



Stakeholder Engagement and Next Steps

As we prepare to submit a new Section 37 application, we have been engaging with statutory bodies, the public, and landowners on the previously consented design and reviewing feedback to finalise our updated proposal.

The feedback period

We will accept feedback from now until **Friday 31 October 2025**.

This is the final pre-application consultation (PAC) event for the project, the purpose being to share the feedback we have received and our responses. We are very grateful for the time taken to share your views with us, both in person and online.

Environmental assessments will continue as we move toward submission of our application in 2026.

Comments made to us throughout the consultation process do not constitute representation to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). Once the Section 37 application has been submitted, there will be a formal opportunity for representations via the ECU online portal, as well as by email and post.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Community Liaison Manager who works closely with community members to make sure they are well informed of our proposals and that views, concerns, questions or suggestions are put to the project team.



Community Liaison Manager

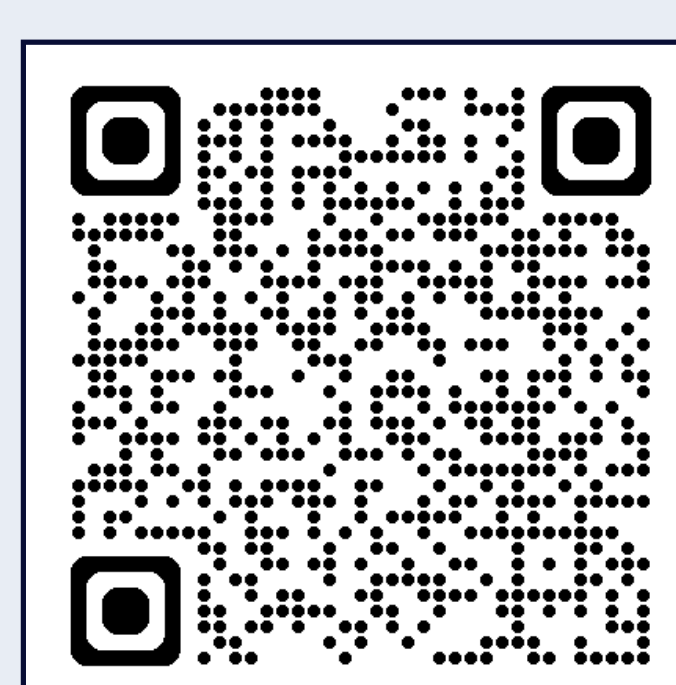
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Additional information:



The best way to keep up to date is to sign up to project updates via the project webpage:

ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/gills-bay-radial/

You can also follow us on social media:

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What you told us at the public consultation event in September 2025

A consultation event was held at Mey Village Hall on Thursday 4 September, attended by 49 people. An online feedback option was also available, and the consultation period closed on Friday 26 September.

A summary of feedback received and our responses are below.

Feedback	Response
Why is the Gills Bay to Thurso South Radial Connection needed?	<p>This project is required to connect clean, renewable energy from wind, tidal, and solar projects into the wider transmission network. Proposed renewable energy projects will connect into the proposed Gills Bay Switching Station, which requires this connection to the existing Thurso South Substation for power to flow into the national grid. This will strengthen grid stability in the far north of Scotland and is a vital step in supporting net zero and energy security targets. It will also bring opportunities for local jobs, skills, supply chain contracts, and wider community benefits.</p>
Why is there a lot of development in the north of Scotland?	<p>We manage the high-voltage transmission network in the north of Scotland. While we don't decide where energy is generated or used, we have a legal duty to provide generators with access to our network so electricity can be transported across Great Britain. The north of Scotland is rich in renewable resources making it vital for Scotland's and the UK's climate targets. Covering a quarter of the UK's landmass, our region will play a crucial role in the transition to a low-carbon future.</p>
Why can't all the infrastructure be undergrounded?	<p>Underground cables (UGCs) are used where justified but installing them for the entire project has major challenges. Our licence requires us to deliver projects that are both efficient and economical for consumers - UGCs are far more expensive than overhead lines and these costs are passed on to bill payers. Installing UGCs can cause increased impacts on habitats, soils, and watercourses when compared to OHLs. If a fault occurs, this often requires extensive works, specialist resource, tools, and equipment to locate, followed by significant civil work to expose the damage, replace the damaged section, and then up to a month to carry out the repairs, posing risks to supply and reliability.</p>
Why can't all infrastructure be placed offshore?	<p>Offshore cables are vital for Scotland's electricity network, but not everything can be built at sea. Onshore infrastructure is required to ensure renewable power reliably reaches homes and businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infrastructure must still be on land to manage and distribute electricity• Offshore construction is more complex and costly for bill payers• Subsea cables can impact marine habitats, fishing grounds, and shipping routes <p>The existing Thurso South Substation has been identified as the most efficient and economic point on the network for the proposed renewable energy projects to connect into.</p>

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How are landscape and visual impacts being considered?	<p>We carefully consider how the project may affect local scenery and communities. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is carried out as part of the EIA, which looks at views from towns, villages, walking routes, and tourist sites, and seeks to reduce potential visual impacts where possible. Once the Section 37 application is submitted, visualisations will be available to view on the ECU portal.</p> <p>The proposed design reflects key landscape and visual concerns that were raised during the previous consenting process and we have retained the UGC sections required as mitigation.</p>
How is the environment being considered?	<p>We prioritise environmental protection in all our projects, following strict policies and regulations. Our approach uses the avoid, minimise, mitigate, and restore hierarchy to safeguard protected areas and wildlife. We are currently updating the EIA to submit alongside the Section 37 application, which includes updated surveys such as ornithology. The previously consented design has 10km of UGC in two sections to mitigate impacts on ornithology and visual amenity.</p> <p>We are leading the way on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), committing to deliver at least 10% more biodiversity on all projects gaining consent.</p>
How is ornithology being considered?	<p>We recognise the diversity of wildlife in these areas. Bird surveys, including seasonal surveys to monitor and record breeding activity along with flight activity, were recently concluded. The Vantage Point surveys recorded the number, heights and direction of bird flights, which are then modelled and assessed against the proposed tower and line heights to assess the likelihood of bird collision. The EIA will include assessment of the potential impact on ornithology and identify mitigation as required.</p>
How will archaeology be assessed?	<p>We carefully consider environmental, cultural, and built heritage when planning projects. Using national records, local authority data, and detailed site surveys, we assess potential impacts on archaeological sites, listed buildings, and other heritage assets. The EIA Report will detail these findings and recommend ways to mitigate any potential adverse effects.</p>
What can community feedback influence?	<p>We value feedback from all stakeholders and use it to help shape our projects. While community feedback is not our only consideration, we wish to develop all projects sensitively and to reduce impacts as much as possible. Community feedback provides an essential insight into local issues that helps to refine the design. The current design has been informed by consultation undertaken during the previous consenting process.</p>
Will there be any benefit to the community?	<p>The project will contribute to wider investment in Caithness, supporting jobs, skills development, supply chain opportunities, and local spending. We are also keen to work closely with local communities to understand what opportunities there may be to leave a local legacy.</p> <p>All new transmission projects must also provide a Community Benefit Fund, which will bring positive benefits and a long-lasting legacy to communities across the north of Scotland. More information can be found here: www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/information-centre/community-benefit-fund</p>



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Is there a health risk associated with overhead lines?	We design, build and operate all our infrastructure in line with strict health and safety laws and guidance from the UK and Scottish Governments, the Health and Safety Executive, and Ofgem. For electromagnetic fields (EMFs), we follow UK Government guidance, which is based on international research and includes precautionary measures. Decades of studies have found no established health effects below the safe exposure limits, and our designs ensure these limits are never exceeded, even when operating at full capacity.
Where will the tower locations be and what is the limit of deviation (LOD)?	<p>We have included a map of the indicative tower locations; however, exact locations won't be finalised until the Section 37 application is submitted. There may be some element of micrositing depending on environmental, technical, land, and community constraints. Once the Section 37 application has been submitted, you will be able to view all documentation on the ECU portal and there will be a formal opportunity for representations.</p> <p>When we apply for consent, we include an LoD which will be refined down from the currently shown indicative LoD to approximately 100m, to take account of sensitive receptors. This is a defined area or "corridor" within which the final infrastructure can be built.</p>
What is the proposed construction access strategy?	<p>An assessment of construction related traffic and associated impacts will be undertaken as part of the EIA. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and will set out how we will safely manage traffic during construction, to minimise disruption, protect communities, and keep roads safe.</p> <p>Existing access tracks will be utilised and upgraded where feasible and temporary access tracks will be installed where required. Permanent access will be required to cable sealing end compounds. Short sections of permanent access may also be required for the OHL.</p>
Will the proposed development impact my property valuation?	<p>We will look to mitigate impacts on residential properties as far as possible and these impacts will be assessed as part of the EIA Report that will accompany our application for consent.</p> <p>Concerns in relation to impacts on property are being noted by our team, however, as a regulated business, we are obliged to follow a statutory legal framework under the Electricity Act 1989 and Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1963. If you are entitled to compensation under the legal framework we will assess any claim on a case-by-case basis under the direction of this legal framework. If this is the case, we will recommend that you engage a professional adviser and we generally meet reasonably incurred professional fees in these circumstances. However, for the avoidance of doubt, we should advise that we will not meet fees incurred in objecting to our proposed developments.</p>
Does the proposed development affect my human rights?	We do not consider that the proposals we are consulting on are in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) provisions. Our proposals are in pursuance of legitimate requirements to ensure energy security and are in accordance with our licence provisions, supported by the consultation which is being carried out with all affected stakeholders. The application for consent for the proposed new connection, which will be accompanied by an EIA Report, will be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for determination and will be subject to necessary scrutiny and consultation as part of that process.



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