

Volume 5: Appendix 8.2.10 – Woodland

Report: Durris Church Woodland

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1. WOODLAND REPORT: DURRIS CHURCH WOODLAND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Woodland Report has been prepared by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (the Applicant) who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission), own, operate and develop the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.
- 1.1.2 This Woodland Report will accompany an application for Consent under Section 37 of the *Electricity Act 1989*¹ (as amended) and Section 57(2) of the *Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997* to construct and operate approximately 105.2 kilometres (km) of new double circuit 400 kilovolts (kV) overhead transmission line (OHL) between Kintore and Tealing (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). A full description of the Proposed Development and its ancillary works is set out within **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description** of this EIAR.

1.2 Purpose of this Woodland Report

- 1.2.1 As part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, it was identified that the OHL construction and the access tracks required to construct the Proposed Development would cross a number of woodland areas within private or state-owned landholdings.
- 1.2.2 This Woodland Report provides a conceptual assessment of the woodland areas that are affected by the Proposed Development, including the requirement of woodland removal and management recommendations to mitigate the impact of the woodland removal.
- 1.2.3 This Woodland Report relates to land at Durris Church Woodland and the relevant landholding property boundary is presented in **Figure 8.1.10: Landowner Boundaries**.
- 1.2.4 Field surveys of the woodland areas have been undertaken and have been used to determine the various woodland characteristics in order to identify the woodland removal required and recommended. This Woodland Report also sets out the area quantity (in hectares (ha)) to be compensatory planted to ensure no net loss of woodland is achieved as required by The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal².

Requirement and Objectives of the Report

- 1.2.5 This Woodland Report details the works required to the woodland, including the felling any restocking, due to the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.
- 1.2.6 The objectives of this Woodland Report are to:
- provide an assessment of the woodland areas that are affected by the Proposed Development, including the requirement for woodland removal and management recommendations to mitigate the impact of the woodland removal; and
 - describe any mitigation measures proposed to address likely impacts relating to loss of woodland and windthrow risk and to meet The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal by identifying the required quantity for compensatory planting.

Limitations and assumptions

- 1.2.7 All data included within this Woodland Report has been gathered from field surveys or desk-based assessments, which includes analysis of nationally held datasets, up to date aerial imagery and field measurements and data collection.

¹ UK Government, 1989. *Electricity Act 1989*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/contents>

² 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>

- 1.2.8 Baseline data was derived from Scotland's environmental web³ and Scottish Forestry map viewer⁴. The data sources identified in **paragraph 8.4.6 of Volume 2, Chapter 8: Forestry** were also used to inform this Woodland Report.
- 1.2.9 Forests (or woodlands) comprise the land, of at least 0.5 ha (UKFS: V5 2023) under areas of trees with a canopy cover of at least 20%, or having the potential to achieve this, including the integral open space, as well as any felled areas awaiting replanting and are identified on the National Forest Inventory (NFI). The term 'forest' and 'forestry' for the purpose of this report 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 timber production.
- 1.2.10 Woodland structure and age for the purpose of this Woodland Report have been categorised into an age class matrix:
- Young – young trees, generally less than 5 years old;
 - Immature – trees between approximately 6-15 years old;
 - Pole Stage – trees between 16 – 30 years old, primarily conifer;
 - 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.
- 1.2.11 In addition, to simplify the reader's understanding, 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 – broadleaf 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 conifer and broadleaf trees with non-native species present;
 - Native Mixed Woodland – mixed woodland containing native broadleaf species such as Oak or Birch and including elements of Scots Pine;
 - Conifer – Conifer species; Sitka spruce, Norway spruce, Larch, Firs or Pines; and
 - Scrub/Regen – areas of unmanaged land with low density, self-seeded trees. A mixture of species with non-native conifer and broadleaf trees present.

1.3 Woodland Property

- 1.3.1 Durris Church Woodland (hereinafter referred to as the property) is situated east of Banchory and is under private ownership. The woodland is comprised of broadleaf species including beech, oak and silver birch with a conifer component including Larch, Douglas fir and Scots pine. This small section of mixed woodland (0.91 ha) lies on the southern banks of the River Dee.

1.4 Development Requirements

400 kV Overhead Line

- 1.4.1 The Study Area for this assessment is based on the required Operational Corridor (see **paragraphs 3.8.21 to 3.8.22 in Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**). The Applicant defines the OC as the area in which it has rights to remove woodland for the purposes of the safe construction, resilience and continued maintenance of OHLs, or protection of electrical plant as required by the *Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002 regulations* and the *Electricity Act 1989*. The OC is defined with reference to the distance at which a tree could fall and cause damage to the OHL, resulting in a supply outage. As a result, the final OC width would be based on the safety distance required to allow for a mature tree falling towards the OHL at the mid-point on an OHL span between two Towers, taking account of

³ Scottish Forestry Land Information Search URL: https://map.environment.gov.scot/LIS_Agri/Agri.html

⁴ Scottish Forestry Map Viewer URL:

<https://scottishforestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d6125cfe892439ab0e5d0b74d9acc18>

topography and tree height at maturity. Standard falling distance for a mature conifer tree is considered to be a minimum of 30 m. Where the OC passes through areas of native broadleaved woodland, it is noted that the width of woodland may be reduced, due to the general lower height and characteristics of the tree species present and as will be detailed in the Woodland Retention Plan.

- 1.4.2 The 400 kV OHL standard tower dimensions for the Proposed Development have a width of 11.2 m at the widest part (crossarm) of the tower ie. from outside conductor to outside conductor, in addition to this the safety vicinity zone from each conductor is a 5.3 m radius around the conductor.
- 1.4.3 The OC width that has been assessed and identified for the safe build and energisation of the OHL through the areas of broadleaves is also 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.

Access Track Route Design

- 1.4.4 Access track requirements to facilitate tower construction will occur to the south of the property for Tower N62. As there is no tower construction taking place within the property, only tree clearance, no access tracks are required. Any required access on a temporary basis for tree clearance, will be through existing track upgrade to the south of the property.

1.5 Woodland Characteristics

- 1.5.1 The entire property is situated to the east of Banchory, to the south of the A93 and the river Dee. The woodland is located directly on the southern banks of the Dee. The property cannot be accessed from the north (A93) and instead can be accessed from the south, through the village of Kirkton of Durris.
- 1.5.2 The woodland area impacted by the Proposed Development is an area of predominantly native broadleaves with a smaller conifer component. Ground conditions are variable, on mostly undifferentiated, alluvial soils. The broadleaf area is made up of beech, oak and silver birch whilst conifers include larch, Douglas fir and Scots pine. The woodland has a diverse age structure, with the main age class being mature. Maximum top height for this block is approaching circa. 18 m. This is neither a commercial nor a recreational woodland, with minimal public access taking place within. Furthermore, the woodland appears to be wind resistant with few instances of windblow appearing throughout the crop.
- 1.5.3 A desk-based study of the woodland areas was conducted, utilising web-based data provided by Scottish Forestry³ and referencing the Scottish Government's Ancient Woodland Inventory, to identify current woodland environmental designations and classifications.
- 1.5.4 The Scottish Forestry Map Viewer⁴ provides spatial data on the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland⁵ and classifies the woodland types into four categories:
 - Native woodland⁶;
 - Nearly-native woodland⁷;
 - Open land habitat⁸; and
 - Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)⁹.

⁵ Scottish Forestry Native Woodland Survey of Scotland: Glossary of Terms; URL: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/75-native-woodland-survey-of-scotland-glossary-of-terms/viewdocument/75>

⁶ Native Woodland – woods where the canopy cover is composed mainly of native species (ie over 50%)

⁷ Nearly Native Woodland - where native species make up between 40% and 50% of the canopy. These are woods that could have potential to be converted into native woodlands by altering their species mix.

⁸ Open Land Habitat – areas with <20% canopy cover of trees and shrubs adjoining a native woodland.

⁹ PAWS - Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites. These are surveyed in the NWSS where they are recorded in the Scottish ancient woodland inventory (SAWI). These woodlands appear to have originated through natural regeneration sometime before the mid-19th century, but were later converted to planted woods.

- 1.5.5 The Durris Church Woodland located between Towers N61 and N62, **Figure 8.2.10: Proposed Felling Requirements** has been identified as Native Woodland Classification. Based on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), the property is not under any designations.
- 1.5.6 Desk-based study of the woodland area, using both the Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, has identified small areas Native Woodland as detailed in **Table 1: Woodland type affected by the Proposed Development**.

Table 1: Woodland type affected by the Proposed Development

Woodland	Ancient semi-natural native broadleaved woodland (ASNW) 1a	Ancient semi-natural native broadleaved woodland (ASNW) 2a	Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) (1b – 1750)	Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) (2b – 1860)	Other Woodlands (Roy)	Native broadleaved woodland	Total classified woodland area
Durris Church Woodland	-	-	-	-	-	0.57 ha	0.57 ha

* - Rounding errors can occur

Plate 1: Looking south towards Tower N62



- 1.5.7 **Plate 1** shows the mixed broadleaf woodland with scrub understorey, looking south towards Tower N62. The broadleaf species are mainly made up of mature silver birch, alder, hawthorn, sycamore and beech with a scrub mix of broom, gorse and willow. Regular flooding is evident due to impoverished ground conditions throughout the woodland. Given the

low-lying topography and proximity to the River Dee, it can be assumed that this woodland would regularly flood in winter, during spate conditions.

Plate 2: Looking north towards Tower N61



- 1.5.8 **Plate 2** again shows the woodland composition between Towers N60 and N61. With impoverished ground conditions and erosional damage from flooding, this woodland has a poorly regenerating understorey with mature mixed broadleaves throughout.

Plate 3: Looking north towards Tower N61



1.5.9 **Plate 3** looks north from the property, within the OC, towards Tower N61. This gives an indication of the proximity to the River Dee.

1.6 Windthrow Risk Impact

- 1.6.1 The forest ground conditions are variable on mostly poorly drained gley soil and brown earth. The site has a warm, sheltered and moist climate. The soils are 'moist' moisture status and 'rich' nutrient status.
- 1.6.2 An assessment was undertaken of the risk of windblow to areas of woodland adjacent to the OC which would be exposed due to the tree clearance required for the OC. This assessment is based on the professional judgement of the forestry surveyor with consideration being given to the soil and moisture regime, the topography, tree species, top height, exposure, altitude and aspect in relation to the prevailing wind direction and any previous management regimes from

either, observations at a site level or via an approved management plan. Reference is also made to Forest GALES¹⁰ 2.5 Forest Research decision support system. Felling outwith the OC to a windfirm boundary is termed Management Felling and is presented within **Figure 8.2.10: Proposed Felling Requirements**.

- 1.6.3 The woodland site affected by the Proposed Development has a 'Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring' (DAMS)¹¹ windthrow hazard class score ranging between 11 and 12, classified as 'sheltered-moderately exposed'. No impact of windthrow risk will be created by the removal of the conifer plantation areas within the OHL OC and access track Corridors. A minimal impact of windthrow has been assessed for the native broadleaved woodland areas, due to their location, size and structure.

1.7 Woodland Management Impact

- 1.7.1 The OHL alignment will create additional challenges for the future management of the forest as it dissects existing management coupes and introduces an electrical hazard. The constraint associated with the electrical hazard will be reduced by regular maintenance of the OC, which will avoid the incidences of "Red Zone" trees¹² (reference FISA 804 "Electricity at Work: Forestry").
- 1.7.2 The OHL alignment crosses the forest road network at either approximately 45 or 90 degrees and will be built to the regulatory safe height clearances above forest roads/access tracks, which will reduce the hazard in respect of future timber haulage.
- 1.7.3 The OHL alignment may be restrictive to future in-forest machinery access. The requirement for dedicated forestry machine OHL crossing points will be discussed with the landowner and if required will be identified once the OHL has been constructed, thus providing a safe OHL crossing point(s) for future working within the woodland.
- 1.7.4 The Proposed Development will permanently remove existing mature and young conifer woodland with an area of broadleaved woodland from the OC. This will reduce the forestry restructuring/planting land available within the woodland property area, as the OC will be maintained clear of trees.
- 1.7.5 During the construction phase, a level of disruption will be created for the undertaking of routine forestry management activities by the landowner on the woodland property. This will be project managed through communication and agreement with the affected stakeholders.

1.8 Mitigation Opportunities

- 1.8.1 Prior to the construction phase broadleaf areas will be assessed for further selective felling to identify if greater tree retention can be achieved. This will be dependent on the requirements of the development project and in particular the safety of OHL wiring operations.
- 1.8.2 The OC woodland removal area is required for the construction and functioning of the new OHL infrastructure. Reference to **Section 1.10: Compensatory Planting**, will fully mitigate the OC woodland removal area by replanting the area of woodland removed.
- 1.8.3 No Management Felling has been proposed in this area.

¹⁰ Forest Research (2025). Available at: <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>. The Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring (DAMS) is a system used to assess wind exposure in forestry and land management. It provides a numerical score that quantifies the level of exposure a site experiences based on factors such as elevation, topography, and aspect (the direction a slope faces). The DAMS score helps foresters predict wind risk, which is crucial for understanding tree stability, growth potential, and the likelihood of windthrow (trees being uprooted or broken by wind). The scoring system ranges from 0 to 24, with higher scores indicating more exposure to wind.

¹¹ Detailed Aspect method of Scoring (DAMS) Ref. Forest Research, "Forest Gales software programme" and Forestry Commission Leaflet 85 "Windthrow Hazard Classification"

¹² As specified by the 'Red Zone' set out in paragraph 41 of the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) Safety Guide 804 Electricity at Work: Forestry (2020) FISA 804 <https://ukfisa.com/>

1.9 Woodland Removal Impact

- 1.9.1 Woodland removal area calculations are approximate and have been rounded up to reflect the worst case scenario for removal. Woodland felling will be reduced as much as possible through mitigation.

Table 1 Woodland Removal for Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Infrastructure felling	Mixed woodland	0.91 ha

Table 2 Compensatory Planting

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Compensatory Planting Area	Mixed woodland	0.91 ha

Table 3 Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Total Loss of Woodland Area		0.91 ha
Total Compensatory Planting Area		0.91 ha
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.0 ha

Table 4 Woodland Removal for Management Felling

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Management Felling		0.0 ha
Replanting/Restocking		0.0 ha
Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.0 ha
<i>Note- Felling and restocking approval is via Scottish Forestry Felling Permission application process or Long-Term Forest Plan application or amendment process. This is to be sought by the landowner on whose land the management felling takes place, who is also responsible for all associated restocking operations.</i>		

1.10 Compensatory Planting

- 1.10.1 Compensatory planting to achieve the area quantity (hectares) of woodland removal, referenced above will be provided for the OHL and access track OC area and will be in accordance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP) of no net loss of woodland.
- 1.10.2 Compensatory planting will be detailed within the Compensatory Planting Management Strategy, **Volume 5, Appendix 8.1: Compensatory Planting Management Strategy** of the EIA Report.
- 1.10.3 Areas of tree felling required to facilitate construction (where necessary) outside of the OC, temporary access tracks, holding out positions and EPZ (Equi-potential zones) and areas felled to a windfarm boundary will be replanted on site. Replanting of these sites will follow the conditions set out in the Scottish Forestry approved felling permission (where required) and will be the responsibility of the landowner.



 Landowner Boundaries
 Proposed Tower - 400kV
 (with tower number)
 Proposed OHL Alignment
 - 400kV
 90m Operational Corridor

 Ancient (of semi-natural origin)

 Long-Established (of plantation origin)

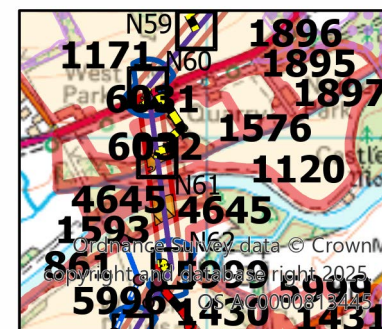
-  ACCESS - EXISTING UPGRADE
-  ACCESS - NEW STONE TEMP
-  Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)
-  Kintore Fetteresson Diversion

OC
MF

- ## Proposed Felling requirements

BL
CON/BL

- Kintore___Fetteresso_275_
- SpecialArrangementTowerL



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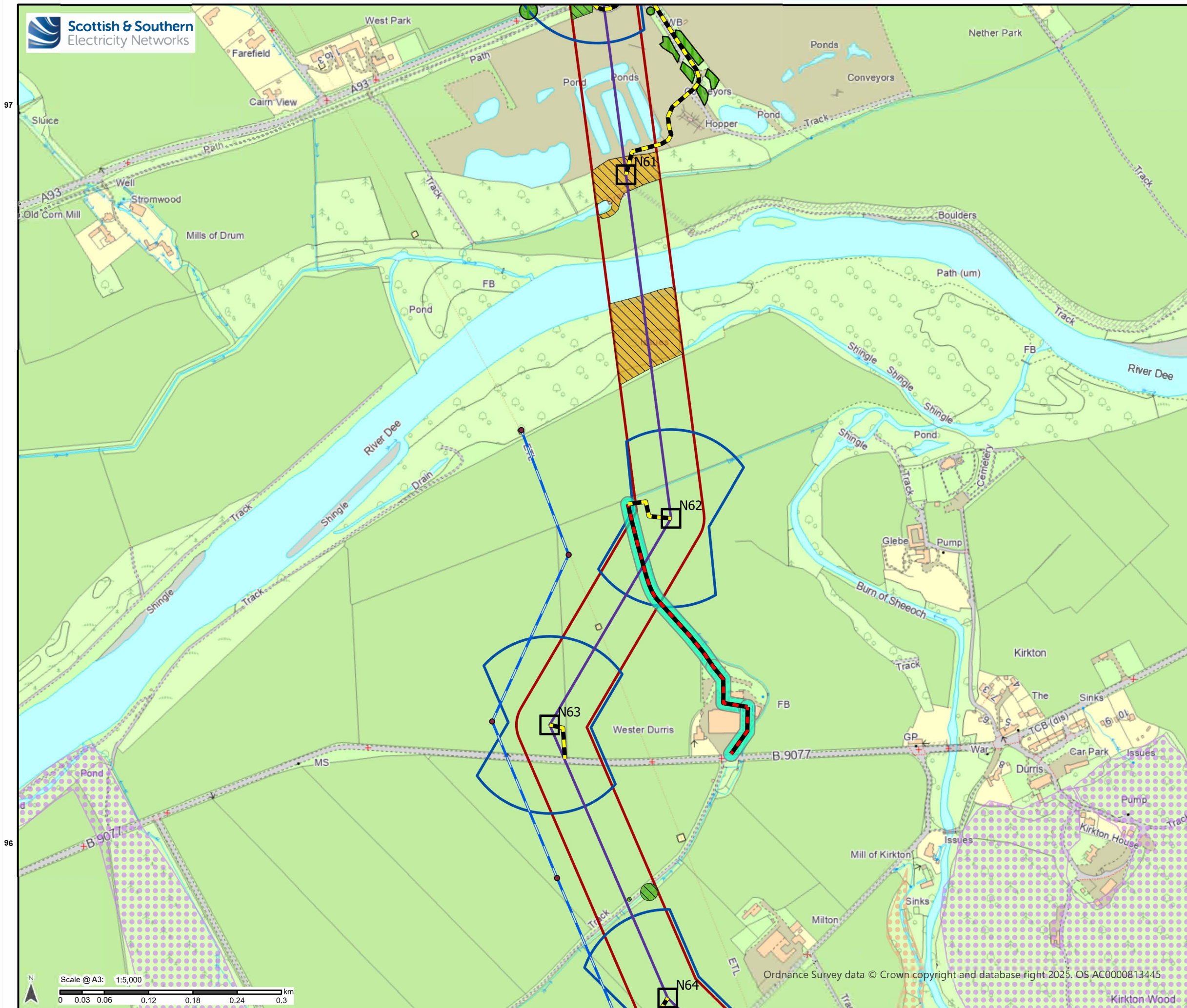


Figure 8.2.10 Proposed
Felling requirements

- Proposed Tower - 400kV
(with tower number)
- Proposed OHL Alignment
- 400kV
- 90m Operational Corridor

**Ancient Woodland
Inventory**

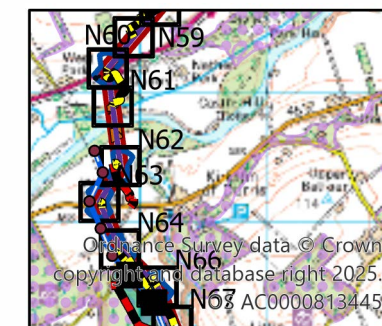
- Ancient (of semi-natural
origin)
- Long-Established (of
plantation origin)
- ACCESS - EXISTING
UPGRADE
- ACCESS - NEW STONE
TEMP
- Proposed Conductor Pulling
Area (EPZ)
- Kintore Fetteresso
Diversion

**Proposed Felling
requirements**

- OC
- Infrastructure

Woodland Type

- BL
- CON/BL
- Kintore__Fetteresso_275_



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Figure 8.2.10 Proposed Felling Requirements

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