

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 11: FORESTRY

11.	FORESTRY	11-1
11.1	Executive Summary	11-1
11.2	Introduction	11-1
11.3	Scope of Appraisal	11-2
11.4	Consultation	11-2
11.5	Legislation, Policy and Guidance	11-4
11.6	Methodology	11-5
11.7	Baseline Conditions	11-7
11.8	Embedded Mitigation Measures	11-8
11.9	Assessment of Likely Significant Effects	11-8
11.10	Cumulative Effects	11-10
11.11	Mitigation	11-11
11.12	Residual Effects	11-12
11.13	Summary	11-12

Figures (Volume 2 of this EIA Report)

Figure 11.1a-d: Forestry Felling

Appendices (Volume 4 of this EIA Report)

Appendix 11.1: Overhead Line (OHL) Woodland Report Property: FGS 20FGS48003

Appendix 11.2: Overhead Line (OHL) Woodland Report Property: FGS 23FGS70293

Appendix 11.3: Overhead Line (OHL) Woodland Report Property: National Forest Estate, Mearns.

Appendix 11.4: Compensatory Planting Management Strategy

11. FORESTRY

11.1 Executive Summary

- 11.1.1 This Chapter considers the potential for significant effects on the forest resource, forest management and access during construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 11.1.2 The Proposed Development is predicted to result in the loss of 49.63 hectares (ha) of woodland, consisting mainly of conifer plantation and small areas of planted broadleaved woodland, due to the requirement to create an Operational Corridor (OC) for the construction and safe operation of the proposed overhead line (OHL). No felling is required for creation of access tracks.
- 11.1.3 It is anticipated that there would be a requirement for a further 60.11 ha of management felling of commercial conifer forest within the National Forest Estate (NFE) managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) to mitigate the risk of windblow. This management felling would be undertaken only with the landowner's consent and would require replanting. Felling permission for the areas of management felling would be granted by Scottish Forestry. This felling permission would, as a standard condition of consent, secure the landowner's commitment to appropriately restock those felled areas.
- 11.1.4 There are three separate woodland properties that lie within the OHL Limit of Deviation (LoD); two woodland creation schemes supported through Forestry Grant Schemes (FGS), and the mature, first and second rotation, Mearns Forest, which is managed by FLS as part of the NFE, and comprises Fetteresso Forest and Drumtochty Forest.
- 11.1.5 Mitigation through design seeks to avoid tree felling where practicable and utilising current unplanted ground where possible. An area listed in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as Long-established (of plantation origin) (LEPO) 1860 is present to the north of Corsebauld and West Bogton. The current species are Sitka spruce with some planted broadleaved trees. Some felling is proposed within this area.
- 11.1.6 No significant effects were identified from the direct loss of woodland. The effects of woodland removal, in forestry terms, were assessed as not significant, on the basis of the relatively low magnitude of change in the context of the regional resource, and the low to medium sensitivity of the types of woodland present in the study area.
- 11.1.7 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 Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP) objective of no net loss of woodland. The development of compensatory planting scheme agreements will be progressed with landowners.

11.2 Introduction

- 11.2.1 This Chapter assesses the potential effects of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas within Mearns Forest and two adjoining woodland creation schemes. The relevant area is shown on **Figures 11.1 a-d: Forestry Felling**.
- 11.2.2 The assessment has been prepared by Neil McKay MICFor, Director of Neil McKay Forestry Consultant Limited, a professional member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) since 1994. A table presenting relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Appendix 5.1: EIA Team** of this EIA Report.

11.3 Scope of Appraisal

- 11.3.1 This Chapter considers the likely impacts of the Proposed Development on forestry and woodland. This includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the forest areas located along the route of the Proposed Development and an assessment of the likely impact that would arise from the Proposed Development, with particular emphasis on forest structure and management.
- 11.3.2 The assessment is based on the description of the Proposed Development that is provided in **Chapter 3 – The Proposed Development**.
- 11.3.3 This assessment is based on the requirement to form and maintain an Operational Corridor (OC) along the route of the Proposed Development within forest and woodland areas, while recognising the potential impact over broader forest management areas (outwith the OC) as a result of the Proposed Development. Any felling undertaken outside of the OC, referred to as management felling, would be solely under the control of the landowner. Management felling would be deemed to be necessary where windblow is predictable and felling to a wind firm boundary would be sought. Replanting these additional felled areas would be one of the conditions in the felling permission should it be granted by Scottish Forestry.
- 11.3.4 As provided in terms of the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (ESQCR)⁷ and Schedule 4 of the Electricity Act 1989⁸, the Applicant has the necessary statutory powers to remove woodland for the purposes of construction and on-going maintenance of new overhead lines (OHLs), and/or protection of electrical plant. This would authorise removal of woodland required for the OC.

Study Area and Operational Corridor

- 11.3.5 The forestry study area includes all woodland standing, windblown, felled or regenerating within the Limits of Deviation (LoD) for both the proposed OHL alignment (50 m either side of the centreline of the OHL alignment) and the access tracks (25 m either side of the centreline of the access tracks), prior to identification of an OC (see **Figures 11.1a-d: Forestry Felling**). This forestry assessment focuses on the woodlands within the proposed OC and does not attempt to account for the potential variables of micro-siting within the LoD.
- 11.3.6 The OC is defined with reference to the distance at which a tree could fall and cause damage to the OHL, resulting in supply outage. As a result, the final OC width would be based on the safety distance required to allow a mature tree falling towards the OHL at the mid-point on an OHL span between two poles, taking account of topography and tree height at maturity.
- 11.3.7 Whilst the design of the Proposed Development has sought to minimise impacts on woodland and forestry where possible, some felling during construction to create an OC for the OHL cannot be avoided and therefore is required. The width of the OC would be variable depending on the nature of the forest or woodland. Within areas of forest the OC would require a distance of 36 m either side of the OHL.
- 11.3.8 No felling is proposed for access tracks outwith the OC.

11.4 Consultation

- 11.4.1 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA scoping process and pre-application advice. **Table 11.1** sets out the comments received from consultees in relation to forestry and the actions taken to address them within this assessment.

Table 11.1: Consultee Scoping Responses

Organisation & Date	Summary of Consultation Response	EIA/Design Response to Consultee
<p>Scottish Forestry 20th January 2025</p>	<p>The first consideration for all woodland removal decisions should be whether the underlying purpose of the proposals can reasonably be met without resorting to woodland removal. Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal clearly sets out a strong presumption in favour of protecting Scotland's woodland resources.</p> <p>Woodland removal should be allowed only where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits.</p> <p>The following criteria for determining the acceptability of woodland removal should be considered relevant to this application –</p> <p>Woodland removal with a need for compensatory planting</p> <p><i>Design approaches that reduce the scale of felling required and/or converting the type of woodland to another type (such as from tall conifer plantation to low-height, slow growing woodland), must be considered from the earliest stages, rather than removing the woodland completely. The purpose of any required CP is to secure, through new woodland on site (replanting) or off site (on appropriate sites elsewhere), at least the equivalent woodland-related net public benefit embodied in the woodland to be removed.</i></p>	<p>The Scottish Government's CoWRP and implementation guidance is referenced and followed in Section 11.11: Mitigation Measures of this Chapter.</p>
	<p>National Planning Framework 4 - Policy 6 Forestry, Woodlands and trees identifies the following themes that should be considered relevant to this application:</p> <p><i>c) Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered.</i></p> <p><i>d) Development proposals on sites which include an area of existing woodland or land identified in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development has been subject to a routeing exercise that has sought to minimise impacts on woodland and forestry as far as practicable (see Chapter 2: The Routeing Process and Alternatives).</p> <p>Where felling is required within the OC, a strategy for compensatory planting requirements is proposed (see Appendix 11.4: Compensatory Planting Management Strategy). Furthermore, the Applicant is committed to delivering biodiversity enhancements, details of which are outlined in Appendix 7.6: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.</p> <p>Discussion on the compatibility of the Proposed Development to relevant planning policy is included within a separate Planning Statement that is submitted alongside the EIA Report.</p>

Organisation & Date	Summary of Consultation Response	EIA/Design Response to Consultee
	<p><i>on the site (in accordance with the Forestry and Woodland Strategy) are integrated into the design.</i></p>	
	<p>Any additional felling which is not part of the planning application will require permission from Scottish Forestry under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (the Act). For areas covered by an approved Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP), the request for additional felling (and subsequent restocking) areas needs to be presented in the form of LTFP amendment.</p>	<p>Any felling undertaken outside of the OC, referred to as management felling, would be solely under the control of the landowner. Management felling is considered within Section 11.9 of this Chapter.</p>
	<p>The applicant should note that any compensatory planting required as a result of the proposed development, may also need to be considered under The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and should follow the process for preparing a woodland creation proposal, as set out in our guidance booklet: Woodland Creation Application Guidance.</p>	<p>The Applicant recognises the requirements of compensatory planting within Section 11.11: Mitigation Measures of this Chapter and Appendix 11.4: Compensatory Planting Management Strategy.</p>
<p>Aberdeenshire Council 4th February 2025</p>	<p>Forestry issues appear to be adequately covered and the requirement for compensatory planting is addressed. Details of the location and nature of any compensatory planting will be required. This should be included at the application stage.</p>	<p>The Applicant recognises the requirements of compensatory planting within Section 11.11: Mitigation Measures of this Chapter. Detailed compensatory planting and location are to be provided by the Applicant post consent.</p>

11.5 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

11.5.1 The key legislation, policy and guidance listed below has been considered in the assessment:

- The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2009)¹;
- Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal: implementation guidance (2019)²;
- Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (the Act)³;
- The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017;
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)⁴ (see below);
- UK Forestry Standard 5th Edition (2023)⁵;

1 The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2019) (online) Available at <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/285-the-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

2 Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal: Implementation Guidance (online) Available at <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/349-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal-implementation-guidance> (last accessed on 10/08/2025)

3 Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018. (online) Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/8/contents> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

4 National Planning Framework 4 (online) Available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

5 The UK Forestry Standard: 5th Edition (2023) (online) Available at <https://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/uk-forestry-standard/> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017⁶;
- The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002⁷; and
- The Electricity Act 1989⁸

11.5.2 NPF4, Policy 6⁴: Trees, woodland and forestry is the relevant policy that notes that development proposals should not be supported where they would result in:

- any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition;
- adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value or identified for protection in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy⁹;
- fragmenting or severing woodland habitats, unless mitigation measures are identified and implemented; and
- conflict with Restocking Direction, Remedial Notice or Registered Notice to Comply issued by the Scottish Government Forestry Regulator, Scottish Forestry.

11.5.3 Further discussion of the compatibility of the Proposed Development against planning policy is provided in the Planning Statement that accompanies the application.

11.6 Methodology

Desk Study

11.6.1 Ancient Woodland Inventory (Scotland) (AWI)¹⁰ and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)¹¹ available through open data was reviewed for the study area. As no forest specific datasets have been used, the National Forest Inventory 2022¹² dataset is the main digital source. FLS open data for Mearns Forest, NFE sub compartment data¹³ and Mearns Land Management Plans¹⁴ were reviewed where relevant to the Proposed Development. Scottish Forestry Map Viewer¹⁵ was also viewed for the position of grant aided and other woodlands.

11.6.2 Web based imagery was also reviewed to ensure all forest and woodland cover was included within this assessment.

Field Survey

11.6.3 A forest walkover was undertaken on the 14th and 15th of May 2024. During the site visit the forest crop condition was checked against the desk study information.

6 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (online) Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/101/contents> (last accessed on 25/05/2025)

7 The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (online) Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

8 The Electricity Act 1989 (online) Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/contents> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

9 Forestry and Woodland Strategy (online) Available at <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forestry-strategy> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

10 Ancient Woodland Inventory (Scotland) (online) Available at <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/c2f57ed9-5601-4864-af5f-a6e73e977f54/ancient-woodland-inventory-scotland> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

11 Native Woodland Inventory of Scotland available at <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forests-environment/biodiversity/native-woodlands/native-woodland-survey-of-scotland-nwss> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

12 National Forest Inventory 2022 (online) Available at <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/2f24493b-0c4b-47bb-9e16-3a6e1740a01c/national-forest-inventory-scotland-2022> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

13 National Forest Estate sub compartments (online) Available at <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/3d3e3c5a-d19b-498b-8e14-d8aca26ae34b/national-forest-estate-subcompartments-gb> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

14 Mearns Land Management Plan (online) Available at <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/active/mearns> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

15 Scottish Forestry Map Viewer (online) Available at <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/scottish-forestry-map-viewer> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

Assessment of Effects

- 11.6.4 There are currently no standard criteria for assessing the sensitivity / importance and magnitude for forest felling and restocking or determining the value of woodland loss. As such, the assessment is broadly based upon the methodology set out in **Chapter 5 - EIA Process and Methodology** and based on the requirements of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations)⁶.
- 11.6.5 Sensitivity / importance is relatively clear in definition as set out in **paragraph 11.6.7** below, whereas the criteria for magnitude is defined by area, as set out in **paragraph 11.6.9**. Assessing the impact of the Proposed Development on the forest structure relies heavily on the General Forestry Practice Guide set in UK Forestry Standard Fifth Edition⁵ (UKFS) and NPF⁴ Policy 6 (see **paragraph 11.5.2**).
- 11.6.6 The significance of an impact depends upon the sensitivity / importance of the forest area, combined with the magnitude of the impact. The criteria for assessing these, together with the resultant levels of predicted significance, are described in the following paragraphs.

Criteria for Assessing Sensitivity/Importance of Receptors

- 11.6.7 Criteria for assessing the sensitivity / importance of a forest, is as follows:
- High: Highly valued, subject of national designation, e.g. Ancient Woodland Category 1a, interpreted as semi-natural woodland from maps from 1750 and Category 2a from 1860; Particularly rare or distinctive in a national context; or considered susceptible to small changes;
 - Medium: Valued more locally, subject to local designation; Rare or distinctive in a regional context; and/or Tolerant of moderate levels of change;
 - Low: Generally, more commonplace, and not designated; Considered potentially tolerant of noticeable change; or undergoing substantial development such as that their character is one of change; and
 - Negligible: Already fundamentally changed (e.g., second rotation commercial conifer, or designated for felling and replanting rotation in an approved forest plan that is to be implemented); Considered tolerant of noticeable change; or having undergone substantial development such that their character is one of change.

Criteria for Assessing Magnitude of Change

- 11.6.8 Criteria for assessing the magnitude of change to a forest or woodland, is as follows:
- High: A noticeable change to the woodland over a wide area or an intensive change over a limited area;
 - Medium: Small changes to the woodland over a wide area or noticeable change over a limited area;
 - Low: Very small changes to the woodland over a wide area or small changes over a limited area; and
 - Negligible: No discernible change to the woodland.

Significance Criteria

- 11.6.9 The predicted significance of impact is determined by consideration of a site's importance / sensitivity in conjunction with the magnitude of change predicted on it. **Table 11.2** provides a framework for reaching a judgment as to the significance of an impact.

Table 11.2: Matrix for Determining the Significance of Direct Impact

		Sensitivity of Receptor / Receiving Environment to Change / Effect			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of	High	Major	Major	Moderate	Negligible
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible

	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

11.6.10 Major and Moderate effects are considered to be significant within the context of the EIA Regulations.

Limitations and Assumptions to the Assessment

11.6.11 No forestry or woodland information has been provided directly by any woodland owners or agents.

11.6.12 The open data forestry shapefiles have been used to identify the woodlands within the study area. There are minor differences between these, the Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial imagery.

11.7 Baseline Conditions

11.7.1 Mapping of the various woodland components within the study area, as displayed on **Figures 11.1a-d**, are based upon the forestry open data datasets, updated by the use of aerial imagery and fieldwork.

Woodland Designations

11.7.2 Ancient Woodlands represented through the AWI dataset are present within the study area as Long-Established (of plantation origin) LEPO 1860 at Scare Hill to the north of West Bogton (National Grid Reference (NGR): 373200, 783700). LEPO 1860 interpreted by NatureScot¹⁶ as plantation from maps of 1860 (antiquity 2b) and continuously wooded since then. Many of these sites have developed semi-natural characteristics, especially the oldest ones, which may be as rich as Ancient Woodland. The species present within the study area are mainly productive conifer, Sitka spruce and larch with a minor element of mixed broadleaved, which were planted in 2005.

Desk Study

11.7.3 A desk-based review identified the following forest and woodland areas within the study area, as displayed on **Figures 11.1a-d**.

- Mearns Forest is within the NFE and managed by FLS, an agency of the Scottish Government. The management of Mearns Forest is included in the Mearns Forest Design Plan¹⁷ running from 2015 to 2024. This Plan was due for revision in December 2024; however, no more recent Plan is available. The Plan summary includes the forest units identified as Fetteresso Forest, Glenfarquhar Forest, and North and South Drumtochty Forest which cover a total area of 6,677 ha. The planned felling operations between 2015 and 2025 are 763.7 ha, with 924 ha of restocking over the same period. FLS forest plans are now referred to as Land Management Plans (LMP).
- A new woodland planted under the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) Woodland Creation, Case Reference 20FGS48003, has been planted at NGR 375700, 785000 with a grant claim year 2020 under the Conifer Option, which includes mixed conifers and native mixed broadleaves. The new woodland planted includes a total of 112.4 ha, which comprises 61.98 ha of Sitka spruce, 35.23 ha of mixed conifer, 6.94 ha of Scots pine and 8.25 ha of native mixed broadleaved.
- A more recent new woodland planted under the FGS Woodland Creation is present at NGR 372000, 782900 and 371700, 782300; Case Reference No. 23FGS70293 with a grant claim year 2024 under the Conifer Option. This new woodland planted includes a total of 255.07 ha, which comprises 213.69 ha of conifer, 26.03 ha of diverse conifer and 15.53 of broadleaved.

¹⁶ NatureScot. A guide to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). (online) Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/guide-understanding-scottish-ancient-woodland-inventory-awi> (last accessed on 08/10/2025)

¹⁷ Mearns Forest Design Plan 2015-24. (online) Available at: <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/active/mearns> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

Field Survey

11.7.4 Field survey confirmed the Mearns Forest Plan areas which is an active productive conifer forest. The woodland creation areas are still at an early stage in establishment as woodlands.

11.8 Embedded Mitigation Measures

11.8.1 The embedded mitigation is a combination of decisions taken during the design process to avoid or minimise the potential for likely significant effects through routeing and alignment of the OHL and access tracks, and the implementation of standard practice mitigation measures that are well established and effective.

Design

11.8.2 Prior to commencement of the EIA, the routeing and alignment stages of the project sought to prevent or minimise effects on environmental constraints where possible, including forestry. This process is outlined in **Chapter 2 - The Routeing Process and Alternatives**. This involved consultation with FLS to seek to achieve an alignment that aimed to avoid the larger forest and woodland areas by following open ground and the forest edge where possible.

Good Practice

11.8.3 Good forest practice for removing the trees will be followed as detailed within the site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that will be prepared by the successful Principal Contractor, and through the good practice guides within UKFS. Only the conifer plantation would provide marketable timber.

11.9 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

11.9.1 The assessment of likely significant effects associated with the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development is based on the activities described in **Chapter 3 - The Proposed Development**.

11.9.2 The assessment includes consideration of the forestry and woodland removal required to create an OC for the OHL (direct effects), as well as the potential temporary loss of areas of forestry and woodland removal outwith the OC, referred to as management felling (indirect effects). This management felling would be undertaken only with the landowner's consent and would require replanting.

11.9.3 The introduction of OHL into forestry and woodland can give rise to a combination of short-term and long-term effects during both construction and operation. The following interrelated effects can arise from the introduction of OHLs within forest and woodland areas, principally associated with the requirement for tree felling and vegetation management:

- Direct construction and operational effects: loss of areas of forest resource as a result of felling of trees for the OHL OC, in the context of the regional forest resource for both commercial woodland, Ancient Woodland and semi-natural woodlands;
- Indirect construction effects: increased windblow and secondary felling agreed with landowners;
- Indirect operational effects: effects on forest management systems, including fragmentation;
- Indirect operational effects: restrictions on forest access; (the above four effects, direct and indirect, have been considered within the individual Woodland Reports (see **Appendices 11.1 to 11.3**); and
- Direct and indirect cumulative effects: combined loss of woodland from intra and inter projects.

11.9.4 In general, it is considered that there is sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be taken in relation to the identification and assessment of potential significant environmental effects on forestry.

Direct Effects

11.9.5 Forest and woodland removal is required following the specifications for the safe construction and operation within the OC.

11.9.6 The direct loss of forest and woodland from construction and operation of the Proposed Development is set out in **Table 11.3** and illustrated on **Figures 11.1a-d**. This includes the areas proposed to be occupied by the OHL OC.

Table 11.3 Total Area of Woodland Loss within the OC

Felling Requirement	Current Woodland	Area (ha)
OHL OC	Conifer	46.76
OHL OC	Broadleaved	2.87
Total		49.63

11.9.7 The felling requirements associated with the Proposed Development, and the potential effects on forestry and woodland, are detailed below:

- Permanent loss of commercial woodland within the OC:** The long-term / permanent loss of commercial forest resources due to the felling of the OC. For this assessment, the existing baseline forest and woodland resource immediately associated with the Proposed Development is some 6,677 ha. Of this total area, it is estimated that 49.63 ha is to be felled for the Proposed Development and considered as permanent loss of forest resource.
- Loss of designated woodland within the OC:** Long-term loss of broadleaved and native woodland, including sites designated as Ancient Woodland. Ancient Woodland sites might consist of broadleaved or conifer woodland. The woodland removal for the Proposed Development includes 9.98 ha of AWI, LEPO1860, of which 9.24 ha is mainly Sitka spruce planted in 1965, 2001 and 2005 with 0.72 ha of mixed broadleaves planted in 2005 and 0.04 ha of trees planted in 2024 will also be removed from the areas listed as LEPO1860.
- Effects on forest management:** Temporary effects on forest management during construction and long-term effects during operation including fragmentation of woodland blocks; and
- Overall breakdown of woodland loss:** The breakdown between woodland type as permanent woodland is shown in **Table 11.3**.

11.9.8 The total direct loss of forestry and woodland for construction of the Proposed Development equates to 49.63 ha and represents only 0.66% of the immediate forested areas.

11.9.9 **Commercial (Coniferous) Woodland within the OC:** Creation of the OC would result in the loss of 46.76 ha of conifer plantation. The sensitivity of the local forest resource to this loss is Low in that the area is considered to be tolerant to moderate change. The magnitude of the effect is Medium in that it is a noticeable change over a limited area. As such, the significance of the effect is considered to be **Minor Adverse** and therefore **Not Significant** in terms of the EIA Regulations.

11.9.10 **Broadleaved Woodland within the OC:** Creation of the OC would result in the loss of 2.87 ha of broadleaved woodland. The sensitivity of the local forest resource to this loss is Medium in that the area is considered to be tolerant to moderate change. The magnitude of the effect is Low in that it is a noticeable change over a limited area. As such, the significance of the effect is considered to be **Minor Adverse** and therefore **Not Significant** in terms of the EIA Regulations.

11.9.11 **Ancient Woodland within the OC:** A total of 10.00 hectares of LEPO1860 is proposed to be felled to accommodate the OC from the overall area of woodland affected by the OC. In certain parts of the OC, existing low-growing native shrubs may be retained, and natural regeneration of native species could support the establishment of new native growth. The sensitivity is considered Low due to the trees on site are planted non-native conifer and Low magnitude. The significance of the effect is considered to be **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant** in terms of the EIA Regulations.

Indirect Effects

11.9.12 Where felling for the OC takes place through mature conifer plantations windblow within the remaining stand of trees is predictable.

11.9.13 Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring (DAMS) is used in representing the amount of damaging wind that forest stands experience in a year. The range of DAMS is from 6-19 and windiness is the most likely limiting factor to tree growth at higher elevations. DAMS is categorised as follows:

- <13 sheltered,
- 13-16 moderately exposed,
- 16-19 highly exposed,
- 19-22 severely exposed and
- >22 too exposed for commercial forestry.

11.9.14 The DAMS score for the OC ranges from 9 to 13. The older conifer stands, generally 20-25 years and older would likely suffer windblow and therefore management felling has been designed to assumed wind firm boundaries.

11.9.15 Given the age classes identified and the DAMS scoring, management felling includes 59.87 ha of conifer plantation and 0.24 ha of broadleaved trees: a total of 60.11 ha, as shown on **Figures 11.1a-d**. The age class range of the sub compartments includes 18.92 ha of 50 year old and 41.19 ha of stands 20 to 40 years old. **Appendix 11.3: Overhead Line (OHL) Woodland Report Property: National Forest Estate, Mearns** describes that all management felling would take place within the NFE. This would affect commercial forest and includes approximately 2.28 ha of designated LEPO1860. The standing crop within the LEPO1860 is mainly Sitka spruce with Japanese larch planted in 1975 and unplanted open ground. Felling permission for the areas of management felling would be granted by Scottish Forestry.

11.9.16 Management felling of 60.11 ha would be replanted in situ with the species shown within the Mearns Forest LMP Future Habitats and Species Plan, which forms part of the Mearns Forest Design Plan 2015-24¹⁷. This can be assumed with reasonable certainty, given that the felling permission obtained through Scottish Forestry would (as a standard condition) require the landowner's commitment to appropriately restock those felled areas.

11.9.17 The indirect loss of this area of conifer plantation during construction and operation is considered to be of Low sensitivity and Medium magnitude and therefore **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant**.

11.9.18 The direct loss of the LEPO1860 is assessed as Low sensitivity and Low magnitude and therefore **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant**.

11.9.19 Furthermore, the requirement for replanting is considered short term.

11.10 Cumulative Effects

11.10.1 The assessment of cumulative effects on forestry is based on consideration of the effects of the Proposed Development in addition to likely effects of cumulative developments.

11.10.2 Operational developments and existing grid infrastructure are considered as part of the baseline and taken to be such for assessment of effects on forestry. Developments that are consented or proposed, of those defined in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**, have been considered in this forestry cumulative assessment, as set out in **Table 11.4** below.

Table 11.4 Cumulative Assessment with Inter Developments

Cumulative Development	Status	Cumulative Effects
Glendye Wind Farm	Consented	The EIA Report ¹⁸ for this development states approximately 1.22 ha of woodland would be removed during construction of the main site access track and working of a borrow pit. The Applicant commits to re-plant 1.22ha of broadleaf woodland locally as a means of compensating for this loss, in accordance with CoWRP.
Fetteresso Wind Farm	Consented	The EIA Report ¹⁹ states that this development would result in the felling of 26.13 ha of forest, but a commitment to compensatory planting of 26.13 ha would ensure there is no net loss of woodland.
Craig Neil Wind Farm	Consented	No areas of forestry would be directly impacted by this development.
Hurlie 400 kV Substation	Application	The EIA Report ²⁰ for this development predicted that the total felling required for the construction of both infrastructure and management felling would total 117.1 ha. There would be a commitment for off-site compensatory planting, in accordance with CoWRP and management felling to suitable coupe boundaries, resulting in no significant residual construction effects. No significant effects were predicted during the operational stage.
Kintore to Tealing 400 kV OHL	Application	The EIA Report ²¹ for this development predicted that there would be significant residual effects on forestry during construction following the application of embedded and additional mitigation, which included the commitment to off-site planting to compensate for the loss of forest or woodland within permanent infrastructure areas, to comply with CoWRP. No significant effects were predicted during the operational stage.

11.10.3 The area of woodland removal required for the Proposed Development and other projects in the area that impact on the forest resource (as listed in **Table 11.4**), would be mitigated through Scottish Government's CoWRP objective of no net loss of woodland with either compensatory planting or alternative habitat. In this way there is considered to be no cumulative effect on forestry.

11.11 Mitigation

11.11.1 At the time of construction and operation the Applicant will, where possible, take the opportunity to reduce the width of the OC.

¹⁸ Corriolis Energy Ltd (2022) Glendye Wind Farm EIA Report: Volume 001 – Chapter 4: Scheme Description. (online) Available at: <https://www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk/CaseDetails.aspx?id=121949&T=66> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

¹⁹ Fred.Olsen Renewables (2019). Fetteresso Wind Farm EIA Report: Chapter 11: Forestry Assessment. (online) Available at: <https://fredolsenrenewables.com/all-projects/fetteresso/> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

²⁰ SSEN Transmission (2024) Hurlie 400 kV Substation EIA Report: Chapter 7: Forestry. (online) Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/hurlie-planning-documents/eia-report---volume-2/eia-report-volume-2_chapter-7_forestry.pdf (last accessed 08/10/2025)

²¹ SSEN Transmission (2025) Kintore to Tealing 400 kV OHL EIA Report: Chapter 8: Forestry. (online) Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/kintore-to-tealing-400kv-ohl-section-37-application/eia-report--volume-2-technical-chapters-chapters-7-to-18/volume-2---chapter-08---forestry.pdf> (last accessed 08/10/2025)

11.11.2 Given the Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of 49.63 ha of woodland, the Applicant is committed to making arrangements off-site to plant the equivalent area of new woodland as compensatory planting to meet the Scottish Government's CoWRP objective of no net loss of woodland. Compensatory planting to be undertaken will comply with UKFS and associated guidelines which may apply, or any other such replacement standard applied by the planning (consenting) authority. Planting will be supported by an approved replanting plan and shall identify location, species and woodland design, timing, maintenance, monitoring, and reporting standards.

11.11.3 As a result of the level of control over the replanting of the areas of commercial woodland outwith the OC, which will be by way of the agreement between the Applicant and landowners, the mitigation cannot be made the subject of a condition on the Applicant. However, there is a high level of confidence that the replanting will take place.

11.12 Residual Effects

11.12.1 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of 49.63 ha of planted conifer and broadleaved woodlands.

11.12.2 With the commitment to make arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland lost due to construction and operation of an OC for the Proposed Development as compensatory planting, in terms of direct loss of woodland coverage, there are no residual effects.

11.13 Summary

11.13.1 This Chapter provides an assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas.

11.13.2 The Proposed Development is predicted to result in the permanent direct loss of 49.63 ha of woodland due to the requirement to create an OC for the construction and safe operation of the OHL. The woodlands consist mainly of conifer plantation and small areas of planted broadleaved woodland. This woodland loss represents only 0.66% of the immediate forested areas. The loss of this area of conifer plantation is Low sensitivity and Medium magnitude and therefore Minor Adverse and Not Significant.

11.13.3 This total includes 10.00 ha of AWI, LEPO1860, mainly Sitka spruce with 0.72 ha of mixed broadleaves planted in 2005 and includes plantation trees planted in 2024. The direct loss of the LEPO1860 is assessed as Low magnitude. This effect is assessed as Minor Adverse and Not Significant.

11.13.4 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. The details and locations of the compensatory planting areas are yet to be confirmed.

11.13.5 Given the adherence to CoWRP by this Proposed Development, other consented developments and those not yet consented, woodland loss will be replaced with compensatory planting then there is assumed to be no cumulative effect.

11.13.6 Additional good practice measures can be implemented on land outside the OC, for example, further felling may be carried out to create a more natural-looking and wind-firm woodland edge. The total would comprise a total of 60.11 ha (59.87 conifer and 0.24 ha broadleaved). These measures would require approval through an amendment of the Mearns Forest LMP or Felling Licence Application (FLA) with the approval of Scottish Forestry. When restocking works are carried out in areas identified for management felling, a strategic approach is to be applied to minimise the visual and landscape impacts of the OHL. This strategy aims to address future windfirm edges, reduce visual impact, and ensure appropriate planting distances and species in

relation to the OHL and reference should be made to the Forestry Commission guidelines 'Design Techniques for Forest Management Planning'²².

²² Forestry Commission (2014). Design Techniques for Forest Management Planning. (online) Available at:
<https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/106-design-techniques-for-forest-management-planning>. (last accessed on 08/10/2025)