which are of low sensitivity. The disruption to forestry management is limited to the Proposed Development and no extended management felling would be required. Compensation of equivalent hectareage would provide an opportunity to mitigate the loss.

4.12.5 A forestry assessment is included in the EA that supports the planning application for the proposed Cambushinnie 400kV substation. This includes the forestry removal that would be required for the Proposed Development.

4.12.6 The Site is within an area of commercial forestry land, covered by the Cambushinnie Forest Plan, principally of restocked and regenerating young trees, following clearance felling. The effect of removal of young trees can be compensated for on a like-for-like basis through on-site and off-site planting.

4.12.7 A compartment of semi mature / mature Sitka spruce at the southern boundary of the Site has been subject to progressive windthrow. New access, adjacent to this forest compartment would require felling of standing and windthrow trees to ensure safety of the OHL route.

4.12.8 A Landscape and Habitat Management Plan (Appendix F of the EA Report) has been prepared to meet forestry, biodiversity and landscaping objectives across the substation and OHL tie-in projects. This includes planting of conifer and native broadleaf trees. The woodland areas would provide long-term screening of the Site in the longer term. Proposals include an areas of wet woodland peatland restoration and the principal woodland planting.

Trees could also be removed from areas with peat depth greater than 500 mm. This presents an opportunity for peatland restoration.

4.12.9 The Applicant commits to compensatory tree planting equivalent to the loss of forestry on site. The compensatory planting commitment would be achieved through both onsite and offsite tree planting.

4.12.10 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy 6.

4.13 NPF4 Policy 7: Historic Assets and Places

Policy 7 & Principles

4.13.1 In terms of Policy 7 which deals with Historic Assets and Places, the policy is very similar to that which was in the former SPP (paragraph 145).

4.13.2 The intent of the policy is to protect and enhance the historic environment, assets and places and to enable positive change. Key parts of the policy include the following:

4.13.3 **Paragraph c)** states that “*development proposals affecting the setting of a Listed building should preserve its character, and its special architectural or historic interest*”.

4.13.4 **Paragraph d)** states that “*development proposals in or affecting Conservation Areas will only be supported where the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting is preserved or enhanced*”.

4.13.5 **Paragraph h)** states that “development proposals affecting Scheduled Monuments will only be supported where:

- i) *direct impact on the Scheduled Monument are avoided;*
- ii) *significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the setting of the Scheduled Monument are avoided; or*
- iii) *exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the impact on a Scheduled Monument and its setting and impact on the monument or its setting have been minimised.*

4.13.6 **Paragraph I)** states that “*development proposals affecting nationally important Gardens and Designed Landscapes will be supported where they protect, preserve or enhance their cultural significance, character and integrity and where proposals will not significantly impact on important views to, from and within the site or its setting*”.

4.13.7 **Paragraph o)** states that “*non designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ wherever feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource at an early stage so that planning authorities can assess impact*”.

The application of Policy 7

4.13.8 As noted, no significant direct or indirect effects on designated and undesignated assets are predicted as a result of the Proposed Development. Nevertheless, the implementation of best practice embedded mitigation measures would still be applied to ensure assets are not vulnerable to accidental damage during construction. The Proposed Development is considered to accord with the provisions of Policy 7 so far as they are relevant to the nature of the development as proposed.

4.14 Conclusion on NPF4 Appraisal: A Sustainable Place

4.14.1 The Proposed Development is considered to be acceptable in relation to all of Policy 11’s environmental and technical topic criteria.

- 4.14.2 A key point within Policy 11 (Energy) is that any identified impacts have to be weighed against a development's specific contribution to meeting targets – which attracts significant positive weight in this case.
- 4.14.3 Significant weight is also afforded in relation to Policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises). This policy direction fundamentally alters the planning balance compared to the position that was set out in the former NPF3 and SPP.
- 4.14.4 The term “tackling” the respective crises in Policy 1 is also important – this means that decision makers should ensure an urgent and positive response to these issues and take positive action.
- 4.14.5 The National Spatial Strategy set out in NPF4 is intended to support the delivery of three types of ‘place’ in Scotland: namely, Sustainable, Liveable and Productive places.
- 4.14.6 Eighteen National Developments are identified to support the strategy, and they are to be a “focus for delivery” (NPF4 page 4). National Development 3 (strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure) is one of six National Developments which support the delivery of Sustainable Places.
- 4.14.7 Sustainable Places are primarily concerned with dealing with the climate crisis, and this issue is seen as a fundamental threat to the capacity of the natural environment to provide the services and amenities relied on, including clean air, water and food (NPF4, page 6).
- 4.14.8 In order to deliver Sustainable Places, NPF4 makes it clear that there must be significant progress in achieving net zero emissions by 2030 in order to hit the overall target of net zero by 2045.
- 4.14.9 Furthermore, it sets out that meeting the Government's climate ambition will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of the economy and society and that this means ensuring “*the right development happens in the right place*” (Page 7)
- 4.14.10 The importance of applying NPF4 and its aims and objectives as a whole is demonstrated within the recent Creag Dhubh to Dalmally 275 kV Section 37 decision which recognises that conflict with some areas of policy can arise - in that case Policy 6 (Ancient Woodland loss) and to a lesser degree due to localised amenity harm. However, in applying NPF4 as a whole, there was recognition of the wider benefits and accordance with policy. The Ministers stated the following in their Decision letter on that proposed development:
- “However, it would satisfy the requirements of all other development plan policies and would benefit from being a national development in NPF4 and from the support that is given within NPF4 to developments that contribute to renewable energy generation and greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Therefore, the Scottish Ministers conclude that the Development is, overall, in accordance with and supported by NPF4”.*
- 4.14.11 In a development management context, the application of NPF4 policies has to be done by reading NPF4 as a whole. The policy appraisal contained in this Statement has demonstrated that the Proposed Development (in either the Proposed Alignment or the Alternative Alignment) would accord with NPF4 when it is read as a whole, and as a consequence, the proposal is considered to be the right one in the right location and one which will contribute to Scotland being a Sustainable Place.

5. Appraisal against the Local Development Plan

5.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The other elements of the statutory Development Plan covering the site comprises:

> The Perth and Kinross Local Development Plan 2 (November 2019).

5.1.1 This Chapter does not present a detailed assessment of the proposed development as that has been covered in Chapter 4 of this Statement against the policy provisions of NPF4. As explained earlier, NPF4 is now part of the Development Plan and in the event of any conflict, its provisions prevail as it is the later document.

5.2 Relevant LDP Policies

5.2.1 The other policies of relevance in the HwLDP are summarised below in **Table 5.1** with brief comment added with regard to how the policies relate to the policies of NPF4, where relevant:

Table 5.1: PKC LDP 2 Policy Summaries

LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
Policy 1 Place Making	The policy is split into various parts and part 1A is of some relevance. It states that development must contribute positively to the quality of the surrounding built and natural environment and that all development should be planned and designed with reference to climate change, mitigation and adaptation. The policy requires design and siting of development to respect character and amenity of place. Other aspects of the policy relate to more conventional built development and would not be relevant.	The provisions of this general policy insofar as relevant are contained within the scope of NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy). No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 15 Public Access	The policy states that proposals that would have an adverse impact upon the integrity of any core path or right of way will not be permitted. The policy also requires proposals that would affect public access rights, to ensure that such effects are adequately addressed and where necessary, suitable alternative provisions should be made.	NPF4 Policy 11 deals with impacts in relation to public access. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 26 Scheduled Monuments & Archaeology	Policy 26A deals with Scheduled Monuments and states that there is a presumption against development which would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a Scheduled Monument and its setting, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Policy 26B deals with Archaeology and states that the Council will seek to protect areas or sites of known archaeological interest and their settings. Where development is proposed in such areas,	NPF4 Policy 7 (Historic assets and places) deals with impacts in relation to cultural heritage. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.

LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
	there will be a strong presumption in favour of preservation in situ.	
Policy 27 Listed Buildings	Policy 27A deals with listed buildings and states that there is a presumption in favour of retention of listed buildings. It adds that the layout, design, materials, scale and siting and use of any development which will affect a listed building, or its setting should be appropriate to the building's character, appearance and setting.	NPF4 Policy 7 deals with cultural heritage. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 29 Gardens & Designed Landscapes	The policy states that the Council will seek to manage change in order to protect and enhance the integrity of those sites that are included on the current Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.	NPF4 Policy 7 deals with nationally important Gardens and Designed Landscapes. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 31 Other Historic Environment Assets	The policy states that there is also a range of non-designated historic assets and areas of historical interest, including historic landscapes, other gardens and designed landscapes, historical woodlands and routes, which do not have statutory protection. It states that these resources are, however, an important part of Scotland's heritage and the Council will seek to protect and preserve significant resources as far as possible.	NPF4 Policy 7 deals with impacts in relation to cultural heritage. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 33 Renewable & Low Carbon Energy	Policy 33a states that proposals for the utilisation, distribution and development of renewable and low carbon sources of energy will be supported, subject to a number of factors. These include the individual or cumulative effects of a development in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Biodiversity and natural heritage; > Woodland and forestry; > Landscape character, local landscape areas, wild land areas and national scenic areas; > Visual amenity; > The historic environment and cultural heritage; > Hydrology, the water environment and flood risk; > Air quality, including any effects on greenhouse gas emissions and impacts from construction; > Aviation, defence and seismological recording; > Telecommunications and broadcasting infrastructure; > Residential amenity of the surrounding area (including noise and shadow flicker); and 	NPF4 Policy 11 deals with Energy developments. Whilst Policy 33 of the LDP requires the contribution of a development to targets to be taken into account, NPF4 Policy 11 expressly requires significant weight to be given to such a contribution.

LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hazardous installations (including pipelines). <p>The policy also requires consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The contribution of the development towards meeting carbon reduction and renewable energy generation targets; > The net economic impact of a proposal; > The transport implications arising; > Construction and service tracks and borrow pits, including effects on soils such as carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitats or prime agricultural land; > The effects on public access; > Decommissioning, including any conditions/bonds considered necessary for site restoration; > Opportunities for energy storage. 	
Policy 38 Environment and Conservation	<p>Policy 38A deals with international nature conservation sites, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).</p> <p>Policy 38B deals with national designations including National Parks, National Scenic Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves. The policy tests in relation to international and national designations in the policy are the same as those as set out in national planning policy, namely NPF4.</p> <p>Policy 38c deals with local designations. It states that development which would affect a local designation will not normally be permitted except where the Council is satisfied that the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the designated area would not be compromised; or any locally significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policies 3 (Biodiversity) and 4 (Natural places) deal with natural heritage matters.</p> <p>No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.</p>
Policy 39 Landscape	<p>The policy states that development and land use change, including the creation of new hill tracks, should be compatible with the distinctive characteristics and features of Perth and Kinross's landscapes, which requires reference to the Tayside Landscape Character Assessment.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policies 11 and 4 deals with landscape matters.</p> <p>There is a conflict with NPF4 policy provisions.</p> <p>NPF4 Policy 4 sets out specific policy tests for dealing with impacts in</p>

LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
	<p>The policy states that proposals will be supported where they do not conflict with the aim of maintaining and enhancing landscape qualities.</p> <p>Proposals need to demonstrate with reference to an appropriate landscape capacity study that either in the case of individual developments or when cumulatively considered alongside other existing or proposed developments, that they satisfy certain criteria. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > They do not erode local distinctiveness, diversity and quality of Perth and Kinross's landscape character areas, the historic and cultural dimension of the area's landscapes, visual and scenic qualities of the landscape, or the quality of landscape experience. > They safeguard views, viewpoints and landmarks from development that would detract from their visual integrity, identity or scenic quality. > They safeguard the tranquil qualities of the area's landscapes. > They safeguard the relative wildness of the area's landscapes, in particular, wild land areas. > They provide high quality standards and landscape design, including landscape enhancement and mitigation schemes when there is an associated impact on a landscape's qualities. > They incorporate measures for protecting and enhancing the ecological, geological, historic, cultural and visual immunity elements of the landscape; and > They conserve the experience of the night sky in the less developed areas of Perth and Kinross through design solutions with low light impact. <p>The policy also references local landscape areas (LLAs) and states that development should only be permitted where it will not have a significant adverse impact on their special character or qualities, or where these impacts are clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits that are of local significance to Perth and Kinross.</p>	<p>relation to Local Landscape designations and these differ significantly from the provisions within Policy 39.</p> <p>Furthermore, NPF4 Policy 11 contains landscape as one of a number of considerations and it also contains a specific balancing mechanism in relation to consideration of impacts and the contribution of a development to targets.</p> <p>Policy 39 conflicts with NPF4.</p>

LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
Policy 40 Forestry, Woodland and Trees	The policy sets out that the Council will follow the principles of the Scottish Government policy on control of woodland removal and developers are expected to fully accord with its requirements. It adds that in accordance with that document, there will be a presumption in favour of protecting woodland resources, except where the works proposed involve the temporary removal of tree cover in a plantation, which is associated with clear felling and restocking. It adds that in exceptional cases where the loss of individual trees or woodland cover is unavoidable, the Council will require mitigation measures to be provided.	NPF4 Policy 6 deals with forestry, woodland and trees. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 41 Biodiversity	The policy states that the Council will seek to protect and enhance all wildlife and wildlife habitats, whether formally designated/protected or not, taking into account the ecosystems and natural processes in the area. It adds that proposals that have a detrimental impact on the ability to achieve the guidelines and actions in the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan will not be supported unless clear evidence can be provided that the ecological impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated.	NPF4 Policies 3 and 4 deal with biodiversity. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 51 Soils	<p>The policy states that the Council will seek to protect soils from damage, such as erosion or compaction. It adds developments located on areas of good quality agricultural soils will only be supported in certain circumstances. The policy adds that the Council is also committed to ensuring that development avoids disturbance to, and the loss of, carbon rich soils, including peatland, which are of value as carbon stores.</p> <p>The policy also allows for exceptions in relation to development that would disturb carbon rich soils, and in such circumstances, development is to be informed by appropriate peat surveys and management plans and any disturbance or excavation should be minimised. An assessment is also required of likely effects of development on carbon dioxide emissions and suitable mitigation measures are to be identified.</p>	NPF4 Policy 5 deals with soils. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 52 New Development and Flooding	The policy states that there is a general presumption against proposals for built development or land raising on a functional flood plain and the policy sets out requirements for developers to address flood risk associated with new development.	NPF4 Policy 22 deals with flood risk and water management. No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 53	The policy deals with the water environment, foul drainage, surface water drainage and natural watercourses.	NPF4 Policy 22 deals with flood risk and water management

LDP Policy	Policy Summary	Comment re NPF4
Water, Environment and Drainage		No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.
Policy 56 Noise Pollution	<p>The policy states that there will be a presumption against the siting of development proposals which will generate high levels of noise in the locality of existing or proposed noise sensitive land uses and similarly, against the locating of noise sensitive uses near to sources of noise generation.</p> <p>The policy adds that a Noise Impact Assessment will be required for proposals where it is anticipated that a noise problem is likely to occur.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 11 contains noise as one of a number of considerations.</p> <p>No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4.</p>
Policy 60 Transport Standards and Accessibility Requirements	The policy deals with development proposals, in particular those that involve significant travel generation and it sets out requirements in relation to transport standards, including parking and the need, in some cases, for the preparation of a Transport Assessment.	<p>NPF4 Policy 13 deals with sustainable transport.</p> <p>No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4</p>
Policy 61 Airfield safeguarding	The policy states that planning permission will be refused for developments likely to have an unacceptable impact on the safe operation of aircraft from a number of airfields, including Dundee Airport, Perth Airport and unlicensed airfields as defined in the Council's Supplementary Guidance.	<p>NPF4 Policy 11 contains aviation as one of a number of considerations.</p> <p>No conflicts or contradictions with NPF4</p>

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 5.3.1 As noted above, Policy 33 of the LDP deals with renewable and low carbon energy development. The Council has draft 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Guidance', which is dated 2019. The guidance contains detailed advice on how applicants are to address the criteria of LDP Policy 33 when preparing and submitting planning applications for a range of renewable and low carbon electricity and heat generation technologies. Transmission grid infrastructure is not explicitly provided for within Policy 33 or Supplementary Guidance, but the expansion and reinforcement of the grid arises directly from the roll out of renewable energy to meet net zero.
- 5.3.2 The guidance is a material consideration and does not have statutory status and as noted, it remains in draft form. The guidance also contains a Spatial Framework for wind energy, as required by the previous planning policy, SPP.
- 5.3.3 The guidance is therefore out of date and is in conflict with the provisions of NPF4. The Council recognises this and states on its website, in relation to 'guidance update NPF4 Policy 11 Energy' that following the adoption of NPF4 as part of the Development Plan, the policy framework for the consideration of development proposals within the Council area has changed. It states:
- "this includes an update of national planning policy in relation to energy – Policy 11 – as well as wider updates across the national planning policy framework. The updated policy includes a significant shift in the support of renewable energy infrastructure to support net zero. The current draft guidance is to be reviewed and updated in 2024-2025 to reflect the updated*

policy position and to provide further guidance on the types of proposals that are being progressed in the Council area.”

- 5.3.4 The Council has indicated that the draft guidance will be available for consultation in due course, but no date is set.

5.4 Conclusions on the LDP

- 5.4.1 The environmental and topic considerations within the LDP policies are encompassed within the broad remit of NPF4 Policy 11 Part e). Similarly, the topic provisions of other LDP policies generally fall within the wide-ranging topic remit of NPF4 Policy 11. Each of the relevant development management considerations have been addressed above (Chapter 4) in the context of NPF4 Policy 11 and other relevant NPF4 policies and are not repeated. The renewable energy policy provisions of the LDP and the draft Supplementary Guidance are based on those of the former SPP.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Electricity Act 1989

- 6.1.1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act places a specific statutory duty on the Scottish Ministers to have regard to various matters when considering development proposals for consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act.
- 6.1.2 The information that is contained within the individual topic sections of the EA Report therefore enables Scottish Ministers to be satisfied that the obligations under Schedule 9 are met and that suitable mitigation has been identified. It is also considered that the detailed work undertaken in the formulation of the EA overall has confirmed and provides confidence that the Proposed Development would be undertaken in an environmentally acceptable manner.

6.2 The Climate Crisis & Renewable Energy Policy Framework

- 6.2.1 The nationally important benefits of the Proposed Development have been set out in the context of the current Climate Emergency – the Proposed Development would help address the issue of global heating and very challenging ‘net zero’ targets and contribute to improving security of supply.
- 6.2.2 A large and rapid increase in electricity generation from renewable sources is essential for Scotland to meet its net zero emissions targets. In turn this helps support jobs and business investment. The grid needs substantial reinforcement including new infrastructure to connect and transmit output from new generators and delivering this, and enabling connections is fundamental to achieve a net zero economy and supporting improved network resilience. The Proposed Development forms a critical link on the 400 kV upgrade of the Beaulieu Denny line which significantly enhances capacity and transmission across Scotland and throughout the UK.
- 6.2.3 ND3 supports renewable electricity generation and repowering and expansion of the electricity grid. The infrastructure is designated as national development and essential infrastructure and is explicitly supported by NPF4 Policy 11(a)(ii) Energy.

6.3 The Planning Balance & Conclusion

- 6.3.1 In NPF4 there is a clear recognition that climate change must become a primary guiding principle for all plans and decisions. Significant weight is to be given to the Climate Emergency and the contribution of individual developments to tackling climate change.
- 6.3.2 NPF4 came into force on 13 February 2023 and provides up to date statements of Scottish Government policy, directly applicable to determination of this application. This should be afforded very considerable weight in decision-making.
- 6.3.3 NPF4 is unambiguous as regards the policy imperative to combat climate change, the crucial role of facilitating further renewable energy production and transmission and the scale and urgency of renewables deployment required. As described in this Planning Statement:
- > The global climate emergency and the nature crisis are the foundations for the NPF4 Spatial Strategy as a whole. The twin global climate and nature crises are “*at the heart of our vision for a future Scotland*” so that “*the decisions we make today will be in the long-term interest of our country*”¹³. The policy position, and the priority afforded to combatting the Climate Emergency, is different to that which was set out in NPF3 and SPP;
 - > NPF4 Policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises) directs decision-makers to give significant weight to the global Climate Emergency in all decisions. This is a radical departure from the usual approach to policy and weight and clearly denotes a step

¹³ NPF4, page 2.

change in planning policy response to climate change. The matter of weight is no longer left entirely to the discretion of the decision maker; and

- > NPF4 is clear that grid transmission infrastructure plays a crucial role in combatting climate change, transitioning to a net zero Scotland and ensuring security of energy supply. NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) strongly supports proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies, including transmission infrastructure.

6.3.4 This change in policy is also seen in the designation of transmission infrastructure applications as National Developments. National Developments are significant developments of national importance and essential infrastructure that will help to deliver the spatial strategy, as the Statement of Need for Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure explains.

6.3.5 Scottish Ministers have reinforced the position set within policy within their recent decision on the Creag Dhubh to Dalmally 275kV OHL project stating (paragraph 87) of their Decision Letter that:

*“Scotland faces a real challenge in building an electricity grid which will allow Scotland to harvest and export its vast resources of clean energy. **The Scottish Ministers recognise that to achieve the dual aims of maintaining a resilient electricity network for businesses and consumers and enabling renewable ambitions to be realised, the need for grid reinforcement is greater than ever...**”* (emphasis added)

6.3.6 Furthermore, paragraph 88 of the Decision Letter states:

*“Scotland’s energy policies and planning policies are all material considerations when weighing up the proposed Development. **NPF4 makes it clear that low carbon energy deployment, maintaining security of electricity supply, and electricity system resilience remain a priority of the Scottish Government.** These are matters which should be afforded significant weight in favour of the Proposed Development”.* (emphasis added)

6.3.7 The Proposed Development accords with relevant policies and is in accordance with the statutory Development Plan when read as a whole. The Proposed Development has been designed with embedded mitigation to ensure a satisfactory relationship with the receiving environment and to protect residents and communities from undue impact. Where potential significant effects arise, appropriate mitigation measures are proposed such that no significant residual effects arise.

6.3.8 The Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with policy and delivers essential infrastructure improvements whilst ensuring biodiversity enhancement and local socio-economic benefits where possible, in order to contribute to Net Zero and in doing so addresses both the global climate and nature crisis.

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