

Volume 5: Appendix 8.2.27 – Woodland Report:
North Kirkton Wood

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1. WOODLAND REPORT: NORTH KIRKTON 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 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 North Kirkton Wood and the relevant landholding property boundary is presented in **Figure 8.1.27: Landownership Boundary**.
- 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.

1.3 Requirement and Objectives of the Report

- 1.3.1 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.
- 1.3.2 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

- 1.3.3 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>

- 1.3.4 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.
- 1.3.5 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.
- 1.3.6 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.
- 1.3.7 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.

1.4 Woodland Property

- 1.4.1 North Kirton Wood (hereinafter referred to as the property) is a privately owned forest approximately 1.2 km away from Echt. National Grid Reference: NJ 75029 05401. The Property affected by the Proposed Development is between Towers N32 and N33. The forest is accessible from B9119 road.
- 1.4.2 Development Requirements
- 400 kV Overhead Line
- 1.4.3 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 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

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>

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.

- 1.4.4 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.
- 1.4.5 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

- 1.4.6 An upgrade of the existing access track to facilitate tower construction will require a corridor width 20 m wide (10 m either side of centreline) as shown on **Figure 8.2.27: Proposed Felling Requirements** but will be assessed in situ for further tree retention suitability. This will increase the impact of woodland removal along the access track routes that are outside the OHL OC. The area total required for track upgrade outside of the OC is 1.06 ha.
- 1.4.7 Stump removal and residue mulching will be required at each tower location and for the formation of a construction compound and temporary crane pad.

1.5 Woodland Characteristics

- 1.5.1 North Kirton Wood is a privately owned forest approximately 1.2 km away from Echt. It is a young conifer plantation of mixed species of larch and spruce. The area affected by the OC is 2.91 ha. The age of the forest is mostly young with areas of pole mature. There are individual mature beech trees along the boundaries.
- 1.5.2 The plantation was established under the Woodland Grant Scheme ⁵.
- 1.5.3 The site has a warm, sheltered and moist climate. The soils are slightly dry moisture status and vp3 very poor nutrient status. Soil type is ground water gleys.
- 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 Scotland⁶ and classifies the woodland types into four categories:
 - Native woodland⁷;
 - Nearly-native woodland⁸;
 - Open land habitat⁹; and
 - Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)¹⁰.

⁵ Scottish Forestry and Land: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/support-and-regulations/legacy-grant-schemes/woodland-grant-scheme>

⁶ 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>

⁷ Native Woodland – woods where the canopy cover is composed mainly of native species (ie over 50%)

⁸ 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.

⁹ Open Land Habitat – areas with <20% canopy cover of trees and shrubs adjoining a native woodland.

¹⁰ 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.

- 1.5.6 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 Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) (2b – 1860) as detailed in **Table 1: Woodland type affected by the Proposed Development**.
- 1.5.7 An area of approximately 1.88 ha is in the NWSS as unidentifiable type, and all of the North Kirkton Wood is classed as 2b, Long Established (of plantation origin) (LEPO) in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. The total area affected by the Proposed Development within LEPO is 3.84 ha. As the plantation is young and heavily managed no remnants of longevity are likely to have remained and hence will not be 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 woodland area
North Kirkton Wood	-	-	-	3.84 ha	-	-	3.84 ha

* - Rounding errors can occur

Plate 1: Looking south towards Tower N33



- 1.5.8 **Plate 1** shows the mixed species composition of North Kirkton Wood looking towards Tower N33.

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 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 8.2.27: Proposed Felling Requirements**.
- 1.6.2 The woodland site affected by the Proposed Development has a 'Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring' (DAMS)¹² windthrow hazard class score ranging between 6 and 11, classified as sheltered to moderately exposed. The site has a warm, sheltered and moist climate. The soils are slightly dry moisture status and vp3 very poor nutrient status. Soil type is ground water gleys.
- 1.6.3 Due to the relatively young age of the plantation, no Management Felling is being prescribed here.

1.7 Woodland Management Impact

- 1.7.1 The OHL alignment will create additional challenges for the future management of the forest as it 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" trees (reference FISA 804 "Electricity at Work: Forestry").¹³
- 1.7.2 The Proposed Development will require permanent sterilisation of wooded areas 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.
- 1.7.3 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 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.
- 1.8.2 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.

1.9 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.

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/>

Table 2: Woodland Removal for Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Infrastructure Felling	Mixed broadleaved woodland	0.28 ha
	Mixed woodland	1.69 ha
	Mixed conifer	1.89 ha

Table 3: Compensatory Planting

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Compensatory Planting Area	Mixed conifer or mixed broadleaf	3.86 ha

Table 4: Woodland Removal Impact of Infrastructure

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Total Loss of Woodland Area		3.86 ha
Total Compensatory Planting Area		3.86 ha
Total Net Loss of Woodland Area		0.0 ha

Table 5: Woodland Removal for Management Felling

Item	Woodland Type	Area
Management Felling		0.08 ha
Replanting/Restocking		0.08 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 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.

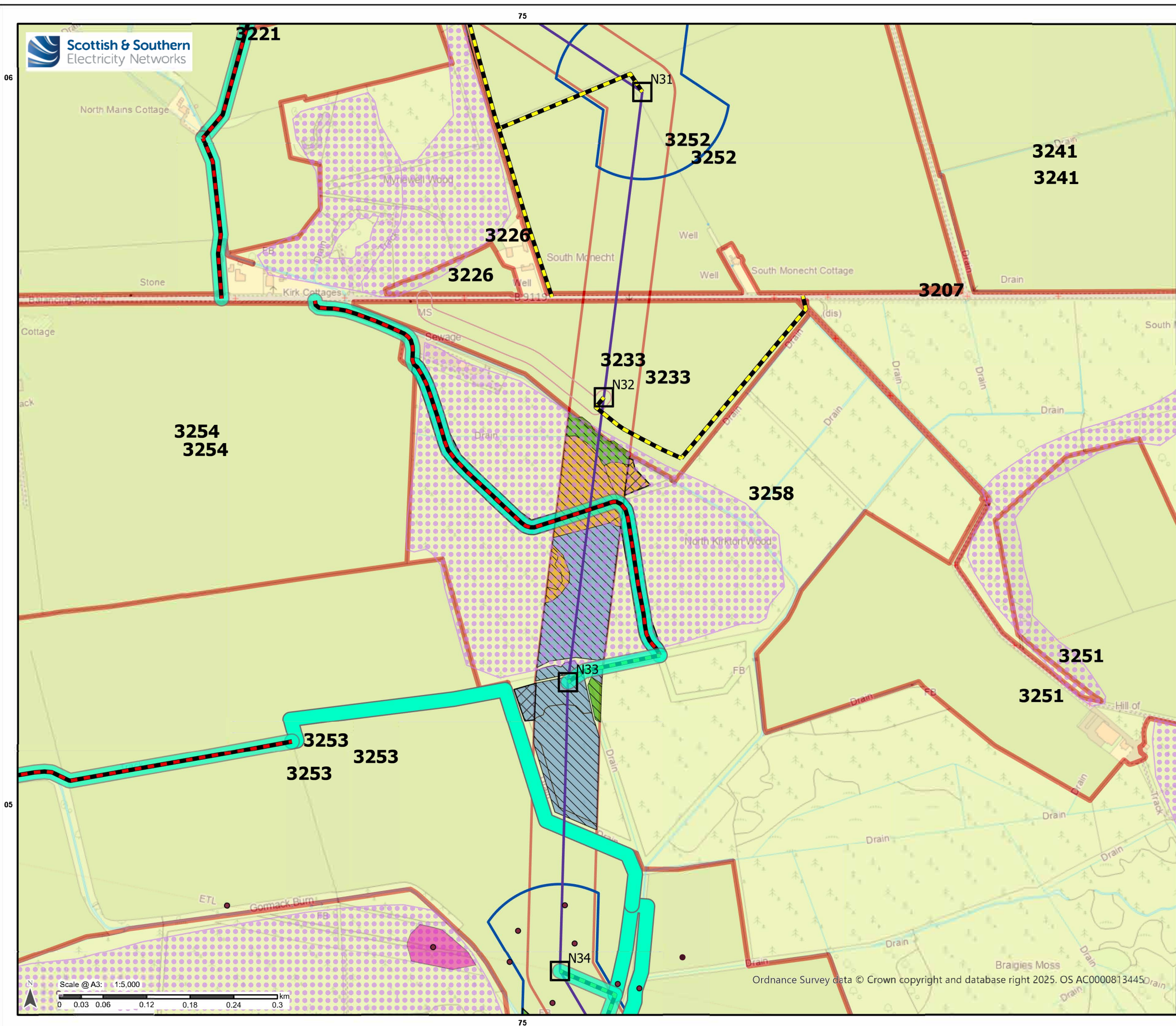


Figure 8.1.27 Landowner Boundaries

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

Ancient Woodland Inventory

- Long-Established (of plantation origin)
- ACCESS - EXISTING UPGRADE
- ACCESS - NEW STONE PERM
- ACCESS - NEW STONE TEMP
- ALTERNATIVE NEW STONE PERM
- Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)
- MES-SSEN temp stone access track 20m buffer
- MES-SSEN perm alternative track buffer

Felling - Diversion

- OC

Proposed Felling requirements

- OC
- MF
- Access
- Infrastructure

Woodland Type

- BL
- CON
- CON/BL
- SpecialArrangementTowerL



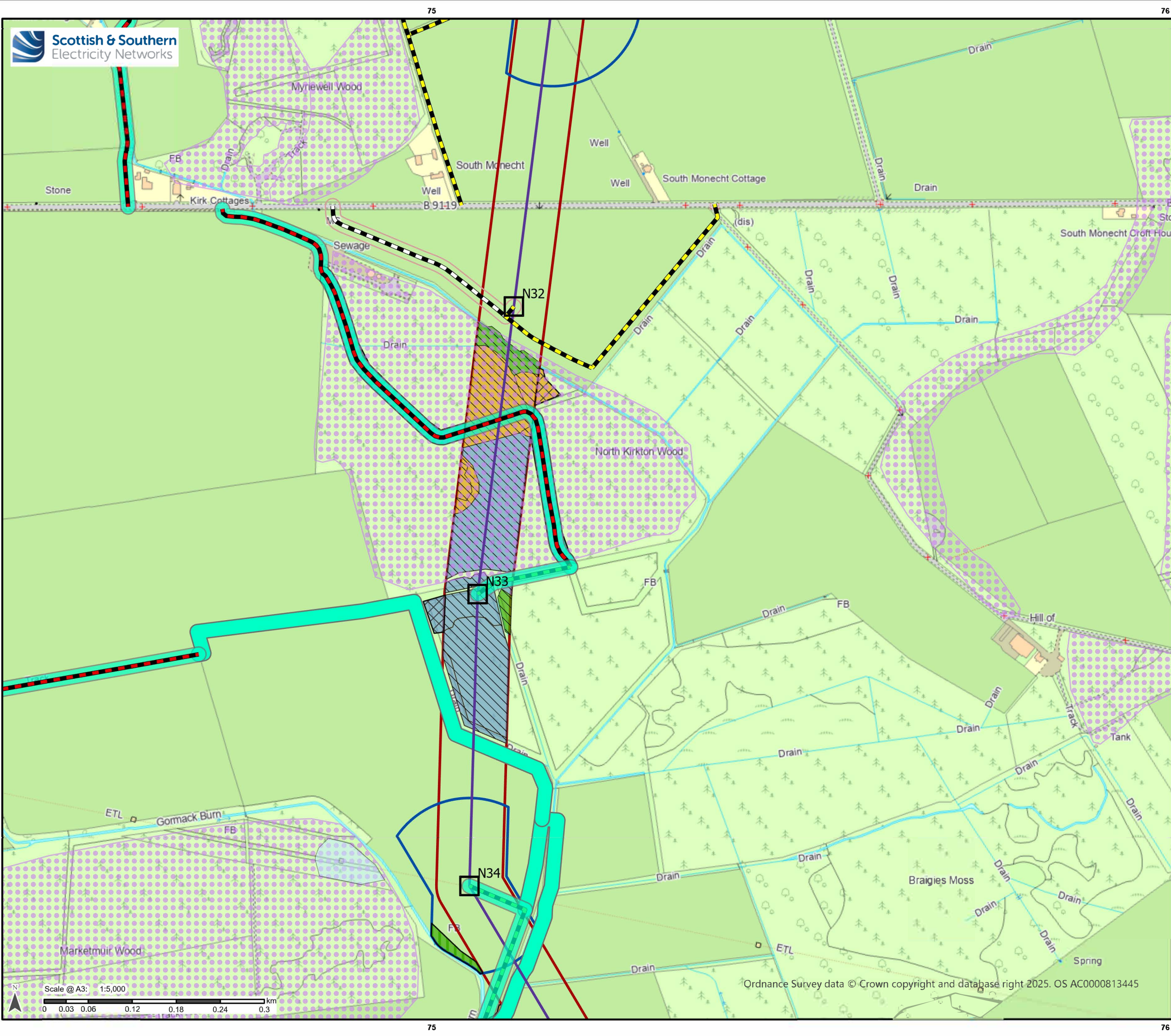


Figure 8.2.27 Proposed Felling requirements

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

Ancient Woodland Inventory

Long-Established (of plantation origin)
ACCESS - EXISTING UPGRADE
ACCESS - NEW STONE PERM
ACCESS - NEW STONE TEMP
ALTERNATIVE NEW STONE PERM
ALTERNATIVE NEW STONE TEMP
Proposed Conductor Pulling Area (EPZ)
MES-SSEN temp stone access track 20m buffer
MES-SSEN perm alternative track buffer

Felling - Diversion

OC

Proposed Felling requirements

OC
MF
Access
Infrastructure

Woodland Type

BL
CON
CON/BL

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