

**Volume 5: Appendix 8.2.18 – Woodland Report:
Drum Hill**

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1. WOODLAND REPORT: DRUM HILL

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 Drum Hill and the relevant landholding property boundary is presented in **Figure 8.1.18: 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 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.

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 The Drum Hill Woodlands (hereinafter referred to as the property) are situated on privately-owned property, and are located in two separate groupings, with the northernmost being ca. 1.16 km south of the SSEN Kintore Substation (NGR NJ763128), and the southernmost being ca. 1.60 km southwest of the SSEN Kintore Substation (NGR NJ760124). The mature woodland and scattered trees cover an area of 5.82 ha. No forest plan covers the woodland stands, and no felling permissions are currently active within them.

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 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

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>

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 Access track related felling will be required at the eastern end of the largest woodland block. The path of the access track has been designed to reduce the amount of woodland felled and passes through the corner of a low-density native mixed broadleaved woodland.
- 1.4.5 Temporary woodland removal will be required to facilitate 'holding out positions'; tension towers require a temporary 'holding out position' to raise the tower working platforms which would be utilised when stringing the conductors. This platform is winched into position by a tractor at one and a half the tower height away and once in position gets locked off and attached to concrete sledges.

1.5 Woodland Characteristics

- 1.5.1 The woodlands are primarily amenity-focused/biodiversity-focussed woodlands, which function on the basis of promoting ecological services and visual effects in the landscape. The species makeup is consistent with a typical lowland mixed broadleaved woodland. The species present within this property's OC felling are predominantly native mixed broadleaves, with birch dominant. Some larches are present within the largest of the woodland blocks, within the section of that block indicated to be Native Woodland according to the NWSS.
- 1.5.2 The forest has a diverse age structure, with the main age class being Established. Maximum top height for these blocks is approaching ca. 15 m.
- 1.5.3 The woodlands are not utilised for commercial or recreational purposes, with minimal public access taking place within them.
- 1.5.4 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.
- 1.5.5 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

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.

- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)⁹.

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 of 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
Drum Hill	-	-	-	-	-	0.85**	0.85 ha

* - Rounding errors can occur

** - 0.19 ha of categorised NWSS lies within the scrub clearance. For the purposes of compensatory planting, this is treated as woodland.

Plate 1: View NE from NGR NJ 75970 12289 (between Towers N7 and N8).



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 2: View NW from NGR NJ 76045 12430 (between Towers N7 and N8).



1.6 Windthrow Risk Impact

- 1.6.1 The woodland is situated in a lowland arable agricultural zone. The predominant soil types¹⁰ are freely drained humus-iron podzols and brown earths, with some alluvial rankers present within the smaller northern block.
- 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 GALES¹¹ 2.5 Forest Research decision support system. Felling outwith the OC to a windfirm boundary is termed Management Felling and is presented within **Figure 8.2.18: Proposed Felling Requirements**.
- 1.6.3 The woodland site affected by the Proposed Development has a relatively uniform 'Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring' (DAMS)¹² windthrow hazard class score, with this being 11. This gives it a risk classification of being sheltered, with a low risk of windblow occurring.

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. An electrical hazard will be introduced adjacent to each of these woodland blocks, creating an additional challenge for future forest management. The constraint associated with the electrical hazard will be reduced by regular maintenance of the OC, which will avoid the incidences of "Red Zone"¹³ trees.

¹⁰ As per the National Soil Map of Scotland (1:250,000), accessed at <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/soil-maps/national-soil-map-of-scotland/>.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Detailed Aspect method of Scoring (DAMS) Ref. Forest Research, "Forest Gales software programme" and Forestry Commission Leaflet 85 "Windthrow Hazard Classification".

¹³ 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/>

- 1.7.2 The OHL alignment does not cross any of part of an existing internal forest road network. Where it does cross driveways and/or agricultural access tracks, the OHL will be built to comply with statutory clearances above these, which will reduce the hazard in respect of public traffic and/or future timber haulage. 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 woodlands.
- 1.7.3 The Proposed Development will result in the permanent removal of existing mixed woodland from the OC. This will reduce the productive forestry land available for planting within the woodland property area, as the OC will require to be kept clear of trees.
- 1.7.4 During the construction phase, there will be a level of disruption to the undertaking of routine forestry management activities by the landowners on the woodland property. This will be project managed through communication and agreement with them.
- 1.7.5 Management felling may be required outside the OC for the smaller northern block, as indicated on **Figure 8.2.18: Proposed Felling Requirements**. This will eliminate any open edges to the woodland which would be vulnerable to windblow, reducing the risk of future windblow occurring.

1.8 Mitigation Opportunities

- 1.8.1 A standard OC width of 90 m (45 m either side of OC centre line) has been prescribed for the entire length of the alignment through this property. On account of the surrounding trees being predominantly native broadleaves, but with some stunted conifers interspersed, it is considered possible that narrowing of the OC may be achievable.
- 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 quantity (hectares) of woodland removed.
- 1.8.3 The management felling areas will be replanted by the landowner, in-line with the Scottish Forestry felling licence regulations of the area felled must be replanted.
- 1.8.4 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.

1.9 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	2.20 ha
Scrub/regen clearance	Scrub/regen	7.93 ha

Table 2: Compensatory Planting

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Compensatory Planting Area	Mixed conifer or mixed broadleaves	2.39 ha*

* - includes 0.19 ha of scrub that is categorised on the NWSS

Table 3: Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Total Loss of Woodland Area		2.39 ha
Total Compensatory Planting Area		2.39 ha

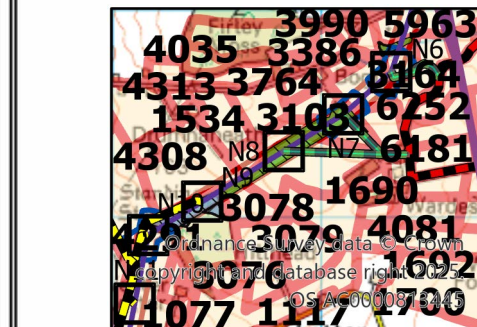
Item	Woodland Type	Area
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.00 ha

Table 4: Woodland Removal for Management Felling

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Management Felling		0.40 ha
Replanting/Restocking		0.40 ha
Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.00 ha
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.		

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 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 windfirm 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.



 BL
 CON
 SpecialArrangementOHLs

[illegible]

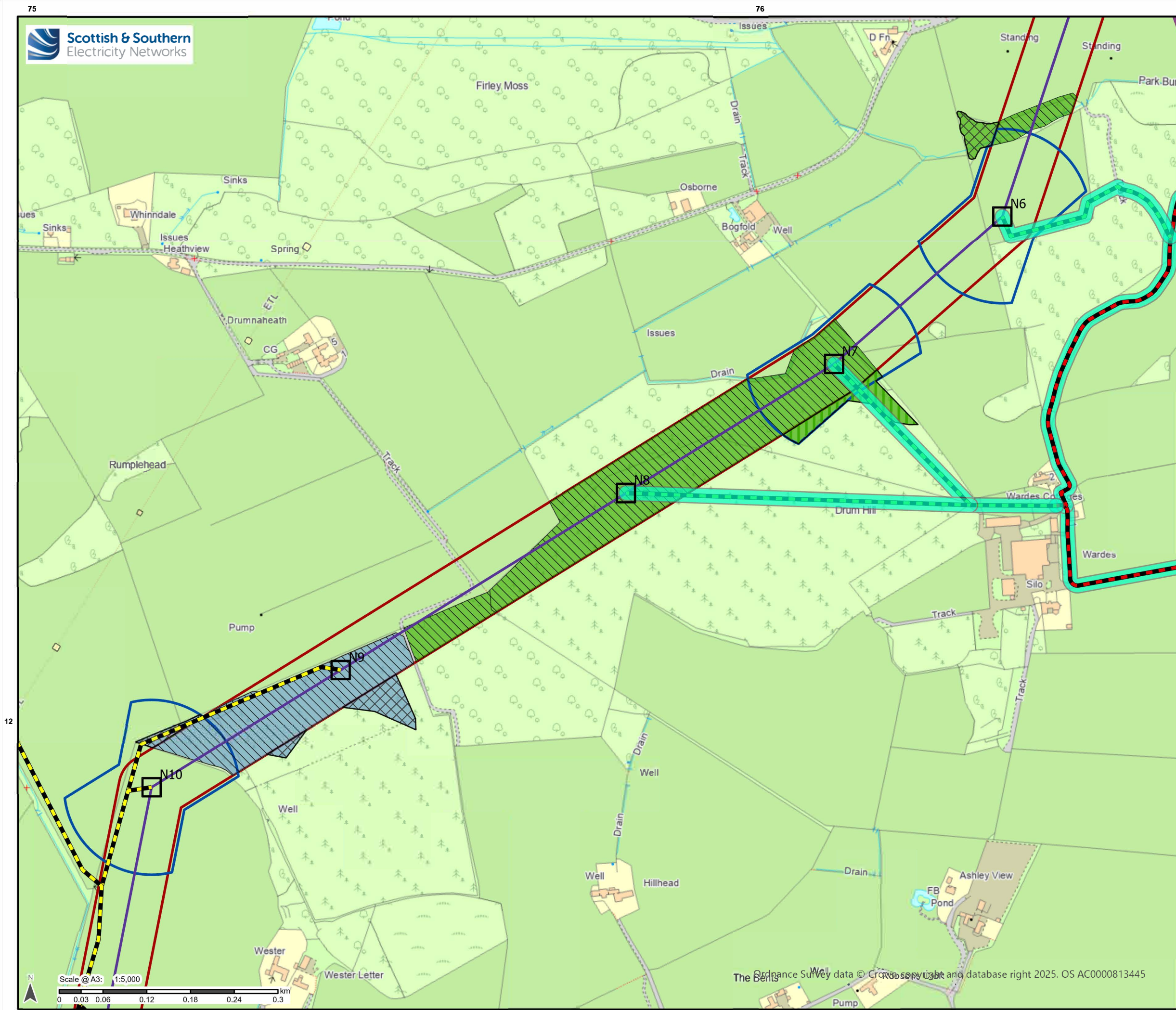


Figure 8.2.18 Proposed felling requirements

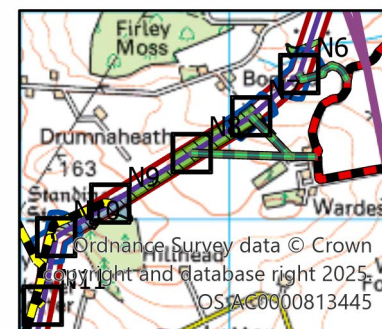
-  Proposed Tower - 400kV (with tower number)
-  Proposed OHL Alignment - 400kV
-  90m Operational Corridor
-  ACCESS - EXISTING UPGRADE
-  ACCESS - NEW STONE PERM
-  ACCESS - NEW STONE TEMP
-  Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)

Proposed Felling requirements

-  OC
-  MF
-  Infrastructure

Woodland Type

-  BL
-  CON
-  SpecialArrangementOHLs



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