

Volume 5: Appendix 8.2.12 – Woodland Report:
Lochty Wood

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1. WOODLAND REPORT: LOCHTY WOOD

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 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.
- 1.1.3 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 Lochty Wood and the relevant landholding property boundary is presented in **Figure 8.1.12: Proposed Felling Plan**.
- 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 and 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.

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>

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.
- 1.2.8 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 Lochty Wood (hereinafter referred to as the property) is approximately 6.6 km north west of Brechin. It is under private ownership. The woodland comprises mainly semi mature to mature broadleaved species such as silver and downy birch, common alder. It is enclosed along the public road by mature beech trees immediately west of Tower S111.

1.4 Development Requirements

400 kV Overhead Line

- 1.4.1 The Study Area for this assessment is based on the required Operational Corridor (OC) (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

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>

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 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 OHL infrastructure and minimum safety clearance distance is therefore 90 m (45 m either side of the OHL centreline) and this has been utilised to calculate the area of the OC. In some cases, such as angle towers the requirement may be slightly in excess of this distance, however the average minimum distance has been used in this assessment.

Access Track Route Design

1.4.4 The property is accessible via unclassified roads connecting to A90 south of Lochty Wood. Access track requirements to facilitate tower construction do not encroach onto the woodland out with the OC.

1.5 Woodland Characteristics

1.5.1 The property is situated approximately 6.6k m northwest of Brechin. Accessible via unclassified roads, which eventually connects onto A90, south of the Proposed Development **Figure 8.2.12: Proposed Felling Requirements**. Lochty wood is identified on; the Ancient Woodland Inventory of Scotland as being Long Established (of plantation origin, 2b) and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS).

1.5.2 The woodland area impacted by the Proposed Development is from West of Tower S111 to 185m West of Tower S113.

1.5.3 The woodland ground conditions are variable, mostly brown earth soils with some gleying.

1.5.4 The terrain is generally flat with some wet boggy ground, producing areas of 'checked' tree growth across the site.

1.5.5 The native broadleaved woodland is broken up by a large area of open ground integrated throughout. Predominant species is silver birch, with occasional common alder, ash and Rowan, with clusters of willow in wetter areas. A significant feature of the woodland is the roadside line of mature beech forming the eastern boundary of the woodland and adjacent to the unclassified county road from Lochty to Montboy.

1.5.6 There is no understory of naturally regenerating trees with grazed beech regeneration found towards the eastern boundary adjacent to the mature roadside beech, ground flora is dominated by a grass sward with little evidence of tree regeneration and appears to be relatively low in species diversity, likely due to herbivore pressure. The tree age class ranges from pole stage to mature.

1.5.7 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.

1.5.8 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;

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%)

- Nearly-native woodland⁷;
- Open land habitat⁸; and
- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)⁹.

- 1.5.9 Desk-based study of the woodland area, using both the Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, indicates that there are designations at the property.
- 1.5.10 The area of Lochty woodland totalling approximately 17.58 ha has been identified as Native woodland classification and is identified as Upland Birchwood on the NWSS.
- 1.5.11 Approximately 13.65 ha of the total woodland area of Lochty woodland is identified on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as well as being Native woodland classification, under the Long Established (of plantation origin) classification (2b).
- 1.5.12 On site evidence suggests that the area has undergone periodic intervention e.g. removal of windthrown trees, lacking significant in structural diversity within the existing tree stock refer to **Plate 1** below. Ground conditions exhibiting significant browsing pressures, most likely from the grazing animals encroaching from the grazing field located within the heart of the woodland. Browsing pressure is also evidenced by the significant lack of understorey.
- 1.5.13 Desk-based study of the woodland area, using both the Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, has identified small areas of Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) (2b – 1860) and Native Woodland as detailed in **Table 1: Woodland type affected by the Proposed Development**.

Table 1: Woodland type affected by the Proposed development

	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 AW classified woodland
Lochty Wood	-	-	-	2.25	-	0.41	2.66

* - Rounding errors can occur

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.

Plate 1: Looking west from Tower S111.



1.5.14 **Plate 2** shows the typical structure of the woodland.

Plate 2: From public road looking south towards the span between Towers S114 and S113



- 1.5.15 No permanent structure will be retained within the wooded area, so the impact to the ground vegetation will only be during the operations and can be further mitigated by using low ground impact machinery.

1.6 Windthrow Risk Impact

- 1.6.1 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 8.1.12: Proposed Felling Requirements**.
- 1.6.2 The woodland site affected by the Proposed Development has a 'Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring' (DAMS)¹¹ windthrow hazard class score ranging between 6 and 12, classified as sheltered to moderately exposed. The local climate is classified as warm, moderately exposed and moist. For that reason, a minimal impact of windthrow has been assessed for the native broadleaved woodland areas, due to their location, size and structure.
- 1.6.3 No Management Felling is recommended on this occasion.

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"

1.7 Woodland Management Impact

- 1.7.1 The OHL alignment is unlikely to create additional challenges for the future management, because of its low impact management approach, however introduction of an electrical hazard and associated wayleaves will reduce the area suitable for woodland restock or regeneration.
- 1.7.2 The proposed OHL furthermore introduces an electrical hazard, but the constraint associated with the electrical hazard will be reduced by regular maintenance of the OC which will avoid the incidences of “Red Zone” trees.
- 1.7.3 The constraint associated with the electrical hazard will be reduced by regular maintenance of the OC, which will avoid the incidences of “Red Zone” trees.¹²
- 1.7.4 Little to no impact to the existing woodland management procedures are foreseen during the construction phase, due to its low impact approach; however, it is hoped that any disruption will be managed through communication and agreement with the affected stakeholders.

1.8 Mitigation Opportunities

- 1.8.1 A reduced OC through areas of native broadleaved woodland will be assessed. During the construction phase these areas will be assessed for further selective felling to identify if greater tree retention can be achieved. Consideration will also be given to potential opportunities to reduce felling corridor, oversail or to carry out crown and tree height reduction in important woodland areas. This will be dependent on the requirements of the Proposed Development, and particularly the safety of OHL wiring operations. With respect to the mature beech along the Eastern woodland boundary which lies perpendicular to the OC further consideration, subject to engineering constraints, will be given to tree management following stringing of the conductors, and prior to energisation. Such management will likely involve arboriculture modifications to the structure of trees that would otherwise encroach into the operational 45 m OC.
- 1.8.2 The OC woodland removal area is required for the construction and functioning of the new OHL infrastructure. Opportunities will be assessed for woodland replanting within the OC, the identification of suitable areas cannot be guaranteed due to the requirement of maintaining the safe energisation of the OHL. 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 The Applicant will be using a process of ‘managed resilience’ which will seek to retain naturally regenerated broadleaved trees and shrubs as close as possible to the line to keep as much tree cover as possible. Smaller-growing species/shrubs thus being able to be retained closer to the line than larger growing species. OHL tree maintenance would take place on a 4-yearly cycle.

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 2: Woodland Removal for Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Infrastructure felling	Mixed broadleaved	2.98 ha

Table 3: Compensatory Planting

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Compensatory Planting Area	Native mixed woodland	2.98 ha

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/>

Table 4: Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Total Loss of Woodland Area		2.98 ha
Total Compensatory Planting Area		2.98 ha
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.00 ha

Table 5: Woodland Removal for Management Felling

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Management Felling		0.00 ha
Replanting/Restocking		0.00 ha
Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.00 ha
Note. Felling approval is via Scottish Forestry Felling Licence application process or Long-Term Forest Plan application or amendment process.		

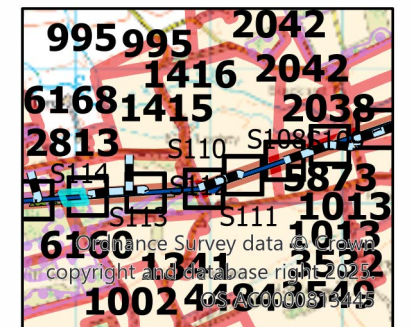
1.10 Compensatory Planting

- 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 Policy On Control of Woodland Removal Policy of no net loss of woodland.
- 1.10.2 Compensatory planting will be detailed within **Volume 5, Appendix 8.1: Compensatory Planting Management Strategy**.
- 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.

 Long-Established (of plantation origin) Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)

OC

BL



Drawing:

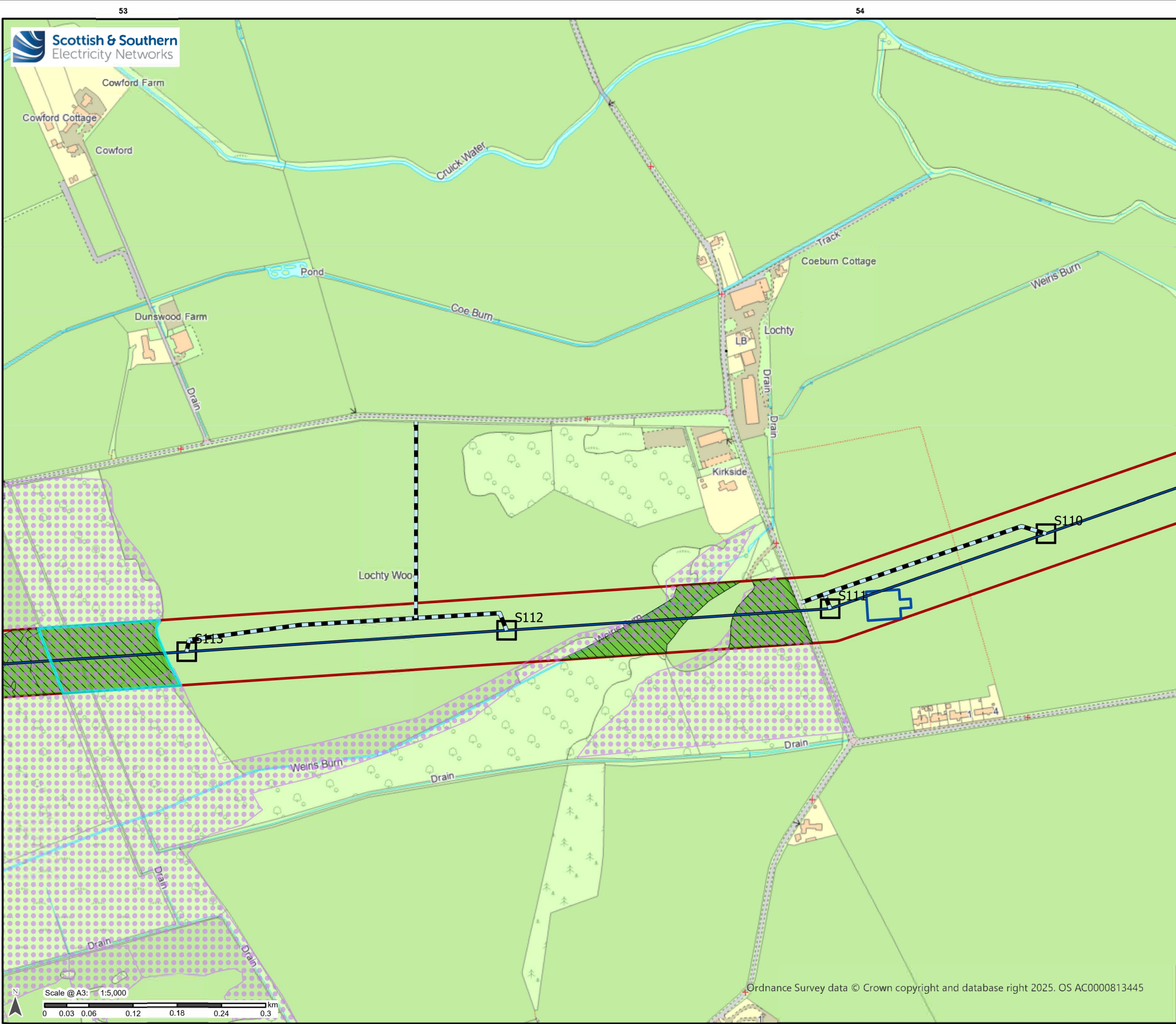


Figure 8.2.12 Proposed
felling requirements

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

Ancient Woodland Inventory

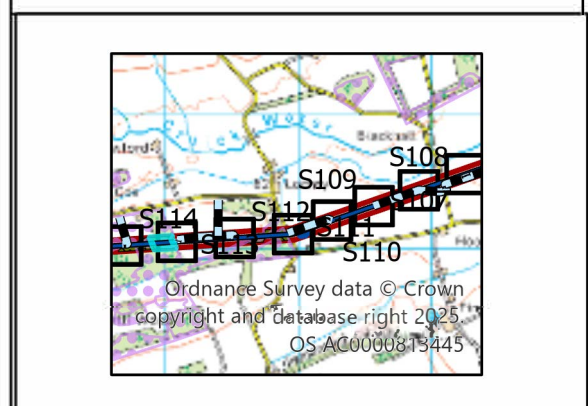
- Long-Established (of plantation origin)
- Access_New_Stone_Temp
- Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)

Proposed Felling requirements

- OC

Woodland Type

- BL



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