Chleansaid Wind Farm 132 kV OHL Connection

Environmental Appraisal (EA) Report

Appendix 4.3: Scoped Out Topics

November 2024

1.1.1 This appendix provides a justification for why the following topics were scoped out of the Environmental Appraisal (EA) report for the Proposed Development.

Population and Human Health

1.1.2 The Site is located within a sparsely populated rural area, with no major industrial activities in the immediate vicinity. The impacts on population and human health for a development of this nature and scale are limited and comprise temporary noise and air quality impacts because of construction activities. However, these impacts are anticipated to be mitigated through the implementation of best practice and pollution prevention measures within the CEMP. In addition, background air quality in the area is good[1]. Social and community factors are not key, although there is potentially a benefit to the local economy during the construction phase.

Radio and TV Interference

1.1.3 Potential effects from OHLs on TV signals are due to physical obstruction of the signal. The Proposed Development would not represent a significant obstruction and it is not anticipated that any adverse effects on TV reception would be experienced. The operation of high voltage OHLs can generate electromagnetic fields over a wide range of frequencies, from power (50 Hz) to radio frequencies. It is anticipated that the Proposed Development would emit low-level radio frequency interference but that in practice little radio and television interference would arise, except when directly beneath the OHL. The design of the Proposed Development has considered the distance between properties and the OHL and no significant effects are anticipated. This topic has therefore been scoped out of further assessment.

EMF

1.1.4 Electris and magnetic fields (EMF) arise from electric charges. Transmission lines comply with the government policy of adopting the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection on exposure to EMF. The Applicant considers that compliance with government policy on levels of exposure to EMFs, which in turn is based on the advice of the government's independent scientific advisers, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) (now part of the Health Protection Agency), ensures the appropriate level of protection for the public from these fields. The NRPB keeps the results of EMF health studies under constant review to ensure that the guidelines for limiting exposure are based on the best available scientific information.

1.1.5 EMFs diminish quickly with distance. For a 132 kV OHL, typical magnetic fields diminish to near zero at around 50 m from the centreline, while electric fields do so in around half the distance[2]. As there are very few receptors within 50 m of the LoD, it is therefore considered unlikely that significant effects on human health associated with EMFs would result from the Proposed Development. Therefore, EMF has been scoped out of any further assessment.

1.1.6 Given the rural location of the works, and the nature and scale of the Proposed Development, it is not predicted that any of these factors are likely to give rise to significant effects on human receptors following the implementation of the above best practice and pollution prevention measures. As such, population and human health has been scoped out from further assessment.

Noise and Vibration

1.1.7 The area surrounding the Proposed Development is a sparsely populated, rural area. There are no sensitive receptors within 100 m of the Proposed Development. The closest receptor is the residential property at

[1] Defra (2023) UK Air Information Resource. Available at (online): https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/ [Accessed June 2023].

[2] EMFs.info (2018) Summaries of fields from all power lines [online] Available at: http://www.emfs.info/sources/overhead/summaries/ [Accessed December 2023].

Dalnessie Estate, located approximately 200 m east of the northern extent of the Proposed Development. Given the scale and nature of the works, no construction activities capable of producing high-levels of noise and vibration are anticipated.

1.1.8 Noise and vibration produced during the construction phase will be controlled through the implementation of Best Practicable Means (BPM). This may include the selection of low-noise plant and equipment, working hours, and the use of acoustic screening and will be included within the detailed CEMP produced by the appointed Contractor.

1.1.9 Noise produced during the operational phase is anticipated to be minimal. As a result, following the implementation of BPM during construction, no significant effects in relation to noise and vibration are anticipated.

Land Use

1.1.10 A review of the Land Capability for Agriculture Map[3] showed that the Proposed Development is located on Class 5.3 agricultural land - land capable of use as improved grassland (pasture deteriorates quickly). As the Site is not located in prime agricultural land, there would be a minor potential for localised effects. Significant effects on land use would be unlikely and therefore it is scoped out of further assessment.

Traffic and Transport

1.1.11 The location of the Proposed Development is in an area that is sparsely populated, the closest residential receptor is located 200 m east of the northern extent of the Proposed Development. A proportion of the OHL will follow an alignment close to the A836 which connects Lairg with Tongue.

1.1.12 The A836 is of a good standard to the south of its junction with the A838, which is located adjacent to the southern terminus of the proposed OHL, and takes the form of a single track road supported by passing places to the north of this junction.

1.1.13 Any Traffic and Transport effects would be generated primarily during the construction phase and would be temporary and short term in nature. Any operational traffic is expected to be limited to service vehicles carrying out routine maintenance.

1.1.14 Construction activities would generate staff transport movements, with small work crews travelling to and from the Site. The construction compound would have a safe area for parking away from public roads, with temporary or upgraded access roads constructed to accommodate the delivery of materials and construction plant to and from the Site.

1.1.15 The Principal Contractor would determine the location of the Site access(s) and which items of plant would be required to support the transmission line's installation. They will prepare a CTMP in consultation with THC, which will describe all mitigation and signage measures that are proposed on the public road network.

1.1.16 Based on the above and given the nature and scale of the Proposed Development, it is considered that the requirement for further Traffic and Transport assessment can be scoped out, subject to the provision of a framework CTMP, which can be finalised post-submission as part of a full CEMP.

1.1.17 An outline CTMP is provided in **Appendix 3.4.**

[3] Scottish Government (2022). Land Capability for Agriculture Map Viewer. Available at (online): https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/capability-maps/national-scale-land-capability-for-agriculture/ [Accessed June 2023].

Recreation and Tourism

1.1.18 The Proposed Development is located in area commonly used for recreational activities such as walking, horse riders, anglers, cyclists and stalking. Recreational and tourism sites are clustered around the nearest settlements and at Dalnessie Estate. There is a popular long distance walking and cycling route in proximity to the Proposed Development, including the National Cycle Network Route NCN1 (Inverness to John O'Groats) along the A836. Right of Way HS29, Heritage Path 'Strath Tirry to Badenloch Tracks' (HP308) and Scottish Hill Tracks 'Lairg to Crask Inn by Loch Choire' (HT325) also as recorded in the National Catalogue of Rights of Way follows the existing access track from Dalnessie Estate, heading west where it joins the A836. Dalchork Wood is also a popular orienteering location.

1.1.19 During construction, there may be temporary impacts to recreational activities however these would not be considered significant, providing best practice mitigation and pollution prevention measures detailed in a CEMP are in place. Where interactions with recreational users are likely, an outdoor access plan will be prepared as part of the CEMP, and signage would be erected at suitable locations to warn of construction traffic.

1.1.20 The visual impact would be covered by the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment referenced above. No effects to recreation and tourism are anticipated during the operation phase of the Proposed Development. On this basis, it is proposed that Recreation and Tourism effects are scoped out of further assessment.

Air Quality and Climate

1.1.21 The Proposed Development has limited potential to impact local air quality. There is a potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust and construction plant and traffic exhaust emissions. However, the nature of the construction activities is that these would be localised, short term and intermittent. The potential for such nuisance effects on residential or recreational amenity during construction will be strictly controlled in accordance with the project CEMP.

1.1.22 Regarding climate change and in the context of the EIA process, climate change is considered both in relation to the contribution of the Proposed Development to increasing or decreasing gaseous emissions with Global Warming Potential (GWP) and in relation to climate change adaptation. Emissions associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to temporary and short term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide through exposing peat and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of GWP.

1.1.23 The Proposed Development would enable the continuation of operation for a renewable source of energy to the National Grid, helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels which produce harmful emissions.

1.1.24 Regarding climate adaptation, consideration would be given the potential implications of climate change on the substation design (e.g. design for increased flood risk and adverse weather). However, no potential for significant impacts have been identified and it is therefore scoped out from further assessment.

1.1.25 It is considered that due to the lack of likely significant effects, no further assessment is required for Air Quality and Climate Change. It is therefore proposed that this topic is scoped out.

Material Assets and Waste

1.1.26 Given the built form nature of the Proposed Development it would inevitably and unavoidably result in the use of some natural resources and generate waste, however this is anticipated to be minimal, largely restricted to cut soil from installation of poles (to be used as backfill wherever possible). It is considered that standard mitigation measures and best practice measures, detailed within the CEMP will be implemented throughout the works. The use of materials and generation of waste during the operational phase is expected to be

minimal and limited to maintenance activities including the replacement of redundant equipment where required. On this basis, no significant effects are expected to arise for material assets and waste during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

Major Accidents and Disasters

1.1.27 The EIA Regulations require the consideration of the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to accidents and disasters. This requirement is interpreted as requiring the consideration of low likelihood / high consequence events which would result in serious harm or damage to environmental receptors.

1.1.28 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential for effects related to the vulnerability to accidents and disasters are likely to be limited to those associated with unplanned power outages, due to extreme weather or structural damage.

1.1.29 Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed.

1.1.30 Other accident and disaster risks associated with the Proposed Development to electrical discharge through accidental contact with live lines (i.e. when enabling connection to the existing substation connection points).

1.1.31 The vulnerability of the Proposed Development to accidents and disasters is therefore proposed to be scoped out from further assessment.