

Volume 2: Chapter 8 – Forestry

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8. FORESTRY

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 This Chapter considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on Forestry. It details the impacts of the Proposed Development on the woodland resource within the Operational Corridor (OC), the implications of felling outwith the OC for access track construction, and any relevant impacts upon the long-term management of the woodlands that are likely to be affected by the felling within the OC and the access tracks. The OC is described in greater detail in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description** and is defined as the designated area around the Proposed Development that is maintained to ensure safe and reliable operation of the overhead line (OHL).
- 8.1.2 There is no accepted definition of a 'woodland' or a 'forest' and both are used interchangeably in guidance documents to refer to groupings of trees. Within this Chapter the term 'forest' and 'forestry' is used to refer to areas that are typically coniferous that are managed for commercial timber production. The term 'wood' and 'woodlands' is used to refer to areas that are typically broadleaved and deciduous and not principally managed for commercial timber production.
- 8.1.3 This Chapter considers the effects of the Proposed Development upon woodlands and forests. It considers the overall impacts within this Chapter, with the potential impacts upon individual forests or woodlands or land parcels presented in a series of Woodland Reports in **Volume 5: Appendices** as follows:
- **Appendix 8.2.1: Balkemback Farm;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.2: Lady Jane's Plantation;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.3: Inches, Burn of Guinea Wood, Burnhead Woodland;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.4: Loch of Park;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.5: Wester Letter Forest & (part of) Drum Hill;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.6: Belliehill Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.7: Forestmuir Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.8: Ballinshoe Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.9: Tillybrigg, Tillyfoddie, Scaur, Culfosie, Barmekin, Myriewell;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.10: Durris Church Woodland;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.11: Small Woodlands Reports;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.12: Lochty Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.13: Duns Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.14: Quartains Woodland;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.15: Coldstream Plantation;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.16: Boggie Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.17: King's Seat Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.18: Drum Hill;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.19: Balrownie Wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.20: Den wood;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.21: Justinhaugh;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.22: Rickarton Estate;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.23: Kintore Garage Woods;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.24: Woods of Redhall;**
 - **Appendix 8.2.25: Inveriscandye Wood;**

- **Appendix 8.2.26: South Kirkton Wood and Marketmuir Wood;**
- **Appendix 8.2.27: North Kirkton Wood;**
- **Appendix 8.2.28: Boggendinnie, Corskie Wood, & Kinnernie Burn Wood;**
- **Appendix 8.2.29: Netherpark Quarry Woodland;**
- **Appendix 8.2.30: Fetteresso;**
- **Appendix 8.2.31: Capo Plantation;**
- **Appendix 8.2.32: FLS Durris Forest (Main Block);**
- **Appendix 8.2.33: Free Church Wood;** and
- **Appendix 8.2.34: Inverury Forest.**

8.1.4 Commercial forestry is not usually regarded as an environmental receptor for EIA purposes. This is because commercial forests are a dynamic environment, and their structure continually undergoes change due to:

- normal felling and restocking by the landowner;
- natural events, such as storm damage, pests or diseases; and
- external factors, such as wind farms or other developments.

8.1.5 An assessment of impacts upon forestry has however been included within the scope of the EIA Report (EIAR) because not all areas with tree cover within the OC of the Proposed Development can be clearly defined as commercial forests.

8.1.6 The specific objectives of the study within this Chapter are as follows:

- identify the baseline environment with regard to forestry and woodlands within the Forestry Study Area (see **paragraph 8.3.2**);
- describe how consultation has informed the scope of the assessment;
- identify the mitigation measures proposed to address effects upon forestry and woodlands; and
- present the residual effects remaining ie the changes to the physical structure of forests and woodlands within the OC.

8.1.7 The impacts considered within this Chapter are interrelated with environmental impacts, which are assessed separately in the EIAR. This Chapter should therefore be read in conjunction with the following chapters of the EIAR, including but not limited to: **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description; Volume 2, Chapter 9: Landscape and Visual Amenity, Volume 2, Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage; Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology, Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology and Volume 2, Chapter 13: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils** as they are interrelated to the proposed changes in the forest or woodland structure.

8.1.8 The responsibility for the management of any forest or woodland outwith any infrastructure felling and any management felling lies with the landowners and therefore the wider felling operations, restocking, and aftercare operations within these areas do not form part of the Proposed Development for which consent is sought. As consent for management felling is not being sought as part of this application, and phasing and timescales are unknown, the quantities are described to provide an overview of the extent of felling that is likely to be required.

8.1.9 The Proposed Development is located partially within existing forest and woodlands. Proposals have been developed to:

- identify areas of forest and woodlands to be permanently removed for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development;
- identify areas of forest to be temporarily removed for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development; and

- identify the amount of compensatory planting required in order to comply with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy⁸.
- 8.1.10 In general, throughout this Chapter data labelled 'baseline' refers to the current species composition and any existing plans without any modification as a result of the Proposed Development. Data labelled 'Proposed Development' refers to the plans incorporating the Proposed Development.
- 8.1.11 The forestry assessment was prepared and overseen by DGA Forestry LLP, experienced forestry consultants with appropriate memberships to the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) and experience of forestry assessment in the context of wind farm, grid and mixed-use developments.
- 8.1.12 The following terminology will be referred to throughout this Chapter:
- Ancient woodland: woodland which is known to have existed since at least 1750, is included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) or has ancient woodland indicator species identified through site surveys. These woodlands are also categorised as '1a and 2a';
 - Broadleaved woodland: woodlands made up of broadleaved trees;
 - Coupe: Individual blocks of trees within a woodland or forest;
 - Infrastructure felling: felling required to allow for the construction of the Proposed Development (see **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**);
 - Long Established (of plantation origin) (LEPO): Interpreted as plantation from maps¹ of 1750 (1b) or 1860 (2b) and continuously wooded since these dates. Whilst some of these sites are now commercial forestry plantations, some sites may have retained semi-natural characteristics, especially the oldest ones, which may be as rich as ancient woodland¹;
 - Management felling: felling in commercial forests that has been undertaken before its current agreed phase to minimise woodland fragmentation, coupe isolation and to allow windfirm edges to be created following the removal of trees due to infrastructure felling. The likely extent of management felling is identified to provide an overview of what is likely to be required. Scottish Forestry (SF) in their response to the Scoping Report (**Volume 5, Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report**) state that management felling (ie that outwith the terms of the Section 37 Consent and referred to as 'resilience felling' by SF in their response) will require separate permission under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act² 2018;
 - Native woodland: woodlands made up of native species, this can include Scots pine so is not always solely broadleaves (based partially upon the definition within the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland and professional judgement from surveys);
 - Operational Corridor: The area of land to be cleared for construction and maintained without trees for the safe operation of the proposed OHL;
 - Proposed Development: the Kintore to Tealing 400 kV OHL and associated infrastructure as described in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**;
 - Semi-natural woodland: woodland which consists of primarily native species and exhibits natural features such as fallen deadwood and native ground flora.
 - Site: Defined as the Proposed Development (plus Limit of Deviation (LOD)); refer **Volume 3, Figures 3.1.1 to 3.1.29: Proposed Development for which Section 37 Consent (Electricity Act, 1989) is sought**;
 - Windfirm: trees that are considered less likely to fall down from wind disturbance due to prolonged exposure to the prevailing wind;
 - Windfirm edge: trees along an edge that are considered less likely to fall down from wind disturbance due to prolonged exposure to the prevailing wind ie along a forest road or ride; and

¹ NatureScot, 2023. Guide to Understanding Scottish Ancient Woodland, NatureScot. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/guide-understanding-scottish-ancient-woodland-inventory-awi>.

- Windthrow: trees that have fallen down/snapped due to wind disturbance; usually on edges where they have recently been exposed.

8.2 Scope of the Assessment

Effects Assessed in Full

- 8.2.1 On the basis of the EIA Scoping process (refer to **Volume 5, Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report** and **Volume 5, Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion**), desk-based, and field survey work undertaken in combination with the professional judgement of the EIA team, experience from other relevant projects, consideration of policy guidance or standards, and feedback received from consultees, the following direct, indirect and cumulative effects have been identified for detailed assessment:
- loss of net forest resource as a result of felling trees for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development;
 - loss of broadleaved woodland and native woodland as a result of felling of trees for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development; and
 - cumulative effects during both the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 8.2.2 Indirect effects during construction such as woodland fragmentation and isolation through the increased risk of windthrow is addressed within the Woodland Reports in **Volume 5, Appendices 8.2.1** through to **8.2.34**. Effects of woodland fragmentation upon the severing of woodland habitats is addressed in **Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology**.
- 8.2.3 As noted in **Volume 1, Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation** an assessment of the indirect effects of management felling has been included within the scope of the EIAR and this Chapter.

8.3 Effects Scoped Out

- 8.3.1 On the basis of the desk-based assessment, professional judgement of the assessment team, experience from other relevant projects, policy guidance or standards, and feedback received from consultees, the following effects have been 'scoped out' of detailed assessment, as proposed in the EIA Scoping Report (**Volume 5, Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report**) and agreed in the EIA Scoping Opinion (**Volume 5, Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion**).
- Forestry and woodland management issues during the operational phase are scoped out. It is considered that implications for future forest and woodland management outside of the OC in terms of felling phases, replanting on-site and wayleave maintenance can be adequately addressed through agreements with the relevant landowners.

Study Area

- 8.3.2 The Forestry Study Area (FSA) is shown in **Volume 3, Figures 8.1.1 to 8.1.15: Forestry Study Area** and extends to 214.75 ha. The FSA has been defined as the woodland or forest blocks that will be directly and indirectly felled as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 8.3.3 The OC has been identified to allow sufficient distance for a tree to fall and not cause damage to the OHL as described in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**.
- 8.3.4 The Proposed Development is partially located within areas of forest and woodland along its entire length. Many of these are privately owned and managed and some are part of Scotland's National Forest Estate, owned by Scottish Ministers on behalf of the nation, and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).
- 8.3.5 It is of note that the FSA and the Site are two separate areas. The FSA takes into account any management felling outwith the OC required to establish windfirm edges. The forestry assessment is based on the FSA, as shown in **Volume 3, Figures 8.1.1 to 8.1.15: Forestry Study Area**.

8.4 Assessment Methodology

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Legislation

8.4.1 This assessment is carried out in accordance with the principles contained within the following legislation:

- *Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act*² 2018;
- *Felling (Scotland) Regulations* 2019³; and
- *Electricity Act* 1989 (as amended)⁴.

Policy

8.4.2 The following policies of relevance to the assessment have been considered:

- *National Planning Framework* 4⁵ (NPF4) (Scottish Government) 2023;
- *Scotland's Forestry Strategy*⁶ 2019-2029 (Scottish Government) 2019;
- *Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy*⁷ 2012-2026 (Scottish Government) 2012;
- *Control of Woodland Removal Policy*⁸ 2009 (Forestry Commission Scotland);
- *Scottish Government's policy on control of woodland removal: implementation guidance* ⁹ 2019 (Forestry Commission Scotland);
- *Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan*¹⁰ 2023, Policy E3;
- *Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy*¹¹ 2023; and
- *Angus Forestry and Woodland Strategy*¹² 2024.

Guidance

8.4.3 This assessment is carried out in accordance with the principles contained within the following documents:

- *Right Tree in the Right Place*¹³ 2010 (Forestry Commission Scotland);

² The Scottish Government, 2018. *The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act* 2018, Edinburgh. [Online] Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/8/contents/enacted>.

³ The Scottish Government, 2019, *The Felling (Scotland) Regulations* 2019, Edinburgh. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2019/49>

⁴ The UK Government, 1989. *The Electricity Act, 1989*, London. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/contents>

⁵ The Scottish Government, 2022. *National Planning Framework 4 Revised Draft*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/>

⁶ The Scottish Government, 2019. *Scotland's Forestry Strategy* 2019-2029, Edinburgh.

⁷ Scottish Government, 2012. *Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy* 2021-2026. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-third-land-use-strategy-2021-2026-getting-best-land/>.

⁸ Forestry Commission Scotland, 2009. *Scottish Government's Control of woodland Removal Policy* [Online] Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/285-the-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal>.

⁹ Forestry Commission Scotland, 2019. *Scottish Government's policy on control of woodland removal: implementation guidance*. [Online] Available at: <https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/349-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal-implementation-guidance>.

¹⁰ Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. *Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan* 2023, Aberdeen. [Online] Available at: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/AberdeenshireLocalDevelopmentPlan2023IntroductionAndPolicies.pdf>

¹¹ Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. *Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy*, Aberdeen. [Online] Available at: <https://aberdeenshirestorage.blob.core.windows.net/acblobstorage/530cfa0d-77f2-4752-a2b3-f1a689f5abc7/pa2023-01---planning-advice---aberdeenshire-forest-and-woodland-strategy-2021.pdf>.

¹² Angus Council, 2024. *Angus Forestry and Woodland Strategy* 2024-2034, Angus. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/Report%20183_24%20Angus%20Forestry%20and%20Woodland%20Strategy%202024-2034-Appendix4.pdf.

¹³ Forestry Commission Scotland, 2010. *Right Tree in the Right Place - Planning for Forestry & Woodlands*. Forestry Commission, Edinburgh.

- *Management of Forestry Waste*¹⁴ 2017 (Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA));
- *Use of Trees Clear Felled to Facilitate Proposed Development on Afforested Land 2014*¹⁵ (SEPA);
- *UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) 2023*¹⁶ (Forest Research);
- *UK Woodland Assurance Standard*¹⁷; and
- *A guide to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory* (NatureScot)¹.

Consultation

8.4.4 In undertaking the assessment, consideration has been given to the scoping and pre-application consultation responses which are summarised in **Table 8.1: Summary of Consultation**. A full summary of consultation is provided in **Volume 1, Chapter 6: Scope and Consultation**.

Table 8.1: Summary of Consultation

Consultee and Date	Scoping/Other Consultation	Issue Raised	How Issue has been Addressed
Aberlemno and District Community Council October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Impact on the environment and wildlife.	Consideration of the impact of the Proposed Development on wildlife is provided in Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology and Chapter 12: Ornithology .
Inveresk Community Council October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Impact on the environment and wildlife.	Consideration of the impact of the Proposed Development on wildlife is provided in Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology and Chapter 12: Ornithology .
The British Horse Society October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Access to woodland tracks and rides.	Consideration of the impact of the Proposed Development on recreational access is provided in Volume 5, Appendix 7.1: Outline Outdoor Access Management Plan .
The Woodland Trust October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Protection of ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees. Trees identified within the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) are within the Site boundary.	Ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees are afforded protection within NPF4 and the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) has been considered and presented on the accompanying figures (Figures 8.1.1 – 8.1.15: Forestry Study Area). The ATI has also been considered and no trees have been identified within the proposed felling areas. This Forestry chapter has been prepared as part of the EIAR which will address the impacts of the Proposed Development on ancient woodland.
Aberdeenshire Council October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) not mapped as a constraint. One TPO known to be within the OC.	This Forestry chapter has been prepared as part of the EIAR and none have been identified within the Site from the

¹⁴ SEPA, 2017. SEPA Guidance Notes WST-G-027 "Management of Forestry Waste". [Online] Available at:

https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/28957/forestry_waste_guidance_note.pdf.

¹⁵ SEPA, 2014. LUPS-GU27 "Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development of Afforested Land". [Online] Available at:

https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/143799/use_of_trees_cleared_to_facilitate_development_on_afforested_land_sepa_snh_fcs_guidance_april_2014.pdf.

¹⁶ Forest Research, 2023. The UK Forestry Standard. Forest Research, Farnham.

¹⁷ UKWAS, 2017. UK Woodland Assurance Standard, Edinburgh. [Online] Available at: <https://ukwas.org.uk/standard/background-and-purpose/>.

Consultee and Date	Scoping/Other Consultation	Issue Raised	How Issue has been Addressed
			information made available by Aberdeenshire Council on their website.
Angus Council October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Impacts on woodlands of high conservation value including Lochty Wood.	Ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees are afforded protection within NPF4. Impacts upon Lochty Wood are addressed in the relevant Woodland Report: (Volume 5, Appendix 8.2.12: Lochty Wood). This Forestry chapter has been prepared as part of the EIAR which will address the impacts of the Proposed Development on woodlands of high conservation value. It is also of note that the LOD has been specifically constrained in the area of Lochty Wood (see Volume 3, Figure 8.4.6: Proposed Development Felling Plan).
NatureScot October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Impact on protected species and habitats.	There has been consultation within the wider EIA team including Ornithology and Ecology specialists to ensure that survey information is shared and considered accordingly. Impacts associated with the fragmentation and severance are addressed in Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology.
Scottish Forestry (SF) October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	The Applicant should read and implement the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy. The following points should be noted: • Scottish Forestry (SF) will no longer permit wholesale removal of woodlands to enable developments; • Only construction felling will be approved as part of the application; • All other felling should be approved as part of the Forest Plan or Felling Permissions; and • Where woodlands and forest are removed for developments and subject to compensatory planting, there must be no loss of productivity.	This Forestry chapter has been prepared as part of the EIAR detailing felling and limited restocking proposals where this is applicable. It is agreed that only infrastructure felling will be approved as part of the application for the Proposed Development, and any management felling will be applied for by the affected landowner. The Proposed Development will take into account the Scottish Government's <i>Control of Woodland Removal Policy</i>, the associated implementation guidance; the <i>UK Forestry Standard</i> and other legislation, policy and guidance as relevant. The proposals identify the extent of any net loss of forest or woodland and requirement for compensatory planting (see Volume 5, Appendix 8.1: Compensatory Planting Management Strategy). SF comments are noted and have been taken into account in the assessment.
SEPA October 2024	Formal scoping consultation	Minimise felling. Forest removal and forest waste.	The alignment of the OC has been designed to reduce impacts upon a range of environmental designations and constraints. Full details are provided in Volume 1, Chapter 4: Alternatives and the Routeing Process.

Desk Based Research and Data Sources

- 8.4.5 A desk-based assessment was undertaken to determine existing crop information, this was collated using data from a variety of publicly available data sources.

8.4.6 The following data sources have informed the assessment:

- National Forest Estate sub-compartment database: information on baseline species and age class within state owned forests and woodlands;
- the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS): information on distribution and status of native woodland within Scotland;
- the AWI: information on the distribution and status of ancient woodlands within Scotland;
- the ATI: information uploaded by the public to the Woodland Trust's website;
- the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) database: information on the distribution and status of SSSIs within Scotland;
- the National Forest Inventory: information on baseline species, age class, baseline fell phases and restocking species;
- the most up to date aerial photography available and Ordnance Survey (OS) maps: information on current status of the forest or woodland;
- TPO records held by Aberdeenshire Council and Angus Council; and
- SF publicly available databases (Scottish Forestry Map Viewer): information on felling permissions, grant applications and other matters where permission is required for operations from SF.

Field Survey

8.4.7 Field surveys were undertaken after the collation of crop data and the confirmation of the location of the Proposed Development. Surveys included a site walkover to verify and update the baseline data as necessary and assess how the forest or woodlands will be affected by the Proposed Development.

8.4.8 Field surveys were carried out from September 2024 to April 2025 inclusive and cross referenced with survey information collated as part of the assessment of impacts upon Ecology (see **Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology**).

Assessing Significance

8.4.9 There are currently no published criteria, guidance or methodologies for the assessment of effects on forestry. The predicted significance of the effect has been determined through a standard method of assessment outlined in **Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology** and based on professional judgement.

8.4.10 Greater sensitivity has been given in the assessment to forests and woodlands determined to be of high conservation value eg ancient & semi-natural woodlands, and lower weighting to forests and woodlands determined to be of lower conservation value eg commercial forestry plantations. However, this does not imply that commercial forests would automatically be assessed as of low sensitivity as the specific characteristics of the forest would be taken into account.

8.4.11 In addition, there may be other features, especially veteran trees, within the OC which may have biodiversity value and make a contribution to landscape character and quality.

Criteria for Assigning Sensitivity to Forestry and Woodlands

8.4.12 The sensitivity and the importance of a forest and woodland has been determined on the basis of the following:

- the sensitivity of the different types of forest or woodland present in the FSA taking account of the degree and rate of change in the forest or woodland, both in the recent past and that anticipated in the near future, and therefore the susceptibility/vulnerability of the forest or woodland to change; its quality and the extent to which it is rare or distinctive, and the value attributed to it through designations.

8.4.13 Five categories of sensitivity of a forest or woodland are defined in **Table 8.2: Sensitivity Criteria** below.

Table 8.2: Sensitivity Criteria

Category	Description
High	- Highly valued, subject of national classification (Class 1a or 2a ancient woodland); - Particularly rare or distinctive in a national context; or - Considered susceptible to small changes.
Medium	- Valued more locally, subject to local designation (Class 1b or 2b ancient woodland*); - Rare or distinctive in a regional context; and/or - Are tolerant of moderate levels of change.
Low	- Lower value, more commonplace, not classified or categorised; - Considered potentially tolerant of noticeable change; or - Undergoing substantial development such that their character is one of change.
Negligible	- Already fundamentally changed (eg, second rotation commercial conifer); - Considered tolerant of noticeable change; or - Having undergone substantial development such that their character is one of change.

* unless site surveys have identified that the site may be as rich as ancient woodland as suggested by NatureScot in the AWI guidance in which case it would be categorised as 'high'.

Magnitude of Effect

8.4.14 The magnitude of effect has been assessed based on professional judgement and as identified in **Table 8.3: Magnitude of Change Criteria**, with reference to:

- magnitude of change and extent of forest or woodland removal;
- duration and reversibility - timescale of effect (days/weeks/months/years) until recovery. Permanent effects are described as such, and likelihood of recovery is detailed where appropriate; and
- adverse/beneficial - if the effect will be beneficial or detrimental to the feature.

Table 8.3: Magnitude of Change Criteria

Ranking	Score
High	A noticeable change to the forest or woodland over a wide area or an intensive change over a limited area.
Medium	Small changes to the forest or woodland over a wide area or noticeable change over a limited area.
Low	Very small changes to the forest or woodland over a wide area or small changes over a limited area.
Negligible	No discernible change to the forest or woodland.

Significance of Effect

8.4.15 The sensitivity of a forest or woodland (**Table 8.2: Sensitivity Criteria**) and the magnitude of change criteria (**Table 8.3: Magnitude of Change Criteria**) have been used to inform an assessment on the likely significance of the effect **Table 8.4: Matrix for Determination of Significance of Effects** provides the criteria for reaching a judgement as to the significance of predicted effects.

8.4.16 **Major** and **Moderate** effects are considered to be '**Significant**' in the context of the EIA Regulations; **Minor** and **Negligible** effects are considered to be '**Not Significant**'.

Table 8.4: Matrix for Determination of Significance of Effects

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

Assessment Assumptions and Limitations

Assessment Assumptions

8.4.17 The following assumptions have been made when undertaking the assessment of effects:

- areas felled as part of the management felling programme will be restocked by the landowner who is responsible for applying for the relevant felling permission. The Applicant would have no control or authority to undertake management felling and it would be for the landowner to action any such removal; and
- data taken from publicly available datasets is up to date and correct.

Assessment Limitations

8.4.18 Landowner data, beyond that which is publicly available, was not able to be obtained. All baseline data is taken from publicly available datasets and verified where possible through site surveys. As a result, there may be some discrepancies in the data due to the reliance on publicly available data for the FSA.

8.4.19 Whilst some information gaps have been identified, it is considered that there is sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be taken in relation to the identification and assessment of likely Significant environmental effects on forestry.

8.5 Baseline Conditions

Summary of Baseline

Species Composition

8.5.1 The current baseline species composition and estimated age class of the forests or woodlands within the FSA is shown in **Volume 3, Figures 8.3.1 to 8.3.46: Baseline Species Composition** and illustrated in **Table 8.5: Baseline Species and Age Class Composition**. This data has been split by Section A to F with tower references added.

8.5.2 No baseline data beyond that which was publicly available or obtained during field surveys, was obtained to accurately determine the age class of the forest or woodlands. With the absence of data, an age class matrix has been derived to assess each forest or woodland against the following:

- Young – young trees, generally five years or less;
- Immature – trees between approximately 6-15 years old;
- Pole Stage – trees between 16 – 30 years old;
- Mature – trees considered to be of felling age, 31-50 years and over; and
- Established – established range of age classes with mature trees and an understory of younger trees.

8.5.3 In addition, to simplify the reader's understanding of the composition of the forests and woodlands within the FSA, a species matrix has been derived to categorise the species along the length of the Proposed Development:

- Felled – trees which have been felled and are awaiting restocking;
- Mixed Broadleaves – broadleaved trees containing a range of species including native trees such as oak or birch, may also contain non-native trees such as sycamore or chestnut;

- Mixed Woodland – a diverse mix of coniferous and broadleaved trees with non-native species present;
- Native Mixed Woodland – mixed woodland containing native broadleaved species such as oak or birch and including elements of Scots pine;
- Other Conifer – Coniferous species other than Sitka spruce, such as larch, firs or pines;
- Sitka spruce – the dominant commercial crop in the United Kingdom, a non-native tree grown purely for commercial timber production;
- Sitka spruce/Other Conifer – Sitka spruce planted in a mixture with other conifers such as lodgepole pine or larch, grown for commercial timber production; and
- Scrub/Regen – areas of unmanaged land with low density, self-seeded trees. A mixture of species with non-native coniferous and broadleaved trees present.

Table 8.5: Baseline Species and Age Class Composition

Baseline Species and Age Class (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163) **	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Felled			3.85		22.26	5.47	31.58
N/A			3.85		22.26	5.47	31.58
Mixed Broadleaves	3.08	9.53	10.70	2.07	4.00	6.55	35.94
Established		1.14	2.39		1.41	2.74	7.68
Mature	3.08	8.16	3.22	1.87	1.19	3.00	20.52
Pole		0.02					0.02
Regenerating					1.09		1.09
Young		0.22	5.10	0.21	0.30	0.81	6.64
Mixed Woodland	0.09	2.79		3.28	1.48	6.70	14.34
Established						1.56	1.56
Mature	0.09	1.62		3.28	1.48	3.37	9.83
Pole						1.40	1.40
Regenerating		1.17					1.17
Young						0.36	0.36
Native Mixed Woodland		1.29	1.56	0.15		0.44	3.45
Established		0.95	1.56			0.44	2.95
Mature				0.15			0.15
Young		0.34					0.34
Other Conifer	0.19		3.67	2.93	36.85	14.06	57.70
Established			1.92				1.92
Mature			1.75	2.73	36.85	12.75	54.08
Pole	0.19					0.57	0.76
Young				0.20		0.74	0.94

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Baseline Species and Age Class (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163) **	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Scrub/Regen				1.63	9.61	7.93	19.17
N/A				1.63	9.61	7.93	19.17
Sitka spruce	0.09		0.57	3.92	33.40	4.66	42.64
Established			0.40				0.40
Mature			0.17	0.10	16.24	1.81	18.33
Pole	0.09				4.28		4.37
Regenerating					11.39		11.39
Young				3.82	1.49	2.85	8.16
Sitka spruce/Other Conifer					9.94		9.94
Mature					5.39		5.39
Pole					4.56		4.56
Grand Total (Area ha)	3.45	13.62	20.35	13.99	117.55	45.80	214.75

* - Rounding errors can occur

Designations and Categorisations

- 8.5.4 There are woodlands within the FSA that have been either categorised as ancient woodlands or as native woodlands (**Figures 8.1.1 to 8.1.15: Forestry Study Area**). Native Woodlands that are also defined or identified as ancient woodlands have been categorised as the latter to provide a worst case scenario.
- 8.5.5 Where a woodland has been identified as ancient, the antiquity type has been listed (where known). Woodlands classed as native only are shown on **Figures 8.1.1 to 8.1.15: Forestry Study Area** and are also quantified in **Table 8.6: Baseline Woodland Categorisations**. The antiquity categorisation of the woodlands covered by the Woodland Reports are also listed in **Table 8.7: Woodland Report Antiquity Categorisation**.
- 8.5.6 Ancient woodlands are considered to be the highest conservation value woodlands due to the length of time they have been in existence. There is no mitigation for the loss of this habitat and it is considered to be irreplaceable.
- 8.5.7 Native woodlands, whilst they do not possess the same characteristics as ancient woodlands, are still more ecologically diverse and environmentally important than non-native commercial forestry.
- 8.5.8 The classification of these forests and woodlands within the FSA are shown below in **Table 8.6: Baseline Woodland Categorisations** and total 71.56 ha. These forests and woodlands have been arranged again by section.

Table 8.6: Baseline Woodland Categorisations

Woodland Categorisation and Species (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163) **	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Ancient Woodland Inventory		0.14	7.73	0.59	9.72	6.04	24.22
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)		0.14	7.73	0.59	9.72	6.04	
Ancient Woodland Inventory, Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		3.47	6.07	1.67	4.45	7.33	22.99
2a - Ancient (of semi natural origin)					2.62		
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)		3.27	6.07	1.67	1.83	7.33	
1b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)		0.19					
Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		5.68	2.15	0.20	3.13	13.20	24.36
2a - Ancient (of semi natural origin)***		0.48					
Native Woodland		5.20	2.15	0.20	3.13	13.20	
Grand Totals		9.28	15.94	2.46	17.30	26.57	71.56

* - Rounding errors can occur

** - No categorisations are identified in Section A

*** - Forests or woodlands within the FSA that are not categorised in **Table 8.6: Baseline Woodland Categorisations** but have been identified through site survey as exhibiting characteristics of ancient woodland and hence should be considered as such in this assessment.

Table 8.7: Woodland Report Antiquity Categorisation

Antiquity Categorisation	Woodland Report Reference
2a - Ancient (of sem natural origin)	
Free Church Wood	8.2.33
2a - Ancient (of sem natural origin)***	
Noran Water Woods	8.2.11
1b - Long Established (of plantation origin)	
Ballinshoe Woods	8.2.8
2b - Long Established (of plantation origin)	
Lady Jane's Plantation	8.2.2
Belliehill Wood	8.2.6
Myriewell Wood	8.2.9
Scaur Wood	8.2.9
Tillyfoddie Wood	8.2.9
Black Burn	8.2.11
Cammackmuir Plantation	8.2.11
Collonach Plantation	8.2.11
Cotbank Wood	8.2.11
Lochty Wood	8.2.12
Coldstream Plantation	8.2.15
Boggie Wood	8.2.16
Balrownie Wood	8.2.19
Den Wood	8.2.20
Woods of Redhall	8.2.24
Marketmuir Wood	8.2.26
South Kirton Wood	8.2.26
North Kirton Wood	8.2.27
Corskie Wood	8.2.28
Fetterreso Forest	8.2.30
Capo Plantation	8.2.31
Free Church Wood	8.2.33
Inverury Wood	8.2.34

*** - Forests or woodlands within the FSA that are not categorised in **Table 8.6: Baseline Woodland Categorisations** but have been identified through site survey as exhibiting characteristics of ancient woodland and hence should be considered as such in this assessment.

Future Baseline in the Absence of the Proposed Development

- 8.5.9 If the Proposed Development were not to proceed it has been assumed that commercial forests will continue to be managed principally in-line with commercial objectives and restructuring, including their felling and replanting with similar species. It is not considered likely that there will be a net reduction in the area of forest under this scenario.

Implications of Climate Change for Baseline Conditions

8.5.10 A summary of the relevant climate change projections using the UK Climate Change Projections 2018 (UKCP18) are:

- temperatures are projected to increase, particularly in Summer;
- Winter rainfall is projected to increase and Summer rainfall is most likely to decrease;
- heavy rain days (rainfall greater than 25 mm) are projected to increase, particularly in Winter;
- near surface wind speeds are expected to increase in the second half of the 21st century with Winter months experiencing more significant effects of winds; however, the increase in wind speeds is projected to be modest; and
- an increase in frequency of Winter storms over the UK.

8.5.11 The projected climate change scenario outlined above, is expected to have the following effects on baseline conditions:

- increased growth rates due to warmer and wetter seasonal changes;
- increased chance of windthrow due to weather conditions; and
- potential for greater stress conditions for the trees, which could lead to greater opportunities for pest and disease incursion.

8.6 Mitigation and Monitoring

Embedded Mitigation

8.6.1 Topic specific embedded mitigation (mitigation achieved through design) is outlined below. A comprehensive schedule of embedded mitigation is provided in **Volume 2, Chapter 17: Schedule of Mitigation**.

8.6.2 F1: The mitigation of potential effects upon forestry has been approached through the embedded mitigation of routeing and alignment and the design of the Proposed Development and ancillary infrastructure. The Holford Rules have been used to inform the siting and design process to minimise potential landscape and visual effects as well as the following principle:

- Avoid key landscape features such as locally distinctive landforms and areas of broadleaved and coniferous woodland that contribute to landscape character, especially when noted as a key characteristic of a landscape character type (LCT) or special quality of a landscape designation.

8.6.3 Details on how woodland and forest areas, including ancient woodland, have been avoided through the routeing and alignment of the Proposed Development are included in **Volume 1, Chapter 4: Alternatives and the Routeing Process**. The presence of ancient woodland, Long-Established Woodlands of Plantation Origin (LEPO) or non-categorised areas of known native woodland was considered as a key constraint in the routeing process. Wherever possible, corridor and route options were selected which would allow the alignment to avoid or minimise the need for removal of such woodland areas. The identification of OHL alignment alternatives sought to avoid these areas whilst taking account of other important constraints such as proximity to residential property. Where woodland areas could not be completely avoided, for example where they spanned the full width of the route, or where avoidance would give rise to likely significant effects on other key receptors, the requirement for clearance of woodland was minimised through the design process for the OHL and its access routes and application of additional mitigation.

Applied Mitigation

8.6.4 The Applicant is committed to the implementation of Applied Mitigation summarised in **Table 8.8: Applied Mitigation**.

8.6.5 In addition, **Volume 5, Appendix 9.6: Outline Landscape Mitigation Design Guide** sets out methods of best practice alongside aspirational approaches that would guide the mitigation and restoration of landscape features along the length of the Proposed Development which includes mitigation principals for coniferous woodland, broadleaved woodland and road edge and boundaries.

Table 8.8: Applied Mitigation

Mitigation Measure	Project Stage/Timing	Responsibility
F2: Adherence to all relevant policy and guidance documents including: • Right Tree in the Right Place; • Control of Woodland Removal Policy; • UK Forestry Standard; and • UK Woodland Assurance Standard (where applicable).	Planning stage; during construction of the Proposed Development; and during the implementation of any additional mitigation measures	SSEN Transmission
F3: SSEN Transmission will implement on-site and off-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) measures, as defined in Volume 5, Appendix 11.5: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan. BNG measures will deliver no less than a 10% net gain in biodiversity units and will be underpinned by sound ecological principles to deliver broad benefits for a range of ecological features.	Pre-energisation as defined in Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description	SSEN Transmission
F4: Off-site planting to compensate for loss of forest or woodland within permanent infrastructure areas (a total of 138.84 ha).	Planting to be agreed prior to Construction with delivery in a timeframe pursuant to that agreement	SSEN Transmission
F5: The OC width that has been assessed and identified for the safe build and energisation of the OHL through the areas of broadleaved woodland is 90 m (45 m either side of the OHL centreline). This has been assessed as a maximum OC width required at these woodland locations, with the potential of further narrowing of the OC during construction to allow greater tree retention depending on factors such as tree height, topography, crown reduction or other mitigation strategies. The methodology for this will be detailed within the Woodland Retention Plan with particular focus on where ancient woodland, LEPO and native woodland removal can be reduced.	During construction	SSEN Transmission
F6: The OC width within Loch of Park (see Volume 5, Appendix 8.2.4: Loch of Park) will be reduced to a 32 m distance to the west of the OHL to avoid the loss of woodland within the Site of Special Scientific Interest.	During construction	SSEN Transmission

Further Survey Requirements and Monitoring

8.6.6 During this assessment it has been determined that the following surveys or monitoring will be required:

- F7: Prior to felling for construction, an arboriculture survey in accordance with BS:5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Construction¹⁸ will be carried out to identify any veteran or ancient trees that may be affected by the works and implement a Tree Protection Plan if required.

Compensation/Enhancement

- 8.6.7 In order to comply with the criteria of the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy, compensatory planting would be provided as outlined in **Volume 5, Appendix 8.1: Compensatory Planting Management Plan**. The extent, location and composition of such planting will be agreed with SF, taking into account any revision to the felling and restocking plans.
- 8.6.8 The BNG Report (in **Volume 5, Appendix 11.5: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan**) details the ecological value of the baseline, and the measures that will be implemented to "conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity" in accordance with NPF4 policy 3(b). The Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) has been designed using sound ecological principles and with reference to existing and emerging BNG best practice.

¹⁸ BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations, 2012, BSI

8.7 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects - Construction

8.7.1 The assessment of effects is based on the project description as outlined in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**. Unless otherwise stated, potential effects identified are considered to be adverse.

Predicted Construction Effects

Proposed Development Felling Plan

8.7.2 Felling required for construction of the Proposed Development can be broadly divided into three separate categories;

- Infrastructure Felling - felling required for the Proposed Development footprint as described in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**;
- Management Felling – As defined in paragraph 8.1.12, felling recommended as a result of the Infrastructure Felling; and
- Scrub/Regen Clearance – clearance of trees or shrubs that have naturally regenerated in areas and may not normally require felling permission.

8.7.3 A felling plan for the Proposed Development is shown in **Volume 3, Figures 8.4.1 to 8.4.15: Proposed Development Felling Plan**, which identifies felling required for construction of the Proposed Development within the OC, as well as the management felling required to achieve the windfirm edge. These data are summarised in **Table 8.9: Felling Areas by Species and Age Class**.

Table 8.9: Felling Areas by Species and Age Class

Baseline Species and Age Class (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Infrastructure Felling							
Felled			3.85		22.26	5.47	31.58
N/A			3.85		22.26	5.47	31.58
Mixed Broadleaves	1.92	8.70	10.00	2.00	3.20	6.28	32.10
Established		1.14	1.69		0.89	2.54	6.25
Mature	1.92	7.32	3.21	1.79	1.14	2.99	18.38
Pole		0.02					0.02
Regenerating					0.87		0.87
Young		0.22	5.10	0.21	0.30	0.75	6.58
Mixed Woodland	0.09	2.79		3.28	1.48	5.40	13.04
Established						1.56	1.56
Mature	0.09	1.62		3.28	1.48	2.15	8.62
Pole						1.32	1.32
Regenerating		1.17					1.17
Young						0.36	0.36
Native Mixed Woodland		1.29	1.56	0.15		0.44	3.45
Established		0.95	1.56			0.44	2.95
Mature				0.15			0.15
Young		0.34					0.34
Other Conifer	0.19		3.37	1.26	10.98	5.94	21.74
Established			1.62				1.62
Mature			1.75	1.05	10.98	4.84	18.63

Baseline Species and Age Class (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Pole	0.19					0.47	0.66
Young				0.20		0.63	0.83
Sitka spruce	0.09		0.03	3.82	21.72	4.28	29.95
Established			0.03				0.03
Mature				0.00	11.67	1.43	13.10
Pole	0.09				3.87		3.95
Regenerating					4.70		4.70
Young				3.82	1.49	2.85	8.16
Sitka spruce/Other Conifer					6.99		6.99
Mature					2.43		2.43
Pole					4.56		4.56
Sub Totals	2.29	12.78	18.82	10.51	66.64	27.81	138.84
Management Felling							
Mixed Broadleaves	1.15	0.84	0.70	0.07	0.80	0.28	3.84
Established			0.70		0.52	0.20	1.43
Mature	1.15	0.84	0.00	0.07	0.05	0.01	2.14
Regenerating					0.22		0.22
Young						0.06	0.06
Mixed Woodland						1.30	1.30
Mature						1.21	1.21
Pole						0.08	0.08
Other Conifer			0.29	1.67	25.87	8.12	35.95
Established			0.29				0.29

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Baseline Species and Age Class (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Mature				1.67	25.87	7.91	35.45
Pole						0.10	0.10
Young						0.11	0.11
Sitka spruce			0.53	0.10	11.68	0.38	12.69
Established			0.36				0.36
Mature			0.17	0.10	4.58	0.38	5.22
Pole					0.41		0.41
Regenerating					6.69		6.69
Sitka spruce/Other Conifer					2.95		2.95
Mature					2.95		2.95
Sub Totals	1.15	0.84	1.53	1.84	41.30	10.07	56.74
Scrub Regen Clearance							
Scrub/Regen				1.63	9.61	7.93	19.16
N/A				1.63	9.61	7.93	19.16
Sub Totals	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.63	9.61	7.93	19.16
Grand Totals	3.45	13.62	20.35	13.98	117.54	45.80	214.75

* - Rounding errors can occur

- 8.7.4 As presented in **Table 8.9: Felling Areas by Species and Age Class** the total felling required for the construction of the Proposed Development is 214.75 ha as follows;
- infrastructure felling totals 138.84 ha;
 - management felling (see paragraph 8.1.12) totals 56.74 ha; and
 - scrub/regen clearance totals 19.16 ha.
- 8.7.5 It has been assumed for the purposes of this assessment that areas currently listed as 'felled awaiting restock' will have been restocked prior to construction.
- 8.7.6 Within the areas required for infrastructure and management felling, there will be a requirement to remove trees that fall into the categorisations defined in **Table 8.10: Felling by Categorisation**.

Table 8.10: Felling by Categorisation

Categorisation and Species (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Infrastructure Felling							
Ancient Woodland Inventory		0.14	6.99	0.59	4.74	5.10	17.55
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)		0.14	6.99	0.59	4.74	5.10	
Ancient Woodland Inventory, Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		3.47	5.28	1.67	2.03	7.30	19.75
2a - Ancient (of semi natural origin)					0.94		
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)		3.27	5.28	1.67	1.09	7.30	
1b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)		0.19					
Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		4.93	2.15	0.20	2.66	6.16	16.09
2a - Ancient (of semi natural origin)***		0.48					
Native Woodland		4.45	2.15	0.20	2.66	6.16	
Sub Totals		8.53	14.42	2.46	9.42	18.56	53.40
Management Felling							
Ancient Woodland Inventory		0.00	0.74	0.00	4.99	0.94	6.66
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)			0.74		4.99	0.94	
Ancient Woodland Inventory, Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		0.00	0.79	0.00	2.42	0.03	3.24
2a - Ancient (of semi natural origin)					1.68		
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)			0.79		0.74	0.03	
Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		0.75	0.00	0.00	0.47	6.86	8.08
Native Woodland		0.75			0.47	6.86	
Sub Totals		0.75	1.53	0.00	7.88	7.82	17.98

Categorisation and Species (by Section)	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Native Woodland Survey of Scotland		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.19
Native Woodland						0.19	
Sub totals		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.19
Grand Totals		9.28	15.94	2.46	17.30	26.58	71.56

* - Rounding errors can occur

** - No categorisations are identified in Section A

*** - Forests or woodlands within the FSA that are not categorised in **Table 8.6: Baseline Woodland Categorisations** but have been identified through site survey as exhibiting characteristics of ancient woodland and hence should be considered as such in this assessment.

Table 8.11 Operational Corridor Forest and Woodland Loss

Loss by Categorisation/Species	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
2a - Ancient (of semi-natural origin)							
Sitka spruce					0.94		0.94
2a - Ancient (of semi-natural origin)***							
Mixed Woodland		0.48					0.48
1b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)							
Native Mixed Woodland		0.19					0.19
2b - Long-Established (of plantation origin)							
Felled			2.24			5.41	7.66
Mixed Broadleaves		2.99	5.24	0.08	0.54	0.46	9.31
Mixed Woodland		0.01		2.03		1.69	3.72
Native Mixed Woodland		0.41	1.38	0.15			1.95
Other Conifer			3.37			1.99	5.37
Sitka spruce			0.03		4.78	2.84	7.66

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Loss by Categorisation/Species	Section A (Tower S206 – S163)	Section B (Tower S162 – S106)	Section C (Tower S105 – S52)	Section D (Tower S51-S1)	Section E (Tower N96 – N61)	Section F (Tower N60 – N1)	Totals Area (ha)
Sitka spruce/Other Conifer					0.51		0.51
Sub Totals	0.00	4.08	12.27	2.27	6.76	12.40	37.78
Native Woodland							
Mixed Broadleaves		2.50	2.09		0.96	2.16	7.71
Mixed Woodland		1.50		0.20	0.57	0.97	3.23
Native Mixed Woodland		0.45	0.06			0.22	0.73
Other Conifer						2.80	2.80
Sitka spruce					0.19	0.01	0.19
Sitka spruce/Other Conifer					0.94		0.94
Sub Totals	0.00	4.45	2.15	0.20	2.66	6.16	15.61
No categorisation							
Felled			1.60		22.26	0.06	23.92
Mixed Broadleaves	1.92	3.20	2.68	1.92	1.70	3.65	15.07
Mixed Woodland	0.09	0.80		1.06	0.91	2.74	5.60
Native Mixed Woodland		0.24	0.12	0.00		0.21	0.57
Other Conifer	0.19		0.00	1.26	10.98	1.15	13.58
Sitka spruce	0.09			3.82	15.82	1.43	21.16
Sitka spruce/Other Conifer					5.54		5.54
Sub Totals	2.29	4.24	4.40	8.05	57.21	9.24	85.44
Totals	2.29	12.78	18.82	10.51	66.64	27.80	138.84

8.7.7 As shown in **Table: 8.10: Felling by Categorisation** the felling of categorised areas within the FSA, as part of the Proposed Development, is 71.56 ha. Of this felling:

- infrastructure felling of designated and categorised forests and woodlands totals 53.40 ha,
- management felling (see Paragraph 8.1.8) of designated and categorised forests and woodland totals 17.98 ha; and
- scrub clearance of 0.19 ha of are designated as Native Woodland.

8.7.8 The 138.84 ha of infrastructure felling will be left unstocked as the OC for the Proposed Development. This is regarded as permanent woodland loss as a result of the Proposed Development. This data is summarised in **Table: 8.11: Operational Corridor Forest and Woodland Loss**. Of this woodland loss:

- 0.94 ha is forestry categorised as 2a Ancient Woodland (of semi-natural origin);
- 0.48 ha is woodland identified as 2a Ancient (of semi-natural origin) through site surveys but not officially categorised as such in the AWI;
- 0.19 ha is woodland categorised as 1b Long-Established (of plantation origin);
- 36.17 ha is woodlands categorised as 2b Long-Established (of plantation origin);
- 15.61 ha is considered to be Native Woodlands as per the definition in **paragraph 8.1.12**; and
- 85.44 ha is uncategorised.

Approach to the assessment

8.7.9 The assessment on net forest and woodland loss and windthrow risk was undertaken using the matrix detailed in **Table 8.4: Matrix for Determination of Significance of Effects**. The sensitivity and magnitude of impact of the forest or woodland within the FSA was determined using the data produced through the assessment to identify and draw a conclusion on the significance of effect.

Sensitivity

8.7.10 The assessment of the FSA has determined that felling will be required of woodlands categorised as ancient and semi-natural and native. These areas are deemed to be irreplaceable habitat and they total a proportion of the overall FSA of approximately 31%.

8.7.11 The assessment within this Chapter considers the most sensitive elements of the Site and the worst case impact of the Proposed Development upon forestry. It then applies this single sensitivity to the entire assessment even though there will be forests and woodlands along the OC that are of a lower sensitivity.

8.7.12 The overall judgement is that, as the sensitivity of the most sensitive areas of forestry and woodland resource has been categorised as Class 2a and 2b ancient woodland (with a fractionally small area of 1b) as per **Table 8.2: Sensitivity Criteria**, the overall sensitivity has been determined to be **High**.

Magnitude

8.7.13 Using the criteria within **Table 8.3: Magnitude of Change Criteria**, the magnitude of impact is determined to be **High** as there would be permanent forest and woodland loss within the majority of the OC which is the predominant factor within the FSA.

Significance

8.7.14 With a **High** sensitivity and a **High** magnitude, the Proposed Development has a **Major** significance and constitutes a **Significant** effect.

8.7.15 The management felling of 56.74 ha, which would not be under the direct control of SSEN Transmission, will mitigate against windthrow while maintaining a windfirm edge of trees that are considered less likely to fall down due to wind disturbance as a result of prolonged exposure to the wind.

8.8 Residual Construction Effects

- 8.8.1 Subject to adherence with all embedded and applied mitigation, as outlined in **Section 8.6 Mitigation and Monitoring** above, **Significant** residual effects (in EIA terms) as a result of the construction of the Proposed Development are anticipated on forestry.

8.9 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects - Decommissioning

- 8.9.1 Decommissioning effects are unclear given the Proposed Development's operational life and the manner in which forestry features within the Study Area could change over such a long period. However, while decommissioning effects are not assessed further (see **Volume 5, Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report** for further details), it is unlikely that the significance of effects experienced at that time will be greater than those assessed for the construction phase.

8.10 Assessment of Likely Cumulative Effects

- 8.10.1 The assessment of cumulative effects on forestry is based upon consideration of the effects of the Proposed Development within the FSA, in addition to the likely effects of cumulative developments.
- 8.10.2 Operational, under construction developments and existing grid infrastructure elements, are considered as part of the baseline and taken to be such for the assessment of effects on forestry.
- 8.10.3 The relevant cumulative developments for consideration in the EIAR are listed in **Volume 2, Chapter 16: Cumulative Effects**. Professional judgment has been applied to determine those most likely to have adverse cumulative impacts on forestry and as identified in **Section 8.3: Effects Scoped Out**, there is no consideration of the cumulative operational effects as none are present for effects upon forestry.
- 8.10.4 **Table 8.12: Cumulative Assessment: Intra (Associated) Developments (SSEN Transmission Developments required to connect the Proposed Development)** provides a cumulative assessment of the Proposed Development with the Intra (Associated) Developments defined in **Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**. These are the substation proposals at Emmock and Hurlie which would be directly connected with the proposed OHL.
- 8.10.5 **Table 8.13: Cumulative Assessment: Inter Developments (Other SSEN Transmission Developments and Third Party Developments)** provides a cumulative assessment of the Proposed Development and Intra (Associated) Developments with other reasonably foreseeable SSEN Transmission and third party developments (collectively, referred to as Inter Developments) as defined in **Volume 1, Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**.
- 8.10.6 A brief commentary is then provided following **Table 8.13: Cumulative Assessment: Inter Developments (Other SSEN Transmission Developments and Third Party Developments)** on the predicted cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with the Intra and Inter projects considered in the assessment.

Table 8.12: Cumulative Assessment: Intra (Associated) Developments (SSEN Transmission Developments required to connect the Proposed Development)

Cumulative Development	Cumulative Construction Effects
Emmock 400 kV substation	Impacts upon forestry were scoped out of the assessment for the Emmock 400 kV substation with limited removal of gappy hedges required. There is no removal of any categorised woodland required for this SSEN Transmission Associated Development. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Emmock 400 kV substation.
Hurlie 400 kV substation	The EIAR for the Hurlie 400 kV substation did not identify any significant effects on forestry and no categorised woodland is present within the application area or the felling area required for this SSEN Transmission Associated Development.
Overall Intra Cumulative Assessment Summary	Whilst there would be a greater area of forest clearance required for both the Proposed Development and the Hurlie 400 kV substation together, considering the embedded and applied mitigation in place on both projects, there would be no significant cumulative effect from the Proposed Development and the SSEN Transmission Associated Developments.

- 8.10.7 The Proposed Development is predicted to have a significant residual effect on forestry during construction. The Proposed Development is not predicted to give rise to cumulative effects when combined with the Intra Developments as forestry is not affected by Emmock 400 kV substation and mitigation for the Proposed Development and Hurlie

400 kV substation, including adherence to all relevant policy documents and restocking proposals, are not predicted to give rise to significant cumulative effects on forestry.

Table 8.13: Cumulative Assessment: Inter Developments (Other SSEN Transmission Developments and Third Party Developments)

Cumulative Development	Cumulative Construction Effects
Emmock and Tealing Tie-ins and Tie-Backs	Impacts upon forestry were scoped out of the assessment for the Emmock 400 kV substation with limited removal of gappy hedges required and this tie-in project will be partly located within the same area. There is no removal of any categorised woodland required for this inter development. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Tie ins and Tie backs.
Alyth to Tealing 275 kV OHL Upgrade (to 400 kV)	The upgrade project involves reconductoring of the OHL between the existing towers. No new towers would require to be erected as part of the proposed works and there would be no requirement for any groundbreaking works. Therefore, there are no effects on forestry. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Alyth to Tealing 275 kV OHL Upgrade.
Tealing to Westfield 275 kV OHL Upgrade (to 400 kV)	The upgrade project involves reconductoring of the OHL between the existing towers. No new towers would require to be erected as part of the proposed works and there would be no requirement for any groundbreaking works. Therefore, there are no effects on forestry. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Tealing to Westfield 275 kV OHL Upgrade.
Fithie Energy Park	The request for a screening opinion for the Fithie Energy Park states “ <i>Within the proposed Site is an area of woodland approximately 1.5ha in total split between two areas: a 0.3ha area in the west of the Site, adjacent and to the north of Fithie Burn and a larger 1.2 ha area to the east of the Site. Both of these areas are to be retained with no tree felling proposed.</i> ” Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Fithie Energy Park.
Balnuith Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)	The Planning, Design and Access Statement for the Balnuith BESS states “ <i>The Development would be offset from existing landscape features, and no tree loss would be necessary</i> ”. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Balnuith BESS.
Myreton BESS	Information provided by the applicant for Myreton BESS in the public consultation held in March 2025 states “ <i>Trees and Landscaping: The site and cable route contain limited tree cover, with only a few trees along field boundaries potentially affected to facilitate access or services.</i> ” ¹⁹ . There are no areas of AWI within the boundary of the Myreton BESS. There is no information presented as to the nature and categorisation of these trees and therefore on a precautionary basis, working from a worst case basis and assuming that any trees that may be affected by the Myreton BESS are of significant value then there are significant cumulative effects predicted.
Ark Hill Wind Farm Extension	The EIAR for this development identifies that there is both broadleaved and coniferous woodland within the Study Area for the ecological assessment but there are no works within these areas shown on the planning application drawings. The EIAR for this development (in table 11.8 of their EIAR) scopes out impacts upon woodland features and this has not been questioned by NatureScot in their response to the application. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Ark Hill Wind Farm Extension.
Glendye Wind Farm	The EIAR for this development states that forestry felling is required along sections of the main access track “ <i>Overall, approximately 1.22ha of woodland will be removed during construction of the main site access track and working of borrow pit 1. In accordance with the Scottish Government Control of Woodland Removal Policy, the Applicant will re-plant 1.22ha of broadleaf woodland locally as a means of compensating for this loss.</i> ” (Chapter 4: Scheme Description). Therefore, on a precautionary basis, and assuming that any trees that may be affected by the Glendye Wind Farm are of significant value then there are significant cumulative effects predicted.

¹⁹ Myreton BESS. Myreton Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Project [Online] Available at : <https://fpedevelopments.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FPE-2nd-Exhibition-Boards.pdf>

Cumulative Development	Cumulative Construction Effects
Laurencekirk Residential Development	The Planning Supporting Statement for this development states in paragraph 4.28 that existing woodland will be retained. The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey also states that no significant habitat loss is anticipated assuming the retention of these trees. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Laurencekirk Residential Development.
Glendye Wind Farm Grid Connection	This development involves the construction of an approximately 20 km 132 kV OHL between the Glendye Wind Farm and the existing Fetteresso substation. Information submitted with this development's Scoping Report identifies LEPO and native woodland within the search corridor for where the OHL may eventually be consented²⁰. With the information available at present it is likely that categorised woodland removal could occur and accordingly, adopting a worst case scenario, the cumulative effect of the Proposed Development with the Glendye Wind Farm Grid Connection will be Significant.
Fetteresso Wind Farm, Grid Connection and Access Corridor	This development involves construction and operation of 10 wind turbines within the vicinity of Fetteresso Forest. Chapter 11 Forestry Assessment of the EIA for this development concludes that <i>"26.13 ha of forest will be lost (2% of the forest within the Study Area), which comprises 23.99 ha which will be felled and not replanted & 2.14 ha of currently bare ground which will not be replanted. Compensatory planting proposals for 26.13 ha will ensure that there is no net loss of woodland as a result of the development. This planting will occur on land outwith the ownership of the Forestry and Land Scotland."</i> Therefore on a precautionary basis, working from a worst case basis and assuming that any trees that may be affected by the development are of significant value then there are significant cumulative effects predicted.
Glenbervie BESS	This project is just at the Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) stage and therefore very limited information is available in the public domain other than a location drawing that shows that the red line for the project abuts onto Broadleaved woodland along the access track that is registered in the NFI and coniferous woodland to the east of the site that is similarly recorded in the NFI. It is assumed that a BESS development would not need to remove woodland that is on its boundary and that sufficient area is available within the site access without impacting upon woodland on neighbouring land. Accordingly, with the limited information available at present, it is concluded that there is no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Glenbervie BESS.
Quithel BESS	This project has received a Screening Opinion from the Scottish Ministers that concludes that it does not constitute EIA development. The site location submitted with the request for a Screening Opinion does show that there are likely to be arboricultural features on site, but these are on the boundary and are not categorised or designated. It is therefore reasonable to assume that if they are required to be removed, with the information available at present, that there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Quithel BESS.
Network Rail Drumlithie	This is an SSEN Transmission reasonably foreseeable development for the installation of new transformers at Fetteresso Substation and cable connections to the railway line. With the information available at present it is likely that there will be additional loss of woodland within Fetteresso Forest for the Network Rail Drumlithie project. There is no information available on where the final alignment of this project will be but the search area that is available does show that this includes some areas of ancient woodland and areas of commercial forest within Fetteresso forest. With the information available at present it is likely that categorised woodland removal could occur and accordingly, adopting a worst case scenario, the cumulative effect of the Proposed Development with the Network Rail Drumlithie project will be Significant.
Fiddes 132 kV Grid Replacement	This project is an SSEN Transmission reasonably foreseeable development located near to Fetteresso Forest and has not been subject to a screening or scoping. There is a possible requirement to install a new double circuit 132KV connection from the existing Fiddes substation to the existing/upgraded Fetteresso substation. It is unknown the extent and nature of the felling required for this development, therefore on a precautionary basis, working from a worst case basis and assuming that any trees that may be affected by the development are of significant value then there is a significant cumulative effect predicted.
SSEN Transmission Offshore Grid	This project is an SSEN Transmission reasonably foreseeable development located within Fetteresso Forest and has not been subject to a screening or scoping. The Project would likely involve an onshore HVDC converter station and underground cables from the coast to the

²⁰ Figure 7: Forestry, EIA Scoping Report in Glendye Wind Farm Overhead Line Grid Connection, SSEN Transmission

Cumulative Development	Cumulative Construction Effects
Connection and Access Corridors	HVDC converter station. It is unknown the extent and nature of the felling required for this development, therefore on a precautionary basis, working from a worst case basis and assuming that any trees that may be affected by the development are of significant value then there is a significant cumulative effect predicted.
Possible Future Wind Farm Connection	This project is an SSEN Transmission reasonably foreseeable development located within Fetteresso Forest and has not been subject to a screening or scoping. The Project would likely involve a 132 kV OHL with a section of underground cable on the approach to the substation. It is unknown the extent and nature of the felling required for this development, therefore on a precautionary basis, working from a worst case basis and assuming that any trees that may be affected by the development are of significant value then there is a significant cumulative effect predicted.
Onshore Transmission Infrastructure for Bowdun Offshore Wind Farm	This project is in receipt of a Scoping Opinion from Aberdeenshire Council and within the developer's Scoping Report they state in Table 7.2 that the EIAR for the development will consider impacts upon commercial forestry in the construction, operation and decommissioning phase. Therefore, with the information available at present, it is concluded, working on a worst case scenario, that there will be a significant cumulative effect predicted.
Craigie Wind Farm	This project has not been the subject to screening or scoping and very limited information is available within the public domain. However, the information that is available shows that it is likely to connect to the proposed Hurlie substation or the existing Fetteresso substation. There is therefore the likelihood that there will be the need for removal of commercial forest and possible designated woodland. Therefore, with the information available at present, it is concluded, working on a worst case scenario, that there will be a significant cumulative effect predicted.
Kintore to Craigiebuckler 132 kV OHL (existing realignment (undergrounding))	This project is an SSEN Transmission Development and will be undertaken under permitted development and as such there is no screening or scoping information available. The indicative route for the underground cable of this OHL does not interact with any areas of forestry and therefore there would be no significant cumulative effects predicted from the Proposed Development and the Kintore to Craigiebuckler 132 kV OHL (existing realignment (undergrounding)).
Hill of Fare Wind Farm	The information provided by the developer of Hill of Fare Wind Farm in support of their planning application suggests that a borrow pit, a batching plant and a construction compound could be located within an area of forest that is ancient woodland but online aerial imagery suggests that this area has been recently felled and paragraph 14.6.25 suggests that this occurred during Storm Arwen in November 2021. However, it is unclear from the application documentation as to whether any ancient woodland remains and whether it is due to be felled to facilitate the development. Accordingly, working on a worst case assumption, it is concluded that there will be a significant cumulative effect due to the loss of ancient woodland.
South Leylodge Farm BESS	The information submitted within the planning application for this development shows that it is located on an agricultural field with no forest or woodland features in close proximity that could be significantly affected. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the South Leylodge Farm BESS.
Kintore Substation BESS	There is ancient woodland on the boundary of the site although the site layout shows that there is no infrastructure within this area and accordingly there is no cumulative significant effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Kintore Substation BESS as only open ground will be built upon.
Kintore Hydrogen Production Facility	This development requires a parcel of land to the south west of the existing Kintore substation as well as a network or narrow corridors. The Tree Survey Report submitted with the application states that the site borders ancient and native woodlands and therefore there is the potential for impacting upon these arboricultural assets although in Table 2.4 it is clarified that no areas of ancient or native woodland are to be removed and potential significant impacts are not considered to be present. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Kintore Hydrogen Production Facility.
Kintore South Solar Array and BESS	This development includes a co-located solar photovoltaic (PV) array and BESS. The Screening Report shows the red line boundary of the development which includes an area of woodland, however does not identify any areas of felling required but it does identify an opportunity to maintain and enhance forest cover by incorporating new tree planting and ensuring no net loss of woodland.

Cumulative Development	Cumulative Construction Effects
	Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Kintore South Solar Array and BESS.
Womblehill Farm BESS	The screening checklist for this development undertaken by Aberdeenshire Council identifies that there is <i>"Ancient Woodland adjacent to site, but the site is not within a forested area."</i> Aberdeenshire Council also concludes that there is no significant impact upon forest areas from this development. Accordingly, there would be no significant cumulative effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Womblehill Farm BESS.
Cossans Solar and BESS	Information within the Planning Statement and the EIAR for this development identifies that ancient woodland is present along the western boundary of the site and that the current land use includes small sections of woodland along the access track. There is no Forestry chapter included within the EIAR and the application documents do not expressly identify whether woodland areas are to be removed but the indicative landscape plans do appear to show that areas of woodland and trees that are evident from aerial imagery are retained and bolstered with additional planting as part of the project. Accordingly, there would be no significant effect predicted from the Proposed Development and the Cossans Solar and BESS.
Overall Inter Cumulative Effects Summary	Overall, working on a worst case assumption it is concluded that the Proposed Development is predicted to give rise to significant cumulative effects when combined with the Inter Developments during its construction phase as there a number of developments where woodland could be removed, although in most cases the nature and extend of the woodland removal is unknown.

8.11 Summary of Total Intra and Inter Cumulative Effects

- 8.11.1 Taking into consideration both the Intra and Inter developments as listed above, and adopting a worst case scenario it is concluded that there is a significant cumulative effect on forestry during construction. There are 11 Inter Developments that have been predicted to have cumulative effects when considered together with the Proposed Development and the Intra Developments. These projects include BESS, Wind Farms, grid connections, transformers and cable connections for a railway, a HVDC converter station and onshore transmission infrastructure for an offshore wind farm. The majority (eight) of the developments which are likely to have a cumulative effect are located within or near to Fetteresso Forest, with one development near Tealing whereas no cumulative effects have been identified near to Kintore. The other two developments identified are wind farms located west of the Proposed Development in sections D and F.
- 8.11.2 However, as set out in **Table 8.13: Cumulative Assessment: Inter Developments (Other SSEN Transmission Developments and Third Party Developments)** there is limited information available on the extent to which these projects will impact forestry individually and therefore no quantitative assessment can be undertaken to determine the likely significant effects in detail but given the number and scale of the Inter Developments, there is potential for further loss of forestry if they are all developed and therefore overall there is the potential for a Significant cumulative adverse effect on forestry during construction.

8.12 Summary of Significant Effects

- 8.12.1 **Table 8.14: Summary of Significant Effects** below summarises the predicted residual effects of the Proposed Development on forestry prior to and following to application of additional mitigation. There are no Significant effects during the operational phase or any Significant cumulative effects during the operational phase, based on the information available

Table 8.14: Summary of Significant Effects

Predicted Effects	Significance of Effect Prior to Additional Mitigation	Additional Mitigation	Significance of Residual Effects Following Additional Mitigation
Construction	High and Significant	N/A	High and Significant
Cumulative Construction	Significant	N/A	Significant