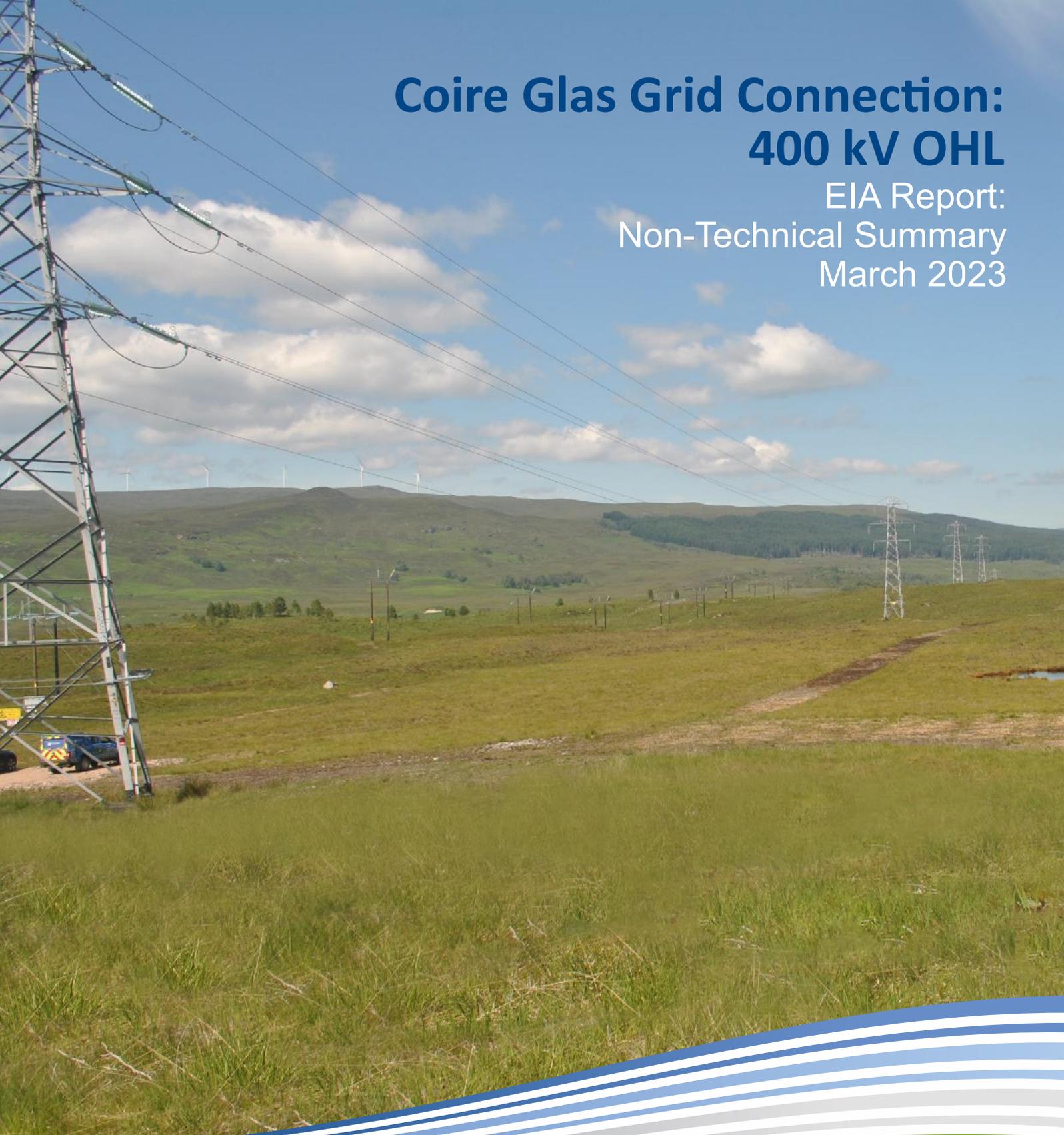


# Coire Glas Grid Connection: 400 kV OHL

EIA Report:  
Non-Technical Summary  
March 2023



**Scottish & Southern**  
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

## NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

## 1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report ("EIA Report") prepared on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ("the Applicant") who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission ("SSEN Transmission"), own, operate and develop the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.
- 1.1.2 The EIA Report has been prepared to accompany an application for consent under section 37 (s.37) of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) ("the 1989 Act").
- 1.1.3 The Applicant is applying for consent to construct and operate approximately 13 kilometres (km) of new double circuit steel structure 400 kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line (OHL) to facilitate a grid connection between the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme and the existing Fort Augustus Substation. The project, referred to hereafter as 'the Proposed Development', is required to connect the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme to the National Grid. The location of the Proposed Development is shown in **Figure 1**.
- 1.1.4 The Applicant is also seeking deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for certain elements of the project, or ancillary works required to facilitate its construction and operation. These ancillary works form part of the Proposed Development and include the construction of temporary and permanent access tracks, and tree and vegetation clearance.
- 1.1.5 Other associated works for which separate consent under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, would be sought by the Applicant include a new 400 kV switching station located within Glen Garry Forest near White Bridge (hereafter referred to as 'the Coire Glas Switching Station') and a new 400 kV / 132 kV substation near Loch Lundie, Invergarry (hereafter referred to as 'the Loch Lundie Substation').
- 1.1.6 These works are referred to as "Associated Works". They do not form part of the s.37 consent for the Proposed Development but have been considered in relation to potential for cumulative effects when determining the scope of the EIA Report, where relevant. The Proposed Development, in combination with the Associated Works, form what is referred to as 'The Coire Glas Grid Connection Project'.
- 1.1.7 The Proposed Development would also form part of a wider rationalisation exercise to reduce the overall amount of electrical grid infrastructure in the surrounding area. The Proposed Development would therefore include re-routing the existing 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL and the existing 132 kV Invergarry Tee OHL into the proposed Loch Lundie Substation. Following the construction of the Proposed Development, the existing 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL would also be decommissioned and dismantled between the proposed Loch Lundie Substation and the existing Fort Augustus Substation. The Proposed Development would also include a new temporary OHL diversion approximately 0.7 km in length, to enable the continued operation of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL whilst the OHL is rerouted into the proposed new Loch Lundie Substation. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development in accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ("EIA Regulations") to assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development. The findings of the EIA are presented in an EIA Report, including the measures which would be taken to prevent, reduce and, where possible, offset predicted likely significant adverse effects.

## 1.2 Background and Project Need

- 1.2.1 The Applicant owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a transmission licence under the 1989 Act. Under section 9(2) of the 1989 Act, the Applicant has a statutory duty

to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated, and economical system of electrical transmission, and a separate duty to facilitate competition between current and new generators of electricity.

1.2.2 The Proposed Development is required to facilitate the connection of the consented 1,500 megawatts (MW) Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme, being developed by Coire Glas Hydro Pumped Storage Ltd (CGHPSL).

1.2.3 The Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme, together with the Proposed Development, will help to meet increased electricity demand and meet net zero carbon targets fixed by the Scottish and UK Governments to achieve net zero by 2045 and 2050 respectively. The policy objective of “net zero” is the reduction of carbon emissions by 100 per cent (%) from 1990 levels by 2050 to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and seeks to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

1.2.4 The Proposed Development is classed as having national development status in Scotland’s Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4).

### **1.3 EIA Report Structure**

1.3.1 This EIA Report consists of the following volumes:

- Volume 1: Main Report;
- Volume 2: Figures;
- Volume 3A: Visualisations (NatureScot Standard)
- Volume 3B: Visualisations (THC Standard)
- Volume 4: Technical Appendices;
- A Non-Technical Summary; and
- A Planning Statement.

### **1.4 Notifications**

1.4.1 Notice of the application, and details of the project, are available on the Applicant’s website: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/coire-glas-connection-project/>

This NTS and EIA Report is available in other formats if required. For details, including costs, contact:

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## 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Project Overview

- 2.1.1 The Proposed Development is located in a rural area of the Scottish Highlands and is routed between Glengarry Forest (at a location approximately 4 km to the west of the village of Invergarry) and the settlement of Auchterawe (located approximately 2 km southwest of the town of Fort Augustus). A location overview of the Proposed Development is provided on **Figure 1**.
- 2.1.2 From the proposed location of the Coire Glas Switching Station, the Proposed Development would travel directly through the forestry at White Bridge (part of Glengarry Forest) for approximately 2 km before crossing both the River Garry and the A87 to the northeast of Invergarry. After crossing the A87, the Proposed Development would travel through another area of FLS forestry at Munerigie Wood, to reach an elevated area of open moorland to the southwest of Loch Lundie on Aberchalder Estate. The Proposed Development would then continue in an easterly direction to the south of Loch Lundie for approximately 2 km, where it would connect into the proposed Loch Lundie Substation.
- 2.1.3 From the proposed Loch Lundie Substation, the Proposed Development would travel through Drynachan Forest in a north-easterly direction for approximately 1.4 km. After exiting the northern extent of Drynachan Forest, it would continue to travel in a northerly direction through an area of open moorland on Aberchalder Estate for a further 1.3 km (approximately) before entering the forestry at Inchnacardoch Forest. Within Inchnacardoch Forest the Proposed Development would continue in a north-easterly direction for a further 3.4 km (approximately), running broadly parallel to the eastern side of the existing 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL (which would be dismantled following the commissioning of the proposed OHL). At Torr Dhuin, the Proposed Development would diverge from the route of the existing OHL and travel through the forestry to the south of Auchterawe, where it would connect to the southeastern corner of the existing Fort Augustus Substation.
- 2.1.4 Access for the Proposed Development would be established through use of the existing public road network, existing tracks, new temporary tracks and new permanent stone tracks.

### 2.2 Development for which Section 37 Consent and deemed planning permission is sought

- 2.2.1 The Proposed Development would include the following works, for which section 37 consent under the 1989 Act and deemed planning permission is sought:
- The installation and operation of approximately 13 km of new double circuit 400 kV OHL supported by steel lattice towers. This comprises approximately 4.7 km of OHL from the proposed Coire Glas Switching Station to the proposed Loch Lundie Substation, and approximately 8.5 km of OHL from the proposed Loch Lundie Substation to the existing Fort Augustus Substation. Terminal towers would be required to connect at the switching station and both substations;
  - Re-routeing of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL and the 132 kV Invergarry Tee OHL to turn into the proposed new Loch Lundie Substation; and
  - Installation of a new temporary OHL diversion, including the installation of up to eight temporary Trident wood poles, to enable operation of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL whilst the OHL is rerouted into the proposed new Loch Lundie Substation.

### 2.3 Ancillary Development for which Deemed Planning Permission is sought

- 2.3.1 The following ancillary works would be required as part of the Proposed Development, or to facilitate its construction and operation:

- The formation of access tracks (permanent, temporary, and upgrades to existing tracks) and the installation of bridges and culverts to facilitate access;
- The upgrade of existing, or creation of new, bellmouths at public road access points;
- Establishment of temporary measures to protect road and water crossings (e.g. scaffolding);
- Working areas around infrastructure to facilitate construction;
- Tree felling and vegetation clearance to facilitate construction and operation of the Proposed Development, to comply with the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002; and
- Decommissioning and dismantling of a section of the existing 132 kV steel lattice Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL between the proposed Loch Lundie Substation and the existing Fort Augustus Substation.

## 2.4 Description of OHLs

### *The proposed new 400 kV Steel Lattice OHL*

- 2.4.1 The steel lattice towers to be used for the new 400 kV OHL element of the Proposed Development would be constructed from fabricated galvanised steel and would be grey in colour. There are 28 suspension towers, 12 tension towers and 6 terminal towers proposed.
- 2.4.2 The towers would carry two circuits each with six conductors supported from glass-insulators attached to the horizontal cross arms on both sides of each steel lattice tower. The span length would typically be approximately 350 m. Steel lattice tower heights would be in the region of 46 m to 59 m.

### *The existing 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William*

- 2.4.3 As part of the Proposed Development, the existing 132 kV double circuit steel lattice OHL from Fort Augustus to Fort William would be rerouted into the new Loch Lundie Substation, as illustrated on **Figure 2**. The rerouted section of this OHL would be approximately 0.8 km in length and would involve the construction of four new steel lattice towers, which would be up to 28 m in height. The redundant steel lattice towers between the new Loch Lundie Substation and Fort Augustus Substation would then be dismantled and removed from site.
- 2.4.4 To complete this work, there would be a requirement to install a temporary OHL diversion so that one existing circuit can remain in operation during construction, as illustrated on **Figure 2**. The temporary OHL diversion would be approximately 0.7 km in length and would require the installation of up to eight temporary Trident wood poles. This diversion would be dismantled and removed from site once the Proposed Development is operational.

### *The existing 132 kV Invergarry Tee OHL*

- 2.4.5 As part of the Proposed Development, the existing 132 kV single circuit steel lattice OHL from Invergarry Tee Power Station would be reroute into the new Loch Lundie Substation, as illustrated on **Figure 2**. The rerouted section of this OHL would be approximately 0.4 km in length and would involve the installation of three new Trident steel poles, which would be up to 15 m in height. The redundant steel lattice towers from this route would then be dismantled and removed from site.

## 2.5 Associated Works

- 2.5.1 Other associated works are required to facilitate construction of the Proposed Development or would occur as a consequence of its construction and operation. These works do not form part of the description of the Proposed Development and are therefore not included in the application for statutory consents. On that basis they are therefore not assessed in detail in the EIA Report. The associated works are:
- Borrow pits and quarries would be required to source stone for the construction of access tracks. Separate planning applications for these works would be sought by the Principal Contractor;

- Temporary construction compounds would be required along the route of the Proposed Development to facilitate its construction. The final location and design of temporary site compounds would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and separate planning permissions would be sought as required;
- Modification of the existing 33 kV distribution network in some areas to accommodate the new OHL. These works are likely to comprise short sections of undergrounding within the vicinity of the Proposed Development and would be undertaken by Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD). Consent would be sought by SHEPD as required;
- A new 400 kV (the Coire Glas Switching Station). Separate consent under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, would be sought by the Applicant for this development; and
- A new 400 kV / 132 kV substation ('the Loch Lundie Substation'). Separate consent under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, would be sought by the Applicant for this development.

## **2.6 Construction Programme and Working Hours**

- 2.6.1 It is anticipated that construction of the project would take place over a 40 month period (approximately), following the granting of consents and discharge of pre-commencement planning conditions. A further 4 months (approximately) would be required for dismantling works associated with the existing 132 kV OHLs.
- 2.6.2 Construction working is likely to be during daytime periods only. Working hours are anticipated to be Monday to Friday between approximately 07.00 to 19.00 March to September and 07.30 to 17.00 (or within daylight hours) October to February. Weekend working could also be proposed with slightly reduced working hours (i.e. works to cease at 16.00). Working hours would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and agreed with The Highland Council as local authority.
- 2.6.3 Every effort would be made to cause least disturbance to landowners and local residents during construction by providing regular updates on works via the on-site Construction Manager and Community Liaison Officer.

## **2.7 Construction Traffic**

- 2.7.1 During construction, access to the Proposed Development would be taken from the upgrade of existing, or creation of new, bellmouth junctions at up to six public road access points. Construction of the Proposed Development would give rise to regular numbers of staff transport movements, with work crews travelling to work site areas from site compound areas within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.
- 2.7.2 Vehicle movements would be required to construct access tracks; deliver the foundation and relevant components and conductor materials to site; and deliver and collect materials and construction plant from the site compounds to work areas. No Abnormal Indivisible Loads are associated with the Proposed Development infrastructure.
- 2.7.3 A Traffic Management Plan would be prepared by the Principal Contractor, in consultation with the Applicant, The Highland Council (THC) and Transport Scotland. The Traffic Management Plan would describe all mitigation and signage measures that are proposed on the public road network. An Outline Traffic Management Plan is provided in the EIA report. Further detail on the anticipated traffic movements associated with construction of the Proposed Development, and an assessment of the likely effects and suggested mitigation measures, is provided in the EIA report.

## **2.8 Environmental Management during Construction**

- 2.8.1 All works would be carried out in accordance with the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs), which have been developed by the Applicant to ensure best practice working methods are adapted to minimise potential environmental effects.
- 2.8.2 A contractual management requirement of the successful Principal Contractor would be the development and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP would detail how the successful Principal Contractor would manage the site in accordance with all commitments and mitigation detailed in the EIA Report, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance.

## **2.9 Operation and Maintenance**

- 2.9.1 The Proposed Development would require very little maintenance. Regular inspections are undertaken to identify any unacceptable deterioration of components, so that they can be replaced. From time to time, inclement weather, storms, or lightning can cause damage to either the insulators or the conductors on OHLs. If conductors are damaged, short sections may have to be replaced.
- 2.9.2 During operation of the Proposed Development, it would be necessary to manage vegetation along the operational corridor to maintain required safety clearance distances.

## **2.10 Decommissioning the Proposed Development**

- 2.10.1 The Proposed Development would not have a fixed operational life. The effects associated with the construction phase can be considered to be representative of worst-case decommissioning effects, and therefore no separate assessment on decommissioning has been undertaken.

## 3. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 A study has been undertaken by the Applicant to consider reasonable design alternatives in terms of the preferred technology solution and proposed OHL alignment.

### 3.2 Preferred Connection Technology

3.2.1 The choice of connection technology is dictated by several project elements including but not limited to, the generation capacity of Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme, cost, access, engineering limitations, maintenance requirements, existing electrical infrastructure, and electricity supply continuity.

3.2.2 Due to the electricity generation capacity of the Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme, which requires to be transmitted to the National Electricity Transmission System, a 400 kV double circuit (Steel Lattice) connection is required. This technology would provide a high capacity, low loss transmission circuit and would integrate most efficiently with existing substation requirements.

3.2.3 Wood pole, steel pole and, new suite of transmission towers (NeSTS) have all been considered. However, these technology options are not designed to carry the 400 kV double circuit required. An underground cable connection has also been considered, but this option has been discounted as there would be significant technical and financial challenges associated with it.

### 3.3 Route and Alignment Selection Process

3.3.1 Guidelines for the routing of new high voltage OHLs have been established within the electricity supply industry. These guidelines are known as the 'Holford Rules' and have been widely used throughout the UK since the 1960s. The 'Holford Rules' set out a hierarchical approach to routing which advocates avoiding areas of high amenity value, minimise changes in direction, takes advantage of topography and minimises visual interaction with other transmission infrastructure.

3.3.2 The Applicant has developed its own routing guidance, based on the principles set out in the Holford Rules, but broadening the basis for routing decisions to reflect contemporary practice, and, to provide a framework to ensure environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the routing process. The approach to route and alignment selection has therefore been informed by the Applicant's routing guidance, which splits the routing stage of a project into four principal stages, as follows:

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

3.3.3 Each stage is an iterative process and involves an increasing level of detail and resolution, bringing cost, technical and environmental considerations together in a way which seeks to achieve the best balance at each stage.

### 3.4 Corridor Selection (Stage 1)

3.4.1 The Study Corridor for the entire Coire Glas Grid Connection Project was largely defined by a broad area centred on the start point of the grid connection (the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme), and end point (the existing Fort Augustus Substation), and the general direction the OHL connection would require to be routed between the two.

### 3.5 Route Selection (Stage 2)

3.5.1 The route selection stage of the project involved the identification of potential route options (each approximately 1 km wide) between the new Coire Glas Switching Station and the Fort Augustus Substation (via the new Loch Lundie Substation). Potential route options were identified following desk-based review and site walkovers, giving due consideration to the principles set out in the Holford Rules. An appraisal of the environmental, technical and economic constraints of these route options was then undertaken in line with the Applicant's routing guidance, prior to determining a preferred route option to take forward to Stage 3: Alignment Selection.

### 3.6 Alignment Selection (Stage 3)

3.6.1 The alignment selection stage of the project sought to determine an alignment within the preferred route selected during Stage 2. The following tasks were undertaken during the alignment selection stage to identify potential alignment options:

- Desk-based review and targeted site survey by project landscape architects, ecologists, ornithologists, archaeologists, geologists and hydrologists to review alignment options and provide advice on variations or micro-siting opportunities for positioning of towers and indicative construction access;
- Targeted Phase 1 / National Vegetation Classification (NVC) habitat surveys and protected species surveys to supplement existing data;
- Workshops with the Applicant and environmental consultants to discuss alignment options;
- Site visits by the Applicant's engineering team and environmental consultants to review alignment options; and
- Meetings with THC and other consultees (as required).

3.6.2 Once potential alignment options had been identified, the Applicant undertook a further appraisal of the environmental, technical and economic constraints of these alignments, before identifying the alignment that would be taken forward to the EIA Stage of the project as the Proposed Development.

3.6.3 The routing and alignment process is described in full in the Coire Glas Grid Connection Project: Consultation Document<sup>1</sup>. Consultation responses received during the route and alignment stage are documented in the Coire Glas Grid Connection Project: Report on Consultation<sup>2</sup>. Both of these documents are available on the Applicant's website.

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<sup>1</sup> Coire Glas Grid Connection Project: Consultation Report: (May 2022), produced by SSEN Transmission. Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/coire-glas-connection-project/> [Last Accessed 31/03/2023]

<sup>2</sup> Coire Glas Grid Connection Project: Report on Consultation: (April 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission. Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/coire-glas-connection-project/> [Last Accessed 31/03/2023]

## 4. EIA APPROACH, SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

### 4.1 EIA Approach

4.1.1 EIA is a process that considers how a proposed development is predicted to change existing environmental conditions and what the consequences of such changes will be. It therefore informs both the project design and the decision-making processes related to the grant of development consents or planning permission.

### 4.2 Pre-application Consultation

4.2.1 To introduce the Coire Glas Grid Connection Project, including the Proposed Development, a virtual pre-application meeting was held with statutory consultees, co-ordinated by The Highland Council (THC) on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021. The meeting was attended by representatives from NatureScot and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) This provided the Applicant with an opportunity to present the proposals and seek advice on the acceptability of the project, and likely requirements and expectations for a future application.

4.2.2 Following this meeting, A Pre-Application Advice Report was issued by THC on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021. The Advice Report provided a note of the meeting and feedback on the information requested to be included in the EIA by key stakeholders.

4.2.3 In May 2022, a combined Consultation Document was issued for the entire Coire Glas Grid Connection Project, to document the route and alignment selection stages of the Proposed Development and the site selection assessments for the proposed Coire Glas Switching Station and the proposed Loch Lundie Substation.

### 4.3 Consultation with the Local Community

4.3.1 A consultation event for the Coire Glas Grid Connection Project, including the Proposed Development, was held in May 2022 at the following times and locations:

Location	Date	Time
Glengarry Community Hall, Invergarry	4th May 2022	15.00 – 19.00
Fort Augustus Village Hall, Fort Augustus	5th May 2022	15.00 – 18.45
Virtual Exhibition	9th May 2022	17.00 – 19.00

4.3.2 Comments received from stakeholders in response to the Consultation Document<sup>1</sup>, or following public consultation events, were documented in the Report on Consultation<sup>2</sup>, published in April 2023. Further consultation events are planned to be undertaken in April 2023. These consultation events will be part of the pre-application consultation events that will be undertaken for the Loch Lundie Substation and Coire Glas Switching Station elements of the Coire Glas Grid Connection Project but will also include an update on the Proposed Development.

### 4.4 Scoping report

4.4.1 An EIA Scoping Report was issued to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government in February of 2023.

4.4.2 Due to committed timescales to deliver the connection, the EIA Report and Section 37 application has been submitted prior to a Scoping Opinion being received from the ECU. Where scoping responses from consultees have been received prior to finalisation of this EIA Report, such responses have been considered within the EIA Report and are referenced accordingly.

#### **4.5 Further Consultee Engagement**

4.5.1 Stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since the early stages of the project and has continued throughout the scoping and EIA process. During the route and alignment stages of the Proposed Development, stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the route, alignment and design solution options identified, and all responses received were summarised in the Report on Consultation **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

#### **4.6 Approach to Mitigation**

4.6.1 Mitigation measures are identified to prevent, reduce or remedy any potentially significant adverse environmental effects identified, beyond that already taken into account as normal good practice (for example the CEMP). Such measures would be implemented during detailed design, construction and / or operation of the Proposed Development. Each technical chapter of the EIA Report details the measures recommended to mitigate identified likely significant effects, and a summary of the recommended mitigation measures is the EIA report Schedule of Mitigation Measures.

4.6.2 Any remaining predicted effects after considering available mitigation measures are known as “residual effects”. This assessment considers the mitigation as specified in the EIA Report to identify the residual effects, based on the assumption that the identified mitigation is implemented. The residual predicted effects are discussed for each potential effect that has not been scoped out of the assessment and a significance level identified.

## 5. PLANNING AND ENERGY POLICY

### 5.1 Overview

5.1.1 In recent years the United Kingdom (UK) and Scottish Government policies have focused increasingly on concerns about climate change. Each tier of Government has developed targets, policies, and actions to achieve targets to deal with the climate crisis and generate more renewable energy and electricity.

5.1.2 The UK Government retains responsibility for the overall direction of energy policy, although some elements are devolved to the Scottish Government. The UK Government has published a series of policy documents setting out how targets can be achieved. Pumped Storage, Onshore wind generation, solar, and other renewable energy generation projects are identified as important technology to achieve these various targets. Supporting grid transmission infrastructure is essential to the transmission of renewable green energy throughout the UK.

### 5.2 Statutory Framework

5.2.1 The Proposed Development requires consent from the Scottish Ministers under s.37 of the 1989 Act. The Scottish Ministers will determine the application having regard to the statutory duties in the 1989 Act, where relevant, and any other relevant material considerations, one of which will be relevant aspects of the statutory Development Plan. In the case of THC, the statutory development plan is comprised of the National Planning Framework 4 (2023) (NPF4), The Local Development Plan and associated supplementary guidance.

### 5.3 National Planning Policy

5.3.1 National Planning Framework 4 (2023) (NPF4) is a long-term development strategy for Scotland. Part of the 'vision' is of Scotland as a low carbon place, where the opportunities arising from the ambition to be a world leader in low carbon energy generation have been seized. NPF4 is informed by, and aims to help achieve, the Scottish Government's climate change and renewable energy targets.

### 5.4 Local Development Plan

5.4.1 The Proposed Development lies wholly within The Highland Councils administrative area. The adopted statutory Local Development Plan comprises the Highland Wide Local Development Plan and associated guidance (HwLDP) adopted in 2012, and the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan and associated guidance (IMFLDP) adopted in 2015.

5.4.2 A Planning Statement accompanies the application and EIA Report that assesses and describes how the Proposed Development aligns with national and local planning policies.

## 6. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

### 6.1 Landscape and Visual

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken for the Proposed Development within a study area of 4 km. The LVIA considers the two separate subjects of landscape and visual amenity as follows:

- The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character, designated and protected landscapes.
- The visual assessment has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the visual amenity of those present within the landscape, including established views from residential areas and routes.

6.1.1 The LVIA also considers cumulative effects occurring as a result of the addition of the Proposed Development to other proposed electrical infrastructure developments within the study area. This includes the proposed associated developments comprising, Loch Lundie Substation and Coire Glas Switching Station, the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme, and other proposed energy and grid developments within 1.5 km of the study area which do not form a part of the wider Coire Glas project.

6.1.2 Mitigation measures including landform and vegetation restoration through best practice construction techniques are proposed to help minimise effects of the Proposed Development. The residual effects of the Proposed Development with proposed mitigation measures have been assessed after 10 years, allowing for the landscape and vegetation reinstatement to establish.

### 6.2 Landscape Effects

6.2.1 The assessment of potential landscape effects has considered Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified by NatureScot and designated and protected landscapes, including, Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). There would be no significant landscape effects to any of these areas as a result of the Proposed Development.

### 6.3 Visual Effects

6.3.1 The assessment of potential visual effects has considered views from visual receptors in buildings and on public roads and recreational routes. For the majority of receptors, there would be no significant visual effects; and for receptors in Auchterawe, including residents and users of the minor road, there would be beneficial long-term effects during operation, where the existing prominent OHL would be removed and the Proposed Development would be mostly hidden by existing forestry in the majority of views.

6.3.2 Although the majority of visual effects would not be significant, some long-term significant visual effects during the operation of Proposed Development were found for small number of receptors using one recreational route near Auchterawe on the Torr Dhuin Trail, where the Proposed Development would be noticeable alongside the route and would cross at two locations.

6.3.3 Further temporary significant visual effects during construction of the Proposed Development were identified for Auchterawe residents and users of the Auchterawe minor road, where the dismantling of existing steel lattice towers would be very noticeable nearby.

6.3.4 Significant temporary visual effects during construction would also be experienced by receptors on three recreational route groupings: Torr Dhuin Trail, River Oich Trail near Auchterawe; and paths around River Garry near Whitebridge. Parts of these recreational routes would be used for construction access, and construction of the Proposed Development would also be seen adjacent or would cross these routes.

#### **6.4 Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects**

- 6.4.1 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment have considered the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development when added to two cumulative baseline scenarios. Scenario 1 comprises other developments associated with the Proposed Development; while Scenario 2 comprises unrelated developments and developments in Scenario 1.
- 6.4.2 For both scenarios, there would be no significant cumulative landscape effects as a result of the Proposed Development. The majority of cumulative visual effects were assessed as being not significant. However, temporary significant cumulative visual effects have been identified for users of recreational routes around River Garry near Whitebridge, where construction work for the Proposed Development would cross the routes and would form a noticeable addition to existing minimal visual effects associated with construction of the Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme. However, this is not predicted to lead to a cumulative effect during operation, because there would be no long-term effect from any of the baseline cumulative developments.

## 7. TERRESTRIAL ECOLOGY

### 7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 An assessment has been undertaken of the potential impacts on nature conservation interests (non-avian) of the proposed 13 km new double circuit steel structure 400 kV OHL between the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme and the existing Fort Augustus Substation and Ancillary Development.
- 7.1.2 Desk and field surveys were undertaken for identified ecological receptors including sites designated for nature conservation interest, habitats and vegetation, and protected species according to best practice methodologies.

### 7.2 Designated Sites

- 7.2.1 Three designated sites are present within 5 km of the proposed development, Garry Falls (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), West Inverness Shire Lochs (SSSI, SPA) and South Laggan Fen (SSSI). The West Inverness Shire Lochs SSSI & SPA is designated for avian interests and is considered in Section 8: Ornithology. None of the other designated sites identified within the 5 km area will be affected by the Proposed Development. There are no non-statutory designated sites within 5 km of the Proposed Development that could be affected adversely.

### 7.3 Habitats

- 7.3.1 Habitats identified within the Study Area were those of Regional to Less than Local ecological sensitivity. Three irreplaceable habitats are present within the Study Area – blanket bog, ancient woodland and Caledonian Pinewood. Habitats considered to have high dependency on groundwater are present within the Study Area but would not be impacted by the Proposed Development. Predicted effects of the Proposed Development on Ancient Woodland and Caledonian Forests are considered to have a Moderate Adverse and Significant effect. Predicted effects on other habitats are considered Not Significant.

### 7.4 Protected Species

- 7.4.1 Signs of protected species including pine marten, otter, badger, red squirrel and bats were identified within the Study Area.

### 7.5 Cumulative Effects

- 7.5.1 Cumulative effects from other proposals within close to the Proposed Development have been considered and are not anticipated to result in any additional Significant effects on ecological receptors other than those already identified.

### 7.6 Dismantling Effects

- 7.6.1 Decommissioning and dismantling of the sections of redundant OHL will be undertaken upon completion of construction and will be subject to the same environmental mitigation measures for the construction of the new OHL. No additional effects are predicted because of the re-routing and dismantling of sections of the existing 132 kV OHLs associated with the Proposed Development.

### 7.7 Mitigation

- 7.7.1 Proposals for mitigation relevant to identified ecological receptors include the development and implementation of a site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will be used in conjunction with the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs). Furthermore, a suitably experienced Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to undertake pre-

construction surveys for protected species and oversee construction works to minimise any potential effects on nature conservation interests.

## 8. ORNITHOLOGY

### 8.1 Overview

8.1.1 The Proposed Development has the potential to affect bird species and populations present, therefore an assessment of the existing bird species and the predicted impact on them has been carried out to determine if any bird species will be affected adversely. Desk-based studies and different types of field surveys were undertaken between 2021 and 2022, along the Proposed Development route, a survey buffer area was established to ascertain existing baseline conditions.

8.1.2 As a result of the desk studies and field surveys, it was possible to scope out several species from further assessment, including birds of high Nature Conservation Importance due to low levels of activity, distance from the Proposed Development and the nature and location of noted activity.

### 8.2 Notable Bird Species

8.2.1 Four species were included in this assessment; Black-throated Diver, Common Scoter, Black Grouse and Crossbill. These species are considered to be of high Nature Conservation Importance due to their listing as Annex 1 species (Birds Directive) and Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or as qualifying features of the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA.

### 8.3 Potential Effects

8.3.1 An assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on ornithology has been undertaken to consider the ways in which birds could be affected by the construction, operation and dismantling phases of the Proposed Development (including the rerouting and dismantling of the existing 132 kV OHLs).

8.3.2 Habitat loss arising from the construction of the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant adverse effects upon any bird species. Displacement and disturbance impacts, as well as collision risk impacts are also likely to be negligible.

8.3.3 In order for the competent authority to assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the integrity of the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA, information in the form of a shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken. The information provided (in Volume 4, **Technical Appendix 9.2** of the main EIA Report demonstrates that the Proposed Development would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of this SPA.

### 8.4 Cumulative Effects

8.4.1 As the Proposed Development, in isolation, would have no adverse effect on the regional populations of bird species, cumulative effects of the Proposed Development with existing and planned developments in the area are considered to be unlikely to have a significant effect on existing bird populations.

### 8.5 Mitigation

8.5.1 Mitigation in the form of bird flight diverters in sensitive areas and species-specific protection plans detailing working methods and disturbance buffers are proposed.

### 8.6 Conclusion

8.6.1 There is a high degree of confidence that the Proposed Development would not result in a significant effect on ornithology.

## 9. GEOLOGY, SOILS AND WATER

### 9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 An assessment has been undertaken of the potential effects on geology, soils and water during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development within a 500 m buffer area. The assessment has also considered the potential effects of dismantling and rerouting of existing Overhead Lines on geology, soils and water.
- 9.1.2 Pollution risk, erosion and sedimentation, flood risk, linkage between surface and groundwater, impact to peat, impact to groundwater habitats and cumulative impacts were all assessed in detail using desk-based studies and field based surveys. Two designated sites were identified in the study area, Western Inverness-shire Lochs SSSI and SPA and Garry Falls SSSI.
- 9.1.3 Information for the study area was compiled using baseline information from a desk study and which was verified by an extensive programme of field work. The field work included investigation of private and public water supply sources in order to determine those which might be hydrologically connected to and at risk from the Proposed Development. Measures required to protect these sources have been confirmed.
- 9.1.4 The assessment was undertaken considering the sensitivity of receptors identified during the baseline study and considering mitigation measures incorporated in the development design. It has also considered potential future changes to baseline conditions. The scope of the assessment was informed by pre-application advice and scoping responses provided by THC as well as from consultation responses received during the route and alignment stage of the project.
- 9.1.5 The assessment is supported by Appendices that consider potential effects on peat, peat stability and private water supplies (see Volume 4, Technical Appendices 10.1-10.4 of the main EIA Report). A schedule of proposed permanent watercourse crossings associated with the development is also provided (see Volume 4, Technical Appendix 10.4 of the main EIA Report). The assessment also considers the potential effects on public water supply sources and on habitat which could be sustained by groundwater (Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)).

### 9.2 Potential Effects

- 9.2.1 Subject to adoption of best practice construction techniques and a site-specific (CEMP), no significant adverse effects on the water environment have been identified. The CEMP includes provision for drainage management plans which will be agreed with statutory consultees, including SEPA and which will be used to safeguard water resources and manage flood risk. A commitment to deploy Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in these plans has been made. The CEMP also includes provision of a Pollution Prevention Plan which would also be agreed with statutory consultees including SEPA prior to any construction or dismantling works being undertaken.
- 9.2.2 The design of the Proposed Development has been informed by a detailed programme of peat depth probing as and required by NPF4 and it has been shown that wherever possible areas of deep peat have been avoided. The assessment of peat and carbon rich soils has considered all of the proposed infrastructure, including temporary and permanent access tracks. A project specific peat management plan has been prepared (see Volume 4, Technical Appendix 10.1 of the main EIA Report), which confirms the soils disturbed by the development are limited in volume and that these soils can be readily and beneficially reused in restoration works.
- 9.2.3 A programme of baseline and construction phase water quality monitoring is proposed which would be used to confirm that the Proposed Development does not have a significant effect on the water environment. The

monitoring programme would also be used to ensure private water supplies, Drinking Water Protected Areas and Scottish Water supply sources are safeguarded. It is proposed that the monitoring programme is agreed with statutory consultees.

### **9.3 Mitigation**

- 9.3.1 The assessment concludes that with the implementation of best practice construction techniques and a site-specific CEMP, no likely significant effects are predicted on geology, soils and the water environment as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development and no additional mitigation measures are proposed.

## 10. CULTURAL HERITAGE

### 10.1 Overview

10.1.1 A desk-based assessment and walkover field survey has been carried out to assess the effects on archaeology and cultural heritage interests associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. The assessment has been informed by comments and information supplied by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and THC.

### 10.2 Non-designated sites

10.2.1 A total of six non-designated heritage assets have been identified within the Proposed Development LODs. The majority of these are associated with post-medieval settlement and agricultural activities, although a quern stone findspot relating to prehistoric occupation is recorded to the south of Auchterawe.

10.2.2 There is potential for construction works within the Proposed Development to result in direct effects on three heritage assets. In addition, three additional elements of these assets lie within the micrositing allowance and could be affected by micrositing of the towers or access track routes.

10.2.3 In the absence of mitigation, one of these impacts (on a group of clearance cairns (5b)) is assessed as being potentially of moderate significance (*significant* in EIA terms).

10.2.4 There is also a recognised potential for construction works to affect hitherto unknown, buried archaeological remains. Although the likelihood of such impacts is low, the effects on any of archaeological importance could be of moderate significance (*significant* in EIA terms). The other impacts are assessed as being *not significant*.

10.2.5 Mitigation measures have been set out that would avoid, reduce or offset the predicted effects, and residual construction effects of no more than minor significance (*not significant* in EIA terms) are predicted.

### 10.3 Designated sites

10.3.1 Nine Scheduled Monuments, three Category A Listed Buildings, ten Category B Listed Buildings, eleven Category C Listed Buildings and one Conservation Area have been identified within the 4 km Outer Study Area, from which there is some degree of theoretical visibility of one or more elements of the Proposed Development.

10.3.2 The assessment has resulted in the identification of a moderate significant effect (*significant* in EIA terms) on the setting of one Scheduled Monument (Torr Dhuin Fort), although that effect would not significantly adversely affect the integrity of its setting.

### 10.4 Cumulative Effects

10.4.1 With the exception of the moderate significance residual effect on the setting of Torr Dhuin fort (SM 794), the residual cumulative effects of the Proposed Development, in combination with other cumulative developments in the vicinity, are considered to be *not significant*.

## 11. TRANSPORT

### 11.1 Overview

11.1.1 A review of the transport and access issues associated with the Proposed Development has been undertaken. The Proposed Development would lead to a temporary increase in traffic volumes on the road network within the study area during the construction phase.

The study area for the transport and access analysis included:

- A82 between Invermoriston and Spean Bridge;
- U1663 between Fort Augustus and the Fort Augustus Substation, Auchterawe; and
- The A87 between Invergarry and Bunloinn.

11.1.2 A number of desk studies and field surveys were completed to assess the relevant transport policies, accident data, sensitive locations and receptors and potential travel routes to be taken by construction staff and materials required to complete the construction of the Proposed Development.

### 11.2 Assessment methodology and Impact

11.2.1 An assessment of average daily development trips is considered an appropriate method of assessing the impact of the Proposed Development, as this will account for phases of the construction programme that have varying intensities of traffic associated with them. The construction traffic would result in a temporary increase in traffic flows on the road network surrounding the Proposed Development.

11.2.2 No link capacity issues are expected on any of the roads assessed due to the additional movements associated with the Proposed Development. The effects of construction traffic are temporary in nature and are transitory.

11.2.1 No impacts are anticipated during the operational phase as the Proposed Development would not generate any new traffic, apart from during infrequent maintenance activities.

### 11.3 Mitigation

11.3.1 A series of mitigation measures and management plans have been proposed to help mitigate and offset the impacts of the traffic flows from both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. No lasting significant effects are anticipated.

## 12. NOISE

### 12.1 Overview

- 12.1.1 A noise impact assessment has been carried out to predict the likely significant effects of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. The decommissioning and diversion of two existing overhead lines has also been assessed.
- 12.1.2 Short-term attended noise measurements were conducted at nearby noise sensitive receptors relating to the Proposed Development to obtain background noise levels in the vicinity of the site. This is the baseline noise level used for the purpose of the operational noise impact assessment.

### 12.2 Construction Noise

- 12.2.1 To ensure the construction noise remains below the limit during working hours, a construction noise management plan should be implemented. The construction noise of the Proposed Development is predicted to have a Minor impact on nearby noise sensitive receptors (NSRs).
- 12.2.2 The construction noise of the diversions of both the 132 kV Invergarry Tee OHL and the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL were predicted to have a Minor (not significant) impact at NSRs. The construction noise of the dismantling of the 132 kV Invergarry Tee OHL was also predicted to have a Minor (not significant) impact on NSRs.
- 12.2.3 The construction noise of the dismantling of part of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL was predicted to have a Major (significant) impact on six of the fourteen NSRs. This was also the case for the tree felling of the 400 kV OHL at all fourteen NSRs. These consider the limit to be 55 decibels (dB), which includes working on evenings and weekends.

### 12.3 Operational Noise

- 12.3.1 The operational noise of the Proposed Development was assessed to TGN(E)322 standard. The outcome of this assessment predicted the OHL to have Minor impacts on nearby NSRs during wet and dry conditions. The operational noise of the new 132 kV Invergarry Tee and Fort Augustus to Fort William OHLs is predicted to be Negligible.

### 12.4 Mitigation

- 12.4.1 The identified mitigation requirement at this stage is to carry out the dismantling of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL during defined daytime hours. Daytime is defined to be 07:00 – 19:00 on weekdays and 07:00 – 13:00 on Saturdays.

### 12.5 Conclusions

- 12.5.1 The assessment concludes that nearby NSRs will not be impacted by noise from the Proposed Development in construction and operation of the site, with the exception of the dismantling of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL and tree felling associated with the 400 kV OHL. Avoiding dismantling work and felling during the weekends and evenings in the vicinity of NSRs will ensure this phase meets the 55 dB limit and ensures all effects are not significant.

## 13. FORESTRY

### 13.1 Overview

- 13.1.1 An assessment has been completed to assess the likely significant effects from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas. The assessment has been undertaken in line with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) guidance.
- 13.1.2 The Applicant has produced a series of Woodland Reports (see Volume 4, Technical Appendix 14.1 of the main EIA Report) to indicate the areas of forestry or woodland that would be intersected by the Proposed Development. The Woodland Reports set out details of the current baseline in terms of describing the woodland type (species, condition, current management), with reference to incorporation of the Proposed Development within ongoing forest management activities.

### 13.2 Impact on Woodland

- 13.2.1 The Proposed Development is predicted to result in the direct loss of 58.18 hectares (ha) of commercial woodland, of which 17.28 ha of Upland Planted Ancient Woodland (PAWS) and 1.75 ha are classed as 2a within the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). A further 7.64 ha of ancient and semi-natural woodland would also be lost, of which 3.23 ha are classed as 2a within AWI, 0.86 ha as PAWS and 3.55 ha of semi-natural woodland due to the requirement to create an Operational Corridor (OC) for the construction and safe operation of the proposed OHLs (including the rerouted sections of the 132 kV Invergarry Tee and Fort Augustus to Fort William OHLs) and the creation of access tracks.
- 13.2.2 The assessment concluded that the removal of 3.23 ha of ancient woodland and 3.55 ha of semi-natural woodland, would result in a significant adverse effect on both woodland types, despite potential opportunities to reduce the amount of felling, subject to further detailed design. No significant effects were predicted for the removal of commercial or PAWS woodland.

13.2.3 No significant effects on forest operations access were identified.

### 13.3 Compensatory Planting

- 13.3.1 Given that the Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of woodland, the Applicant is committed to plant, off-site, the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's objective of no net loss of woodland.
- 13.3.2 Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the creation of the OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to potential increased risk of wind damage. The Woodland Reports identify further areas of felling to leave an edge able to withstand strong winds (categorised as an indirect secondary impact).
- 13.3.3 It is the intention of the Applicant to encourage the landowners to follow this good practice in terms of redesign of their current Long-Term Forest Plans which in turn would aim to follow UKFS for the implementation of the works required.

### 13.4 Mitigation and Summary

- 13.4.1 The assessment identified the potential for significant effects (pre-mitigation) on forest management, due to the requirement for forest managers to amend current objectives, plans and techniques for their forest, in particular, to incorporate the felling requirements for the OC into their long-term felling and landscape design plans. With the commitment to develop the 'Woodland Reports' for each of the forests and woodlands affected by the

Proposed Development, this is deemed sufficient to reduce the residual effect on forest management to not significant.

## 14. SOCIO-ECONOMICS, RECREATION AND TOURISM

### 14.1 Overview

- 14.1.1 An assessment has been completed to consider the predicted effects on socio-economic activity, and recreation and tourism activity during construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 14.1.2 As a significant investment (approximately £47 million) in a key economic sector, the Proposed Development supports both pillars of the national economic strategy and each of the broad priority areas set out in the strategy. It would provide contract and employment opportunities for Scottish and Highland based businesses throughout the construction and operational phases.
- 14.1.3 The capital investment would enable long-term security of supply and increasing capacity for renewable electricity generation for the region, and the UK as a whole.

### 14.2 Construction

- 14.2.1 There would be direct construction employment benefits as part of the investment plans. The equivalent to 63.8 years of full-time employment would be generated as a result of the construction programme. Considering the origin of these jobs, displacement and multiplier effects, the construction works alone would generate the equivalent of 16.8 years in the Highlands and 43.2 years of full-time employment at a Scottish level. This equates to a gross valued added (GVA) impact of £1.19 million to the Highlands and £2.75 million at a Scottish level over the construction period.

### 14.3 Operation

- 14.3.1 The Proposed Development is expected to generate 1.3 operational jobs per annum in the Highlands and 1.6 across Scotland per annum. This equates to a GVA impact of £48,000 to the Highlands and £92,000 across Scotland per annum.
- 14.3.2 The predicted residual socio-economic effect in relation to construction activities are deemed to be of Minor beneficial and not significant. The predicted residual socio-economic effect in relation to operational activities are deemed to be of Minor beneficial and not significant.
- 14.3.3 The review of the recreational and tourism asset base includes a review of the notable visitor attractions across the Highlands and locally. None of these are located close to the Proposed Development. Similarly, the review of core paths, rights of ways and hill tracks / mountain routes in the area has shown that these are largely unaffected by the Proposed Development.
- 14.3.4 The predicted residual recreational and tourism effect in relation to construction and rerouting of the existing OHLs and operation and maintenance activities are deemed to be Negligible and not significant. The predicted residual recreational and tourism effect in relation to operational activities are deemed to be Negligible and not significant.
- 14.3.5 The Applicant has committed to maximise the economic opportunities for the local area and business and communities in the Highland Council area, where possible and is committed to using local supply chain where feasible and their principal contractors are also encouraged to do the same.
- 14.3.6 The Applicant has a raft of corporate communications which can be reviewed on their corporate website as to the contribution it makes to the Scottish economy, its sustainability ethos and track record of developing and delivering on community investment.

## 15. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 15.1 Summary

15.1.1 The Applicant seeks planning permission under s.37 of the 1989 Act to construct and operate 13 km of new double circuit steel structure 400 kV OHL.

15.1.2 The need for the Proposed Development is driven in by the development of the CGPSS which requires a suitable electrical connection to deliver electricity to the National Grid electricity network. The Proposed Development would in turn support the UK and Scottish Government national energy policy targets for Net Zero.

15.1.3 Consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees was carried out throughout the EIA and Scoping process, in addition to several in person and online virtual consultation events, to invite comment on the Proposed Development itself and specific areas of environmental assessment to incorporate into the EIA.

15.1.4 The EIA incorporates assessment of the Proposed Development's likely significant effects on the following environmental aspects:

- Landscape and Visual impact;
- Terrestrial Ecology;
- Ornithology;
- Geology, Soils and Water;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Transport;
- Noise;
- Forestry; and
- Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism

### 15.2 Conclusion

15.2.1 Subject to implementation of the Applicant's good practice and working control measures, as well as the identified site-specific mitigation measures outlined in each technical chapter of the EIA Report, it is considered that the Proposed Development would not give rise to long-term significant effects, with the exception of the following:

- Although the majority of visual effects would not be significant, some long-term significant visual effects during the operation of Proposed Development were found for a small number of receptors using one recreational route near Auchterawe on the Torr Dhuin Trail, where the Proposed Development would be noticeable alongside the route and would cross in two locations;
- The ecology assessment concludes that predicted effects of the Proposed Development on Ancient Woodland and Caledonian Forests are considered to have a Moderate Adverse and Significant effect. Where possible, the felling wayleave for the operational corridor for the OHL and new access tracks would be reduced through sections of semi-natural woodland and Caledonian Forest Annex I habitat to minimise habitat. In addition, prior to construction, large veteran Scots pine trees will be surveyed within the LOD and where possible the OHL would be microsited to avoid these trees. However, Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat and any loss would be permanent;
- The cultural heritage assessment concludes that a significant adverse Moderate effect is predicted on the setting of the Torr Dhuin Fort Scheduled Monument (SM 794). However, it would remain possible for any visitor to the fort to understand and appreciate its character and its dramatic setting. As such

the integrity of the setting of the monument and its capacity to inform and convey its cultural significance, would be unhindered; and

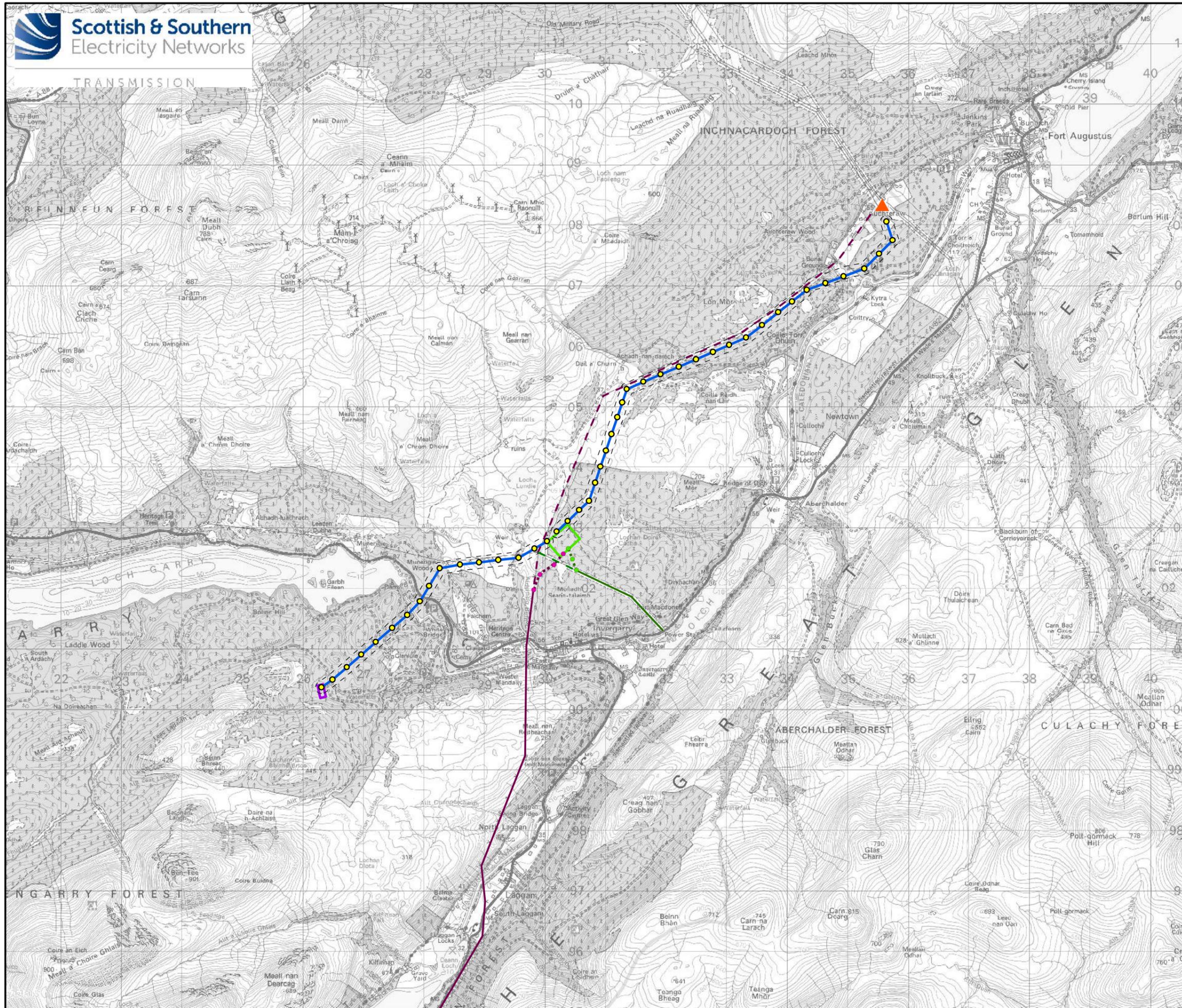
- The forestry and woodland assessment concludes that the removal of 3.23 ha of ancient woodland and 3.55 ha of semi-natural woodland, would result in a significant adverse effect on both woodland types, despite potential opportunities to reduce the amount of felling, subject to further detailed design. Given that the Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of woodland, the Applicant is committed to making arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's CoWRP objective of no net loss of woodland.

15.2.2 In addition to long-term effects, the following short-term / temporary significant effects have been identified:

- Temporary significant visual effects during construction of the Proposed Development were identified for Auchterawe residents and users of the Auchterawe minor road, where the dismantling of existing steel lattice towers would be very noticeable nearby;
- Significant temporary visual effects during construction would also be experienced by receptors on three recreational route groupings: Torr Dhuin Trail, River Oich Trail near Auchterawe; and paths around River Garry near Whitebridge. Parts of these recreational routes would be used for construction access, and construction of the Proposed Development would also be seen adjacent or would cross these routes;
- Temporary significant cumulative visual effects have been identified for users of recreational routes around River Garry near Whitebridge, where construction work for the Proposed Development would cross the routes and would form a noticeable addition to existing minimal visual effects associated with construction of the CGPSS. However, this is not predicted to lead to a cumulative effect during operation, because there would be no long-term effect from any of the baseline cumulative developments; and
- the noise assessment identified that the construction noise of the dismantling of part of the 132 kV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL was predicted to have a Major impact on six of the fourteen NSRs identified. This would also be the case for the tree felling associated with the construction of the 400 kV OHL at all fourteen NSRs. However, avoiding dismantling work and felling during the weekends and evenings in the vicinity of the impacted NSRs will ensure this phase meets the 55 dB limit and would ensure that all effects are not significant.

15.2.3 In order for the competent authority to assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the integrity of the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA, information in the form of a shadow HRA has been undertaken. The information provided demonstrates that the Proposed Development would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of this SPA. No significant effect on any other designated sites are anticipated.

## FIGURES



**Legend**

- Proposed OHL Alignment
- Proposed Steel Lattice Tower
- Proposed Coire Glas Switching Station Platform\*
- Proposed Loch Lundie Substation Platform\*
- ▲ Fort Augustus Substation

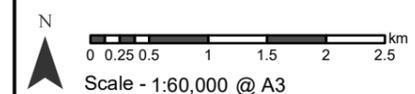
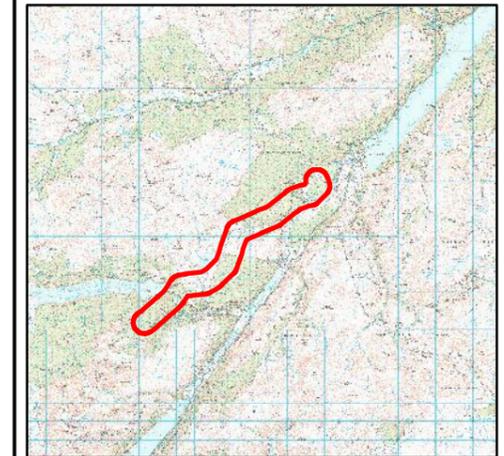
**Existing 132 KV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL (Steel Lattice Towers)**

- new permanent Steel Lattice Tower location
- to be retained
- - - to be diverted into the proposed Loch Lundie Substation
- - - to be dismantled

**Existing 132 KV Invergarry Tee OHL (Steel Lattice Towers)**

- new permanent Trident Steel Pole location
- to be retained
- - - to be diverted into the proposed Loch Lundie Substation
- - - to be dismantled

\*Associated works subject to separate consent under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Footprints show indicative locations only.



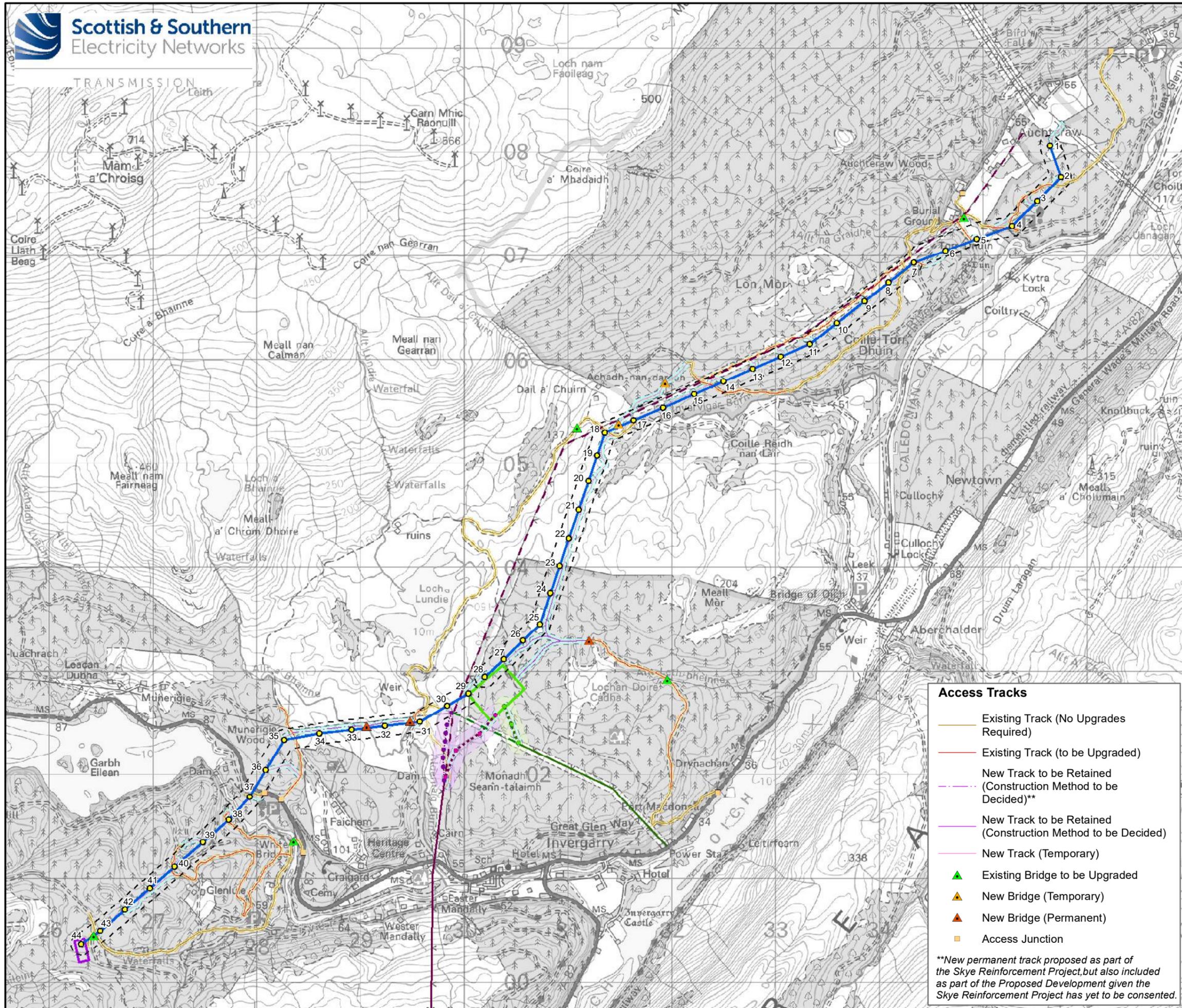
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Project: Coire Glas Grid Connection Project – 400 kV OHL EIA Report

Title: Figure 1 - Location Plan

Drawn by: KM Date: 04/04/2023

Drawing: 121012-NTS-D1-0-1.0



**Legend**

- Proposed OHL Alignment (Steel Lattice Towers)
- Proposed Steel Lattice Tower
- Proposed Coire Glas Switching Station Platform\*
- Proposed Loch Lundie Substation Platform\*

**Limits of Deviation (LOD)**

- OHL Alignment LOD
- Existing Access Track LOD
- New Access Track LOD
- Invergarry Tee OHL Diversion LOD
- Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL Diversion LOD

**Existing 132 KV Fort Augustus to Fort William OHL (Steel Lattice Towers)**

- temporary Trident Wood Pole locations
- temporary OHL diversion
- new permanent Steel Lattice Tower location
- to be retained
- to be diverted into the proposed Loch Lundie Substation
- to be dismantled

**Existing 132 KV Invergarry Tee OHL (Steel Lattice Towers)**

- new permanent Trident Steel Pole location
- to be retained
- to be diverted into the proposed Loch Lundie Substation
- to be dismantled

**Access Tracks**

- Existing Track (No Upgrades Required)
- Existing Track (to be Upgraded)
- New Track to be Retained (Construction Method to be Decided)\*\*
- New Track to be Retained (Construction Method to be Decided)
- New Track (Temporary)
- Existing Bridge to be Upgraded
- New Bridge (Temporary)
- New Bridge (Permanent)
- Access Junction

**\*\*New permanent track proposed as part of the Skye Reinforcement Project, but also included as part of the Proposed Development given the Skye Reinforcement Project has yet to be consented.**

\*Associated works subject to separate consent under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Footprints show indicative locations only.

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Scale - 1:35,000 @ A3

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Project: Coire Glas Grid Connection Project – 400 kV OHL EIA Report

Title: Figure 2 - The Proposed Development (Overview)

Drawn by: KM Date: 04/04/2023

Drawing: 121012-NTS-D2-0.1.0