

Consultation Document

Knocknagael HV Project

September 2026



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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Amenity	The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape, and visual quality. Also includes the impact of SSEN Transmission's works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction activities.
Ancient Woodland	Woodland which has been in continuous existence since before 1750 in Scotland and is important for biodiversity and cultural identity. Ancient semi-natural woodland is Ancient Woodland composed of mainly locally native trees and shrubs that derive from natural seed fall or coppice rather than from planting.
Area of Search	The area within which the site selection study takes place.
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
Commercial Forestry	Planting, maintaining and growing trees for commercial production of timber.
Consultation	The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views and, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies, or programmes of action.
Desk-based Assessment	A desktop appraisal using existing information available.
European Protected Species	Species of plants and animals protected by law throughout the European Union.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process set down in The Electricity Works (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 used to systematically identify, predict, and assess the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.
Gardens and Designed Landscape (GDL)	The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes lists those gardens or designed landscapes which are considered by a panel of experts to be of national importance.
Geographical Information Systems (GIS)	A spatial system that creates, manages, analyses, and maps all types of data.
GWDTE	Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystem
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).
Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS)	LNCSs identify locally important natural heritage that could be damaged by development.
Micrositing	The process of positioning individual structures or infrastructure to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation, or alleviation of adverse impacts.
National Scenic Area (NSA)	A national level designation applied to those landscapes considered to be of exceptional scenic value.
Ordnance Survey (OS)	Ordnance Survey is the national mapping agency for Great Britain.
Overhead Line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or trident wood poles.
RAG	Red/Amber/Green, rating applied for the comparative appraisal.

Term	Definition
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	The RSPB is a charitable organisation founded in 1889. It works to promote conservation and protection of birds and the wider environment.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency is Scotland's environmental regulator and national flood forecasting, flood warning and strategic flood risk management authority.
Semi-natural Woodland	Woodland that does not obviously originate from planting. The distribution of species will generally reflect the variations in the site and the soil. Planted trees must account for less than 30% of the canopy composition
Species Protection Plan (SPP)	A document that sets out the measures required to avoid, minimise, and manage potential impacts on legally protected or otherwise sensitive species during the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the project
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Areas of national importance. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated under the EC Habitats Directive to ensure that rare, endangered, or vulnerable habitats or species of community interest are either maintained at or restored to a favourable conservation status.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Landscapes designated by The Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area designated under the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 74/409/EEC) to protect important bird habitats. Implemented under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
SSEN Transmission	Scottish and Southern Energy Networks Transmission, operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (SHET plc).
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SSEN Transmission works.
Substation	Part of the electrical transmission and distribution system that transforms voltage from high to low, or the reverse, before switching to another electricity network.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.

PREFACE

This Consultation Document invites comments from all interested parties on the proposal by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission) to construct a satellite site to house high voltage equipment and an extension to the existing Knocknagael substation. These works constitute the proposed Knocknagael HV project (“the Project”).

The Consultation Document is available online at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/knocknagael

Public consultation events detailing the proposals described in this document will be held at the following times and location:

Public Consultation Location	Date	Time
Lochardill Hotel (MacDonald Room), Stratherrick Rd, Inverness IV2 4LF	22 nd September 2026	3pm-7pm

Comments on this document should be sent by email with Subject heading ‘Knocknagael HV Project Consultation’ to: kirsty.mcnamara@sse.com

Comments on this document should be sent in writing to:

FAO Kirsty McNamara

SSEN Transmission

10 Henderson Road,

Inverness,

IV1 1SN

All comments are requested by: 25th October 2026

When providing comments and feedback on this Consultation Document, SSEN Transmission would be grateful for your consideration of the questions below:

- Do you feel sufficient information has been provided to enable you to understand what is being proposed and why?
- Do you agree with our potential STATCOM site, please explain your answer.
- Do you agree with our potential Substation Extension site, please explain your answer
- Are there any factors, or environmental features, that you consider important and should be brought to the attention of the project team?
- Do you have any other concerns, suggestions, or comments?

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Document

This Consultation Document has been prepared by Environmental Resources Management (ERM) on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission).

SSEN Transmission, operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, owns, operates and develops the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands. This document invites comments from all interested parties on the site options being considered for the new satellite voltage support facility and the extension to the existing Knocknagael Substation. The proposed development is to be located adjacent to the existing Knocknagael substation, approximately 7 km south of Inverness,

This Consultation Document describes the substation site options appraisal undertaken, the alternatives considered and the identification of a preferred substation site. Comments are now sought from statutory authorities, key stakeholders, elected representatives and the public on the preferred site options identified.

1.2 Document Structure

This Consultation Document comprises the following sections:

1. Introduction – setting out the purpose of the Consultation Document;
2. The Proposals – describes the need for the proposals, the strategic alternatives considered, the proposed technology solution and the typical construction methods;
3. Site Selection Process – sets out the substation site selection process and methodology that has been applied to date;
4. Description of Sites – describes the site options that have been identified;
5. Comparative Analysis of Sites – analyses each site option against a series of environmental and technical considerations to arrive at a preferred site;
6. Selection of Preferred Sites – describes the preferred site identified and summarises the reasons for this;
7. Consultation on the Proposals– invites comments on the site assessment process and identification of the preferred sites.

2. THE PROPOSALS

2.1 The Need for the Project

SSEN Transmission owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and the Islands and holds a licence under the Electricity Act 1989 to “develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical system of electricity transmission”.

Significant investment is being made in the electricity transmission network across Scotland to help meet future energy needs and support the transition to cleaner sources of electricity.

As part of this investment, studies were undertaken to assess how these changes will affect the network in the future. The studies identified a need for additional equipment in the Knocknagael and Farigaig area to help maintain network stability and ensure the electricity system continues to operate safely, reliably and efficiently

SSEN Transmission is proposing to construct and operate a single 250 MVar Static Synchronous Compensator (STATCOM) and associated infrastructure in the Knocknagael/Farigaig area. As electricity demand and generation change throughout the day, voltage levels can rise or fall. A STATCOM responds very quickly to these changes, helping to keep the network operating safely, reliably and efficiently. This can be considered as a device that continuously balances voltage on the network, helping to maintain a secure and stable supply of electricity.

The STATCOM would be located within a newly established 275 kV satellite site and connected to the existing Knocknagael 275 kV substation via underground cable.

To enable the new equipment to connect to the transmission network, an extension to the existing Knocknagael 275 kV busbar is required, necessitating works within the existing substation (the Substation Extension). Opportunities to coordinate these works with the adjacent Loch na Cathrach project are currently under review.

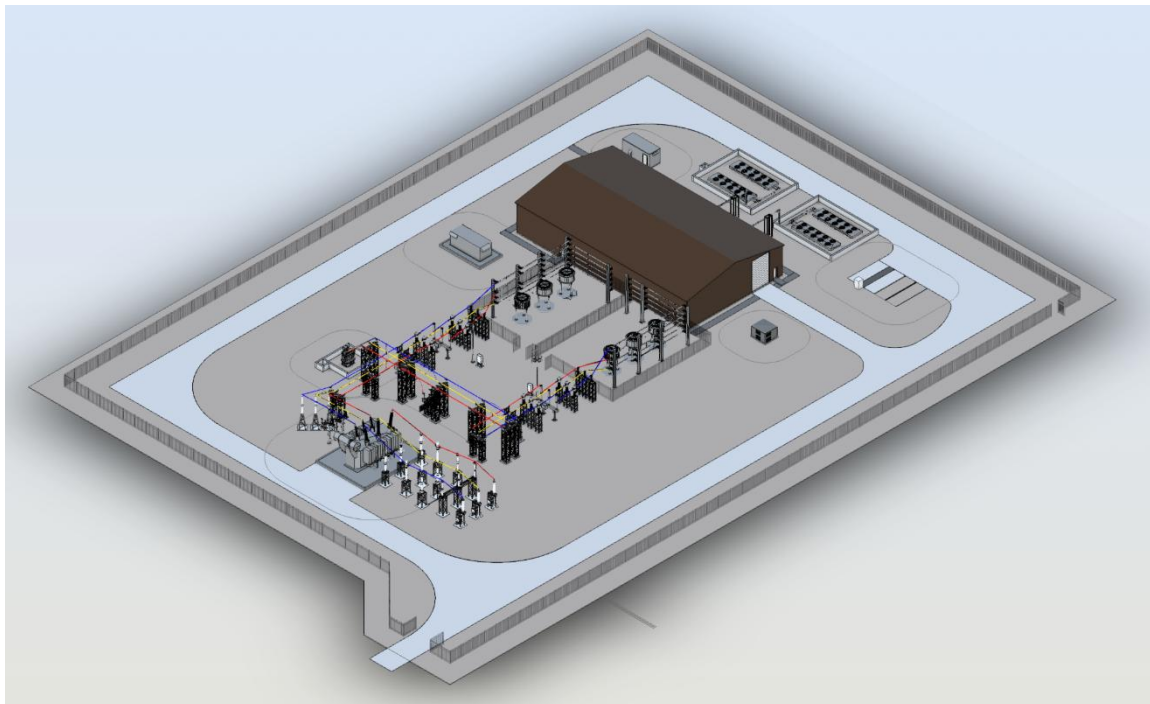
New Shunt Reactors are also proposed at Knocknagael and Farigaig area are also required as part of this High Voltage project. This equipment helps manage voltage levels on the transmission network, improving network stability and supporting the efficient transmission of electricity. The shunt reactors will be constructed within the existing substation platforms, and their consenting strategy is being determined.

2.2 Project Overview

To facilitate this Project, the following elements are required:

- A new 250MVar STATCOM accommodated within a satellite site in the surrounding area of existing Knocknagael Substation connected to the extended 275kV Knocknagael busbar (see **Figure 2.1**). The size of the satellite site will be approximately 110 m by 150 m;
- An extension to the existing Knocknagael Substation to accommodate the extension of the busbar by approximately 130m by 50m (referred to as the HV bay); and
- The connection between the satellite site and the existing Knocknagael Substation will be via a new single circuit 275kV UGC.
- New Shunt Reactors to be installed within the existing Knocknagael and Farigaig substations.

Figure 2.1 - 3D Model of the proposed STATCOM Site



2.2.1 Assessment of Substation Extension Options to Accommodate a STATCOM

The options to extend each side of the existing substation to accommodate the STATCOM were considered but were not taken forward due to a number of significant constraints.

The area is heavily constrained by existing electricity infrastructure, including overhead lines and underground cables. Extending the existing substation would require major modifications to this infrastructure, including outage requirements and complex construction activities within an operational substation. It would also involve substantial earthworks, resulting in increased construction traffic and greater disruption to local communities during construction. Collectively, these factors would increase environmental impacts, introduce additional technical challenges, and significantly extend the construction programme compared with the satellite STATCOM solution.

By comparison, the satellite option is located on a separate site adjacent to the existing substation which reduces the need for major modifications to existing infrastructure, requires significantly less earthworks, minimises construction traffic, and lowers environmental disruption. It also provides a shorter and more reliable construction programme.

2.2.2 Construction Activities

Key tasks during construction of the Project are as follows:

- Enabling work (e.g., woodland clearance, public road improvements and establishment of temporary works such as construction drainage and site compound/welfare);
- Construction of cut/fill to provide a level platform;
- Construction of permanent access roads and drainage;
- Construction of Control Building;
- Installation of mechanical/electrical equipment and associated infrastructure;
- Inspections and commissioning; and
- Removal of temporary works, landscape design implementation (if required) and site reinstatement.

2.2.3 Access

The access strategy has not yet been determined, but existing tracks will be used and upgraded where possible. New temporary and permanent access tracks will be required, dependant on design, operational and ground condition requirements. Track designs will be tailored to local conditions.

The new permanent access track would be constructed as a bituminous track. Any temporary access tracks required to support the development of the Satellite STATCOM Site will be of an unbound surface makeup.

2.2.4 Woodland Removal

Construction could require the removal of sections of woodland, which would be undertaken in consultation with Scottish Forestry and affected landowners. After felling, any timber removed that is commercially viable would be sold and the remaining forest material would be dealt with in a way that delivers the best practicable environmental outcome and is compliant with waste regulations.

2.2.5 Programme

Subject to the necessary assessments, approvals and consents, it is anticipated that construction of the Project would start in 2029 with a completion date of 2033. Detailed programming of the works would be the responsibility of the Contractor in agreement with SSEN Transmission.

3. SITE SELECTION PROCESS

3.1 Guidance Documents

The approach to site selection is informed by the following SSEN Transmission guidance:

- Substation Site Selection Procedures for Voltages at or above 132kV (PR-NET-ENV-502) Rev 02: and
- Biodiversity Net Gain Flow Chart, Guidance and Project Toolkit (FC-NET-ENV-500).

This guidance broadens the basis for site selection decisions to reflect contemporary practice, and ensures environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the site selection process.

This guidance helps SSEN Transmission to meet its obligations under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989, which requires transmission licence holders:

- To have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural historic or archaeological interests; and
- To do what they reasonably can to mitigate any effect that the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.

The guidance develops a process which aims to balance these environmental considerations with technical and economic considerations throughout the site selection process.

The guidance splits a project into four stages, as follows:

- Stage 0: Pre-Site Selection Activities – Strategic Connections Options Appraisal;
- Stage 1: Initial Site Screening;
- Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection; and
- Post Site Selection Activities – Consenting Process.

The stages that are carried out can vary depending on the type, nature of and size of a project and consultation is carried out at each stage of the process. This Project is currently at Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection, the objective of which is to identify technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally acceptable site option within a defined area.

3.2 Stages of Methodology

The key stages undertaken for this Project are as follows:

3.2.1 Pre-Site Selection Activities

The starting point in all new projects is to establish the need for the project and to select the proposed strategic option to deliver it. This process is triggered by the preparation of a number of internal assessments and documents which identify the technology to be used.

3.2.2 Stage 1 – Initial Site Screening

This stage seeks to identify technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally acceptable site option within a defined area.

Six possible STATCOM Site Options and two Substation Extension Options were identified for Stage 1 (see **Appendix A, Figure 3.1**). Four of the STATCOM options were located to the northeast of the existing substation, two to the south. The substation extension options were located immediately northwest and southeast of the existing substation.

STATCOM Site Options 1 – 4 were identified as the least constrained options to be taken forward as they present the most technically feasible options whilst also avoiding key environmental constraints in the south. STATCOM Site Options 5 and 6 were discounted at Stage 1 due to their location within a heavily congested

overhead line and underground cable corridor, resulting in significant engineering constraints associated with asset clearances, cable routing, construction access and layout flexibility, in addition to their closer proximity to scheduled monuments.

Following initial site screening, neither Substation Extension option was discounted during Stage 1, and both were taken forward to Stage 2.

3.2.3 Stage 2 – Detailed Site Selection

This Project is currently at the detailed site selection stage and in consideration of the principles outlined in the guidance, the method of identifying the preferred substation site option in this study has involved the following four key tasks:

- Identification of the baseline situation;
- Identification of alternative options;
- Environmental analysis of site options; and
- Identification of the preferred option.

3.3 Area of Search

The area of search (AoS) currently under consideration is located within Essich, to the southwest of Inverness. The AoS varies for each topic depending on the receptor and professional judgement.

3.4 Baseline Conditions

A baseline desktop study has been carried out to identify a broad range of potential constraints within and adjacent to the site options. This has involved the following sources:

- Identification of archaeological designations and other recorded sites, utilising GIS datasets available via Historic Environment Scotland Data Services and The Highland Council (THC) Historic Environment Team;
- Review of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (2012) to identify local policies and further environmental constraints and opportunities, such as regional level designations or other locations important to the public;
- Review of landscape character assessments and capacity studies of relevance to the AoS;
- Review of Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping (1:50,000 and 1:25,000 and online GIS data sources from OS OpenData) and aerial photography (where available) to identify other potential constraints such as settlement, properties, walking routes, cycling routes etc;
- Extrapolation of OS Vectormap GIS data to identify further environmental constraint including locations of watercourses, waterbodies, roads classifications and degree of slope;
- Review of other local information through online and published media such as tourism sites and walking routes; and
- Utilisation of survey data from the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead (BBNP) 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) project.

3.5 Site Identification and Selection Methods

Four STATCOM Site Options and two Substation Extension Options have been appraised based on SSEN Transmission guidance; *Substation Site Selection Procedures for Voltages at or above 132 kV*. This includes 'Annex A, Holford Rules: Supplementary Notes on the Siting of Substations'. The following considerations have been taken into account during site selection:

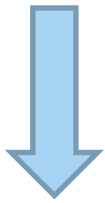
- Respect areas of high amenity value and take advantage of the containment of natural features such as woodland, fitting in with the landscape character of the area;
- Take advantage of ground form with the appropriate use of site layout and levels to avoid intrusion into surrounding areas;

- Use space effectively to limit the area required for development, minimising the effects on existing land use and rights of way;
- Alternative designs of substations may also be considered, e.g. 'enclosed', rather than 'open', where additional cost can be justified;
- Consider the relationship of towers and substation structures with background and foreground features, to reduce the prominence of structures from main viewpoints; and
- When siting options take account of the effects of line connections that will need to be made.

3.6 Appraisal Method

A red, amber, green (RAG) rating has been applied to each topic area within each section, indicating potential constraint to development. A high-level convention for assigning RAG ratings from the SSEN Transmission Site Selection Guidance is shown in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1 - RAG Rating for Comparative Analysis

Most Preferred  Least Preferred	Lower Impact	Low potential for the development to be constrained
	Moderate Impact	Intermediate potential for the development to be constrained
	Higher Impact	High potential for the development to be constrained

Appraisal of site options has involved systematic consideration against the following environmental, technical and economic topic areas:

3.6.1 Environmental

Appraisal of site options has followed the process defined within the SSEN Transmission Site Selection Guidance (PR-NET-ENV-502), including systematic consideration against the following environmental topic areas within **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2 - Environmental RAG topics

	Category	Sub-Topic
Environmental	Natural Heritage	Designations
		Protected Species
		Habitats
		Ornithology
		Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology
	Cultural Heritage	Designations
		Cultural Heritage Assets
	Landscape and Visual	Designations
		Character
		Visual
	Land Use	Agriculture
		Woodland/Forestry
		Recreation

	Category	Sub-Topic
	Planning	Policy
		Proposals

Environmental sensitivity has been considered qualitatively, based on professional judgement and utilising the RAG rating. It has been applied to each topic area indicating potential impacts.

3.6.2 Engineering

Appraisal of site options has followed the process defined within the SSEN Transmission Site Selection Guidance, including systematic consideration against the following engineering topic areas within **Table 3.3**.

Table 3.3 - Engineering RAG topics

	Category	Sub-Topic
Engineering	Connectivity	Existing Circuits / Networks
		Future Development Possibilities
		Interface with SSEN Distribution and Generation
		DNO Connection
	Footprint Requirements	Technology
		Adjacent Land Use
		Space Availability
	Hazards	Unique Hazards
		Existing Hazards
	Ground Conditions	Topography
		Geology
	Environmental Conditions	Elevation
		Salt Pollution
		Flooding
		Carbon Footprint
		SF ₆
		Contaminated Land
		Noise (proximity to dwellings / residential properties)
	Construction Access	Substation Access Road (from public road)
		Transformer Delivery Route
	Operation and Maintenance	Access

Engineering sensitivity has been considered qualitatively, based on professional judgement and utilising the RAG rating. It has been applied to each topic area indicating potential impacts.

3.6.3 Economic

Appraisal of the site options involves systematic consideration against capital and operational cost including construction, diversions, public road improvements, felling, land assembly, consent mitigation, inspection and maintenance.

3.6.4 Identification of Preferred Site Options

Following rating of environmental, technical and cost criteria for the potential site options, these have been considered in combination to arrive at preferred site options. The overall objective throughout the appraisal of site options has been to take a balanced consideration of all criteria. The site options to be progressed to the consenting stage are known as the preferred Site Options.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITES

4.1 Identification of STATCOM Site Options

The location of the four STATCOM Site Options are as follows (shown on **Appendix A, Figure 4.1**):

- Option 1 is located approximately 700 m northeast of the existing Knocknagael 275kV Substation;
- Option 2 is located approximately 400 m northeast of the existing Knocknagael 275kV Substation;
- Option 3 is located approximately 100 m northeast of the existing Knocknagael 275kV Substation; and
- Option 4 is located approximately 150 m northeast of the existing Knocknagael 275kV Substation.

4.2 Identification of Substation Extension Options

The location of the two Substation Extension Options are as follows (shown on **Appendix A, Figure 4.1**):

- Option 1 is located immediately northwest of the existing Knocknagael 275kV Substation; and
- Option 2 is located immediately southeast of the existing Knocknagael 275kV Substation.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SITES

This section provides a review of the baseline information and the potential constraints in the vicinity of the four STATCOM Site Options and two Substation Site Options (as shown on **Appendix A, Figures 5.1 and 5.2**).

5.1 STATCOM Site Options

5.1.1 Environmental

Natural Heritage Designations

All four STATCOM Site Options are located within a broadly similar ecological context (As shown on **Appendix A, figure 5.1**). A number of internationally and nationally designated sites are present within the wider area, including Loch Ashie SPA/SSSI (approximately 3.4–4.3 km), Moray Firth SPA/SAC (approximately 6.7–7.0 km), Beaully Firth SSSI (approximately 6.5–6.8 km) and the Inner Moray Firth SPA/Ramsar (approximately 6.5–6.8 km). However, none of the STATCOM Site Options will directly affect these designations or their qualifying features. No ancient woodland is recorded within any STATCOM Site Options, with the nearest Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) woodland located approximately 85 m northeast of Option 1.

Protected Species

In relation to protected species, trees with bat roosting potential were identified in proximity to all STATCOM Site Options, with the closest feature recorded approximately 8 m north of Option 2. Numerous badger signs were also recorded near Options 1 and 2, including a badger sett within the footprint of Option 2, indicating greater protected species constraints for this option. While all options have been given Green RAG ratings for ecological impacts, due to the proximity of a tree with bat roosting potential STATCOM Option 2 is the least preferred. The application of SSEN's SPPs and GEMPs would manage works which have the potential to impact protected species.

Habitat

All STATCOM Site Options are located on agricultural land comprising modified grassland or cropland and are not considered to support Annex I habitats or potential Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). Overall, ecological constraints are generally low across all STATCOM Site Options. While Option 2 presents a comparatively higher potential risk to protected species, particularly badger, the likelihood of significant ecological constraints is still considered to be low.

Ornithology

All STATCOM Site Options are situated within a similar ornithological context and fall within the wider connectivity ranges of several SPA-qualifying species. None of the STATCOM Site Options provide suitable core foraging or breeding habitat. Records of Schedule 1 and Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) species, including red kite, indicate there is a low potential for impact from the STATCOM Site Options due to the distance from nests, the small footprint of the STATCOM Site Options and the absence of nearby waterbodies. Overall, ornithological constraints are considered low for all STATCOM Site Options, with no option presenting significant ornithological constraint.

Hydrology & Geology

None of the STATCOM Site Options lie within a surface water Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA), with the nearest (Loch Ness) located more than 2.8 km southwest. All STATCOM Site Options are underlain by the Inverness groundwater DWPA; however, this designation applies across the whole of Scotland. Superficial geology comprises glacial deposits overlying Class 0 mineral soils, with no Class 1 or Class 2 peat present and a low potential for peat-related constraints. There are no known private water supplies (PWS) within the relevant groundwater protection buffers, and groundwater-fed supplies are considered unlikely to be affected. While Option 1 may have indirect hydrological connectivity to the Knocknagael Cottages PWS via the Big Burn, the remaining options are not considered hydrologically connected to nearby supplies. In relation to surface waters, Option 1 is located approximately 45 m from a mapped watercourse and would require a watercourse

crossing for the associated underground cable (UGC) connection to the substation extension. Options 2 and 3 are located adjacent to the same OS 50K mapped watercourse, whereas Option 4 is situated more than 50 m away. Overall, drinking water and geological constraints are low across all STATCOM Site Options. Surface water constraints are greatest for Options 2 and 3, followed by Option 1, which has been assigned a moderate rating for potential impacts. Option 4 is the least constrained hydrologically.

Cultural Heritage

There are seven scheduled monuments within 2.5 km of the STATCOM Site Options, with the closest being SM2392 Chambered Cairns 815 m SE of Achvraid Carn Glas, located approximately 947 m southwest of Option 3 (as Shown on **Appendix A, Figure 5.2**). These designations are sufficiently distant from the STATCOM Site Options that no direct physical effects or significant impacts on their setting are anticipated. Leys Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00264) is located approximately 1.4 km northeast of the STATCOM Site Options; however, no effects on its defining characteristics or setting are anticipated. There are no known non-designated cultural heritage assets within any of the STATCOM Site Options, although the wider landscape exhibits a prehistoric character that indicates a moderate potential for previously unrecorded buried archaeological remains. Several listed buildings lie within 2.5 km of the STATCOM Site Options, with the nearest being Category C Listed Drumdevan House (LB8045), located approximately 1.5 km northwest of Options 1 and 2 and 1.7 km northwest of Options 3 and 4. Overall, cultural heritage constraints are considered low across all STATCOM Site Options.

Landscape and Visual

None of the STATCOM Site Options are located within nationally designated landscapes, with no National Scenic Areas (NSA) or Wild Land Areas (WLA) identified within 20 km. The nearest Special Landscape Area (SLA), Loch Ness and Duntelchaig, lies more than 2.5 km away (see **Appendix A, Figure 5.2**). All four STATCOM Site Options are located within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 228 (Rolling Farmland and Woodland), which is characterised by a mixture of agricultural land, woodland and dispersed rural settlement. While each STATCOM Site Option would introduce new built infrastructure into this landscape, their relatively limited footprints and location within existing agricultural land would reduce the potential for adverse effects on characteristic landscape features. A number of residential properties, farmsteads and visitor accommodation are located in proximity to the options, including receptors within approximately 0.2–1.5 km of the STATCOM Site Options. However, no significant visual effects are anticipated, and all options are considered unlikely to compromise visual amenity. Overall, landscape character constraints are considered moderate across all STATCOM Site Options, while visual constraints are considered low. Option 3 is predicted to result in the lowest level of visual impact on visual receptors while Options 2 and 4 are likely to result in the highest level of visual impact.

Land Use

None of the STATCOM Site Options are located on prime agricultural land. No commercial forestry is present within or adjacent to any of the STATCOM Site Options. Option 1 would result in limited woodland interaction associated with the UGC connection to the substation extension. None of the STATCOM Site Options are expected to affect recreational routes or areas used for commercial Highland sports. Overall, land use constraints are low for all STATCOM Site Options, with Options 2, 3 and 4 more favourable due to reduced woodland impacts.

Policy and Planning

In relation to policy, both National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the HwLDP provide significant weight to the global climate and nature crises, and the contribution of developments to combat climate change. All STATCOM Site Options would be brought forward with national, regional or local applicable planning policy. From a planning perspective, all of the STATCOM Site Options other than Option 1 fall within the BBNP 400 kV OHL Limit of Deviation (LoD). However, as this is also an SSEN Transmission project, locations for the STATCOM Site Options would avoid any constraint or interference with this particular development. Overall, planning is considered low for all STATCOM Site Options.

Table 5.1 - Summary of RAG Environmental Ratings (STATCOM Site Options)

RAG Impact Rating - Environmental			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Natural Heritage	Designations	International	G	G	G	G
		Regional	G	G	G	G
	Protected Species	European species	G	G	G	G
		UK Species	G	G	G	G
	Habitats	Annex 1	G	G	G	G
		GWDTE	G	G	G	G
		BNG	R	G	G	A
	Ornithology	Schedule 1	G	G	G	G
		BoCC	G	G	G	G
	Hydrology / Geology	Drinking Water	G	G	G	G
		Aquifer	A	G	G	G
		Surface Waters	A	R	R	G
Cultural Heritage	Designations	WHS SM GDL Battlefields	G	G	G	G
		Sites and Monuments	G	G	G	G
	Assets		G	G	G	G
Landscape and Visual	Designations		G	G	G	G
	Character		A	A	A	A
	Visual		G	G	G	G
Land Use	Agriculture		G	G	G	G
	Woodland / Forestry	Commercial Forestry	G	G	G	G
		Woodland	G	G	G	G
	Recreation	Footpaths and Cycle Routes	G	G	G	G
		Highland Sports	G	G	G	G
Planning	Policy		G	G	G	G
	Proposals		G	G	G	G

5.1.2 Engineering

The four STATCOM site options are located within a broadly consistent agricultural landscape to the North-East of the existing Knocknagael 275/132 kV Substation, with the principal engineering differentiators being proximity to existing SSEN Transmission assets and available development space. All options benefit from the same ground conditions, with no identified peat constraints, contamination risks or significant topographical challenges. The key distinction between the options relates to their clearances from the existing 33kV, 132 kV and 275 kV UGCs circuits, the routing of the existing 275 kV OHL circuit, proposed 400kV ASTI BBNP OHL circuit, and the existing watercourse that runs alongside the existing 275kV UGC circuit.

All of the four site options presented have constrained clearances due to the location of existing SSEN Transmission assets and an existing watercourse in the area, as mentioned above. In addition to this, Option 1 is located close to the 1km cable length limit. This limit has been introduced to maintain the effectiveness of the STATCOMs performance and minimise cable-related operational constraints, thereby reducing routing flexibility.

Whilst Option 2 faces the similar cable limit constraints as Option 3, as it is located further from the site than Option 3 and 4, this makes it less favourable from both a cable routing and infrastructure perspective, Option 2 is the most heavily constrained option in regard to existing assets in the area, surrounding the proposed location.

Options 3 and 4 benefit from their proximity to the existing Knocknagael 275/132kV Substation access road, minimising the need for additional access infrastructure during both construction and operation. Option 3 offers further advantages, being located further from nearby noise-sensitive receptors and requiring the shortest cable route of all options considered. These factors provide engineering benefits, making Option 3 the preferred option from a technical perspective. Option 4 is more constrained than Option 3 in regard to existing assets located in the area.

Table 5.2 - Summary of RAG Engineering Ratings (STATCOM Site Options)

RAG Impact Rating - Engineering			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Connectivity	Existing circuits / network	Distance and feasibility of connecting to the existing circuits / network	A	G	G	G
		Outages for modification to existing circuits	G	G	G	G
	Future development possibilities	Extension of site or other circuits	G	G	G	G
	Interface with SSE Distribution and Generation	Consideration of Business Separation and whole system requirements	G	G	G	G
	DNO Connection	Proximity of LVAC supplies	G	G	G	G
Footprint Requirements	Technology	i.e., AIS/GIS or certainty of sizing on non-standard plant and equipment	G	G	G	G
	Adjacent Land use	Availability for ancillary infrastructure like welfare compounds, laydown areas, screening and SUDS infrastructure.	A	A	A	A
	Space Availability	Non-standard substation configurations to accommodate site specific considerations	A	G	G	A
Hazards	Unique Hazards		G	G	G	G
Hazards	Existing Utilities		G	G	G	G
Ground Conditions	Topography		A	A	G	A
	Geology	Superficial Deposits – Peat	G	G	G	G
		Site testing to verify properties	A	A	A	A
Environmental Conditions	Elevation		A	G	G	G
	Salt Pollution		A	A	A	A
	Flooding		A	A	A	A
	Carbon Footprint		G	G	G	G
	SF6		G	G	G	G
	Contaminated Land		G	G	G	G
	Noise (proximity to dwellings / residential properties)		A	A	A	A
Construction Access	Substation Access Road (from public road)		A	A	G	G
	Transformer Delivery Route		G	G	G	G

RAG Impact Rating - Engineering		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Operation and Maintenance	Access	A	A	G	G
Others	ESQC	A	A	A	A

5.1.3 Economic

All STATCOM options achieved a Green RAG rating.

5.2 Substation Extension Options

5.2.1 Environmental

Natural Heritage Designations

Both Substation Extension Options are located within a broadly similar ecological context (as shown on **Appendix A, Figure 5.1**). A number of internationally and nationally designated sites are present within the wider area, including Loch Ashie SPA/SSSI (approximately 3.4–3.5 km), Moray Firth SPA (approximately 3.4–3.5 km), Moray Firth SAC (approximately 7.1–7.3 km), Beaully Firth SSSI (approximately 6.9–7.2 km), Inner Moray Firth SPA/Ramsar (approximately 6.9–7.2 km) and Loch Ruthven SPA/Ramsar (approximately 10.5–10.7 km). However, neither of the Substation Extension Options are anticipated to directly affect any designated sites or their qualifying features. No ancient woodland is recorded within either Substation Extension Option, with the nearest AWI woodland located approximately 570 m west of Option 1 and 680 m north of Option 2.

Protected Species

Four trees and one building with bat roosting potential are located within 50 m of Option 1, whereas the nearest tree with bat roosting potential to Option 2 is approximately 135 m north. No other protected species signs were recorded within 250 m.

Habitats

In terms of habitats, Option 1 is located within broadleaved woodland and gorse scrub and is not considered to affect Annex I habitats or GWDTE. Option 2 comprises gorse scrub, neutral grassland and areas of wet heath and cross-leaved heath, including habitat conforming to an Annex I wet heath habitat and a GWDTE. Overall, ecological constraints are low across both Substation Extension Options, although Option 2 presents moderate habitat-related constraints associated with Annex I habitat and GWDTE.

Ornithology

Both Substation Extension Options are situated within a similar ornithological context and fall within the wider connectivity ranges of several SPA-qualifying species, however, neither Substation Extension Option provide suitable core foraging or breeding habitat. Records of Schedule 1 and BoCC species in the wider area indicate there is a low sensitivity for the Substation Extension Options due to distance from nests and the absence of nearby waterbodies. Overall, ornithological constraints are low for both Substation Extension Options, with neither option presenting significant ornithological constraints.

Hydrology & Geology

Neither of the Substation Extension Options lie within a surface water DWPA and both are underlain by a moderate-productivity sandstone aquifer within the Inverness groundwater DWPA. Superficial geology across the Substation Extension Options comprises typical glacial deposits over Class 0 mineral soils, with no Class 1 or Class 2 peat present and a low potential for peat and ground-related constraints. There are no PWS within the relevant groundwater protection buffers, and nearby supplies are not considered at risk. In relation to surface waters, Option 1 is located more than 50 m from OS 1:50,000 mapped watercourses, whereas Option 2 is located approximately 15 m from an OS 1:50,000 mapped watercourse and overlies a smaller OS 1:25,000 mapped watercourse which may require diversion. Overall, geological, groundwater and drinking water

constraints are low for both Substation Extension Options; however, Option 2 is considered high for surface water constraints and is the less preferred hydrological option.

Cultural Heritage

There are four scheduled monuments within 2.5 km of both Substation Extension Options, comprising the Stone Circle SW of Torbreck (SM3098), the Hut Circles 800 m SE of Achvraid (SM11786), the Hut Circles 1030 m SSE of Achvraid (SM11561), and the Chambered Cairns 815 m SE of Achvraid Carn Glas (SM2392) (as shown on **Appendix A, Figure 5.2**). These designations are located at sufficient distances from the Substation Extension Options that no direct physical effects or significant impacts on their setting are anticipated. Leys Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00264) is located approximately 2.3 km north of both Substation Extension Options, and no effects on its defining characteristics or setting are anticipated. There are no known non-designated cultural heritage assets within either Substation Extension Option; however, the wider landscape exhibits a well-established prehistoric character, indicating a moderate potential for previously unknown buried archaeological remains. Within 2.5 km of both options, there is one listed building, Category C Listed Drumdevan House (LB8045). Overall, cultural heritage constraints are considered low for both Substation Extension Options.

Landscape and Visual

Neither of the Substation Extension Options are located within nationally designated landscapes, with no NSA or WLA identified within 20 km. The nearest SLA, Loch Ness and Duntelchaig, lies more than 2.5 km from both Substation Extension Options (see **Appendix A, Figure 5.2**). Both options are located within LCT 228 (Rolling Farmland and Woodland), which is characterised by a mixture of agricultural land, woodland and dispersed rural settlement. Option 1 would require greater landform modification and grading, potentially limiting opportunities for mitigation planting and increasing the potential for landscape and localised visual effects. In contrast, Option 2 is anticipated to have a less intrusive form, although opportunities for mitigation planting remain limited. Nearby receptors include Essich Park (approximately 0.6 km from Option 1 and 0.8 km from Option 2), Achvraid Farm (approximately 0.5 km from Option 1 and 0.7 km from Option 2) and Balrobert House (Go Glamping accommodation) (approximately 0.5 km from Option 1 and 0.7 km from Option 2). While significant visual effects are not anticipated for either option, Option 1 presents greater landscape and visual constraints than Option 2. Overall, landscape character constraints are considered moderate for both Substation Extension Options, while visual constraints are moderate for Option 1 and low for Option 2.

Land Use

Neither Substation Extension Option is located on prime agricultural land. No commercial forestry is present within or adjacent to either Substation Extension Option. Option 1 would result in an impact to broadleaved woodland where Option 2 would not. Neither of the Substation Extension Options are expected to affect recreational routes or areas used for commercial Highland sports. Overall, land use constraints are low for both options, with Option 2 more favourable due to reduced woodland impacts.

Policy and Planning

In relation to policy, both NPF4 and the HwLDP provide significant weight to the global climate and nature crises, and the contribution of developments to combat climate change. Both Substation Extension Options would be brought forward with national, regional or local applicable planning policy. From a planning perspective, both of the Substation Extension Options lie in close proximity to the BBNP 400 kV OHL LoD. The Knocknagael Substation Extension (for the Loch na Cathrach Project) also overlaps with Substation Extension Option 2. However, as these are SSEN Transmission projects, it reduces the chances that either development will experience disruption. Internal coordination of design interfaces, sequencing, land requirements and construction activities ensures that the SSEN Transmission projects can be managed effectively, minimising any risk of conflict or disruption. In practice, this allows internal engineering, consenting, environmental and delivery teams to identify and resolve potential clashes early, adjust programmes proactively, and agree shared access, land use and construction methodologies.

Table 5.3 - Summary of RAG environmental Ratings (Substation Extension Options)

RAG Impact Rating - Environmental			Option 1	Option 2
Natural Heritage	Designations	International	L	L
		Regional	L	L
	Protected Species	European Species	L	L
		UK Species	L	L
	Habitats	Annex I	L	M
		GWDTE	L	M
		BNG	L	H
	Ornithology	Schedule 1	L	L
		BOCC	L	L
	Hydrology / Geology	Drinking Water	L	L
		Aquifer	L	L
		Surface Waters	L	H
Cultural Heritage	Designations	WHS SM GDL Battlefields	L	L
		Sites and Monuments	L	L
	Assets		L	L
Landscape and Visual	Designations		L	L
	Character		M	M
	Visual		M	L
Land Use	Agriculture		L	L
	Woodland / Forestry	Commercial Forestry	L	L
		Woodland	H	L
	Recreation	Footpaths and Cycle Routes	L	L
		Highland Sports	L	L
Planning	Policy		L	L
	Proposals		L	L

5.2.2 Engineering

The two Substation Extension Options reflect a shared context of existing high voltage infrastructure at Knocknagael, with some shared and distinct technical constraints on either side of the site. A shared benefit for each option is that there is no peat in the area.

Substation Extension Option 1 will require a significant earthworks infill with the associated platform extension, it is constrained by limited available space, proximity to the existing 11 kV, 132 kV and 275kV assets, would require a non-standard bus coupler bay arrangement, and significant outage requirements.

Substation Extension Option 2 benefits from fewer utility conflicts, improved space availability, and simpler outage coordination. These advantages are further supported by potential opportunities for integration with the Loch na Cathrach Project.

Substation Extension Option 2 is located at a higher elevation and would therefore require significant earthworks, predominantly through excavation. Option 2 is in close proximity to surface water features and lies near the 200-year flood risk boundary, introducing additional environmental and drainage considerations.

Table 5.4 – Summary of RAG engineering Ratings (Substation Extension Options)

RAG Impact Rating – Engineering			Option 1	Option 2
Connectivity	Existing circuits / network	Distance and feasibility of connecting to the existing circuits / network	G	G
		Outages for modification to existing circuits	R	G

RAG Impact Rating – Engineering			Option 1	Option 2
	Future development possibilities	Extension of site or other circuits	R	R
	Interface with SSE Distribution and Generation	Consideration of Business Separation and whole system requirements	G	G
	DNO Connection	Proximity of LVAC supplies	G	G
Footprint Requirements	Technology	i.e., AIS/GIS or certainty of sizing on non-standard plant and equipment	G	G
	Adjacent Land use	Availability for ancillary infrastructure like welfare compounds, laydown areas, screening and SUDS infrastructure.	A	A
	Space Availability	Non-standard substation configurations to accommodate site specific considerations	A	G
Hazards	Unique Hazards		R	G
Hazards	Existing Utilities		A	G
Ground Conditions	Topography		A	A
	Geology	Superficial Deposits – Peat	G	G
		Site testing to verify properties	A	A
Environmental Conditions	Elevation		G	A
	Salt Pollution		A	A
	Flooding		G	A
	Carbon Footprint		A	G
	SF6		G	G
	Contaminated Land		G	G
	Noise (proximity to dwellings / residential properties)		A	G
Construction Access	Substation Access Road (from public road)		G	G
	Transformer Delivery Route		G	G
Operation and Maintenance	Access		G	G

5.2.3 Economic

Both substation options achieved a Green RAG rating.

6. SELECTION OF PREFERRED SITES

6.1 Preferred STATCOM Site Option

From an environmental perspective, Option 4 is considered the preferred option, as it is the least constrained from a hydrological and ecological perspective. Options 2 and 3 are located within 30 m of an OS 50k mapped watercourse, and Site Option 1 would require a watercourse crossing for the UGC connection and may affect a surface water PWS. Ecologically, Option 2 contains the presence of a badger sett within the footprint and is in close proximity to a bat roost. Option 1 is considered the least preferred compared to the other options from a BNG perspective.

From an engineering perspective, Option 3 is the preferred option. It benefits from practical access via existing substation infrastructure, good space availability, minimal engineering conflicts and the shortest cable route of the options considered, while remaining comfortably within the 1 km cable length limit. Option 4 also remains within the cable length limit and offers good access potential, including the shortest construction and operational access route of all options. However, a standard arrangement would be constrained by existing assets on either side of the proposed location, requiring careful compound placement to manage interfaces with existing and proposed electrical infrastructure. Option 2 remains technically feasible and lies within the cable length limit but is the most physically constrained option due to clearance requirements from existing assets and the proposed 400 kV overhead line, which may restrict ancillary infrastructure. Option 1 is located furthest from the existing Knocknagael Substation and is close to the 1 km cable length limit introduced to maintain STATCOM performance and minimise cable-related operational constraints. While technically feasible, it is the least favourable option due to increased earthworks, additional access requirements and reduced routing flexibility, necessitating careful compound positioning and detailed cable design. Overall, Option 3 offers the most balanced and least constrained engineering solution.

From a cost perspective, all STATCOM options achieved a Green RAG rating. Option 3 would require the shortest length of underground cable and provides the closest alignment with Substation Extension Option 2, thereby supporting efficient integration and minimising infrastructure requirements.

6.2 Preferred Substation Extension Options

From an environmental perspective while Substation Extension Options 1 and 2 have broadly similar RAG ratings, Substation Extension Option 2 contains areas of Annex I habitat and is closer to the nearby burn. These constraints are considered manageable through design and mitigation and when balanced against engineering and constructability considerations, Option 2 is considered the preferred overall solution.

From an engineering perspective, Substation Extension Option 2 is the preferred option. Compared with Option 1, it requires less extensive earthworks, generates less construction-related traffic, and presents fewer engineering and utility conflicts. It also offers greater flexibility for the substation layout and reduces outage constraints. In contrast, Option 1 would require greater landform modification and involve increased engineering complexity, including significant earthworks, a higher carbon footprint, and additional interfaces with existing infrastructure. Overall, Option 2 represents the most efficient and deliverable solution.

From a cost perspective, both substation options achieved a Green RAG rating. Option 2 would require less complex engineering works and therefore represents a simpler solution to implement.

6.3 Summary

STATCOM Option 3 and Substation Extension Option 2 are identified as the preferred options following consideration of environmental, engineering and cost factors. While some environmental constraints remain, these are considered manageable through further design development and appropriate mitigation measures. The alternative options would require additional infrastructure works, including longer underground cable routes and diversions of existing assets, resulting in additional environmental impacts, increased complexity and higher delivery risk. Overall, the preferred options provide the most balanced solution.

7. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSALS

7.1 Questions for Consideration by Consultees

SSEN Transmission places great importance on, and is committed to, consultation and engagement with all parties, or stakeholders, likely to have an interest in proposals for new projects such as this. Stakeholder consultation and engagement is an essential part of an effective development process.

The proposals detailed in this report have been developed through detailed environmental analysis of various sites. The potential for environmental effects remains. Further assessment and design will be important in giving detailed consideration to the development and integration of mitigation measures to address significant environmental effects identified.

When providing comments and feedback, SSEN Transmission would be grateful for your consideration of the questions below:

- Do you feel sufficient information has been provided to enable you to understand what is being proposed and why?
- Do you agree with our potential STATCOM site, please explain your answer.
- Do you agree with our potential Substation Extension site, please explain your answer
- Are there any factors, or environmental features, that you consider important and should be brought to the attention of the project team?
- Do you have any other concerns, suggestions, or comments?

7.2 Next Steps

A public exhibition event will be held, as detailed in the preface of this document. The responses received from the public exhibition, and those sought from statutory consultees and other key stakeholders, will inform further consideration of the site options put forward, and the identification of a proposed site option to take forward to the next stage.

A Report on Consultation will be produced which will document the consultations received, and the decisions made in light of these responses.

Please submit your comments by email with the subject heading 'Knocknagael HV Project Consultation' to: kirsty.mcnamara@sse.com

Comments on this document should be sent in writing to:

FAO Kirsty McNamara

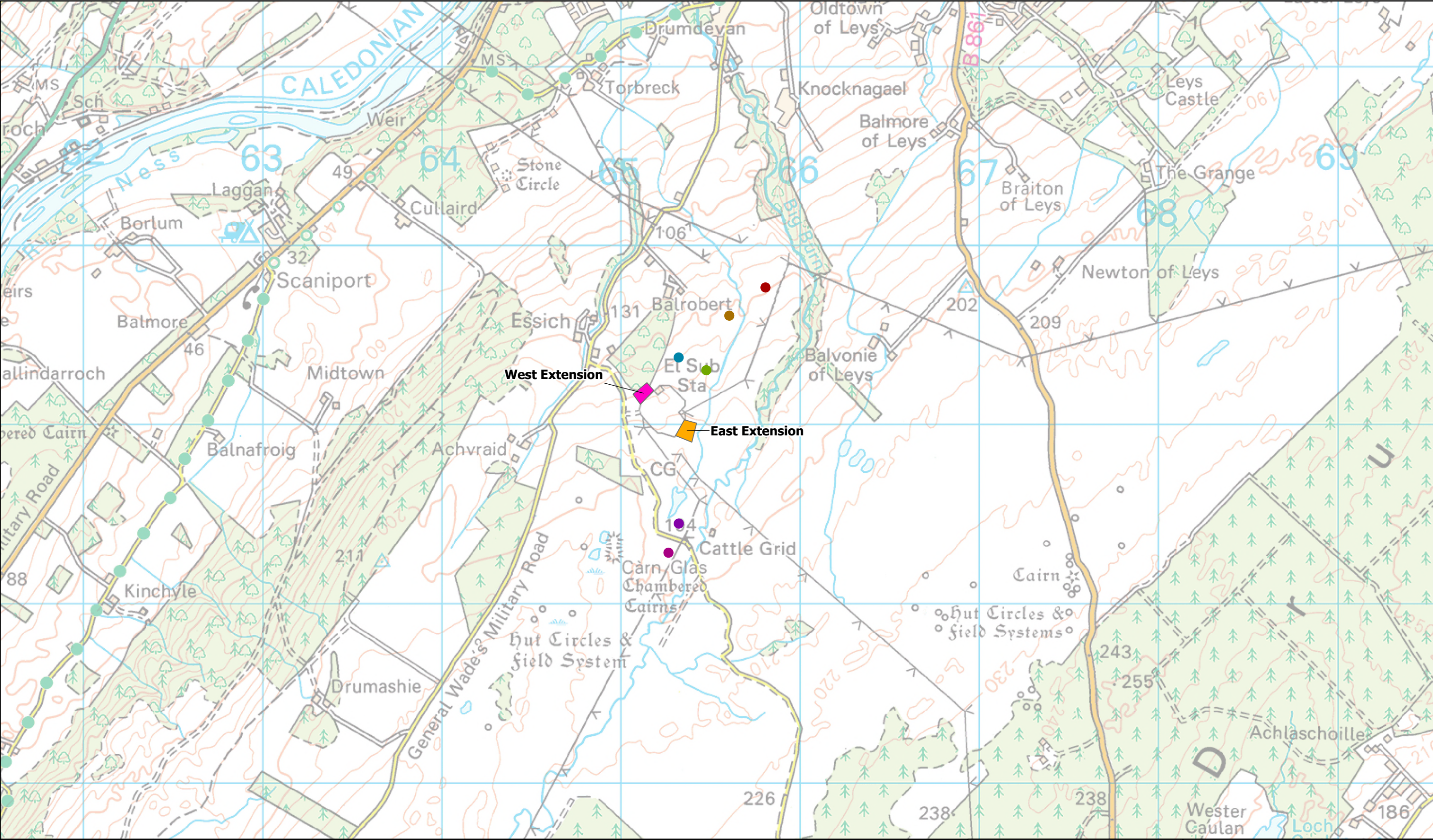
SSEN Transmission

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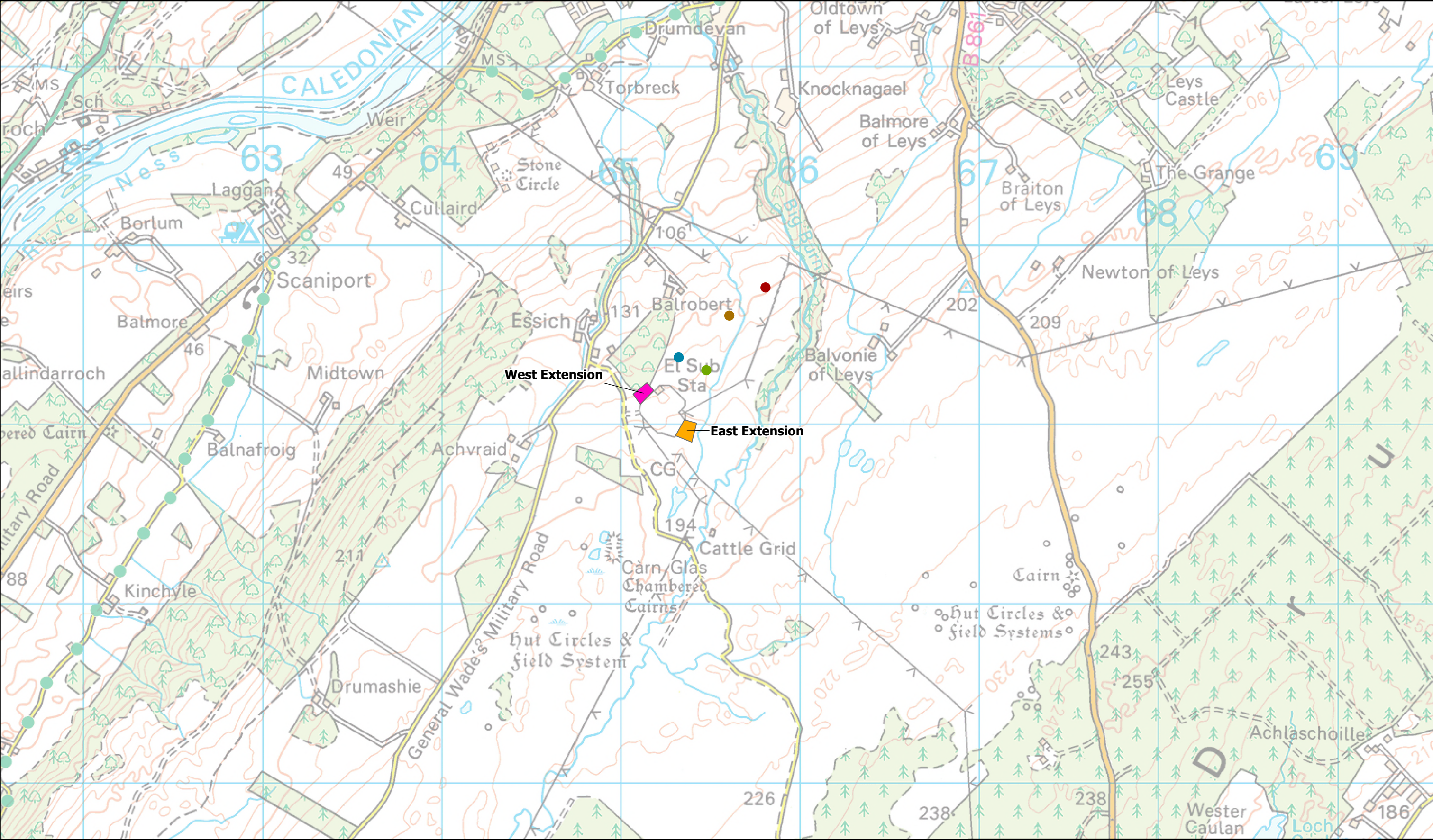
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IV1 1SN All comments are requested by 06 November 2026

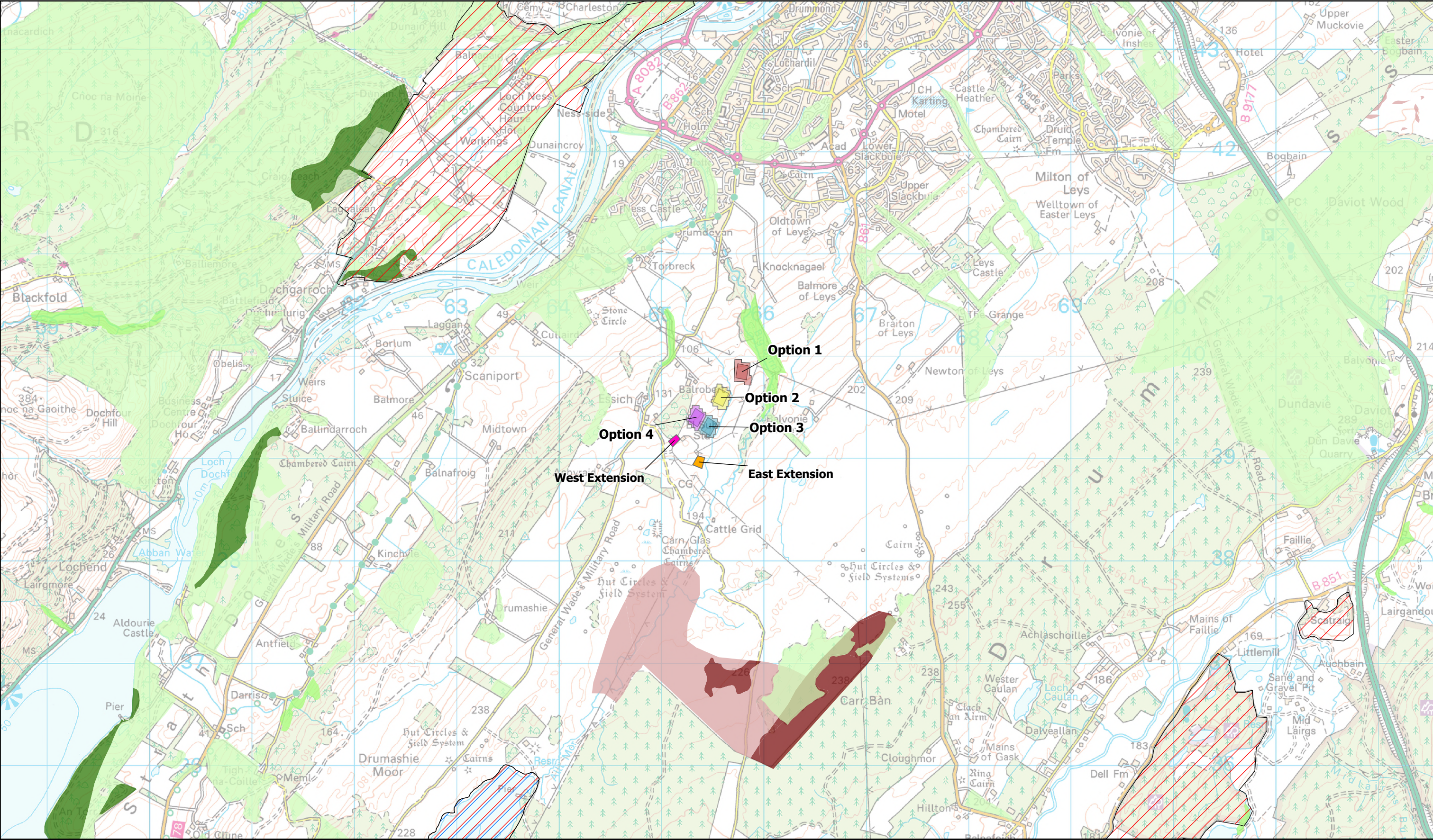
APPENDIX A FIGURES



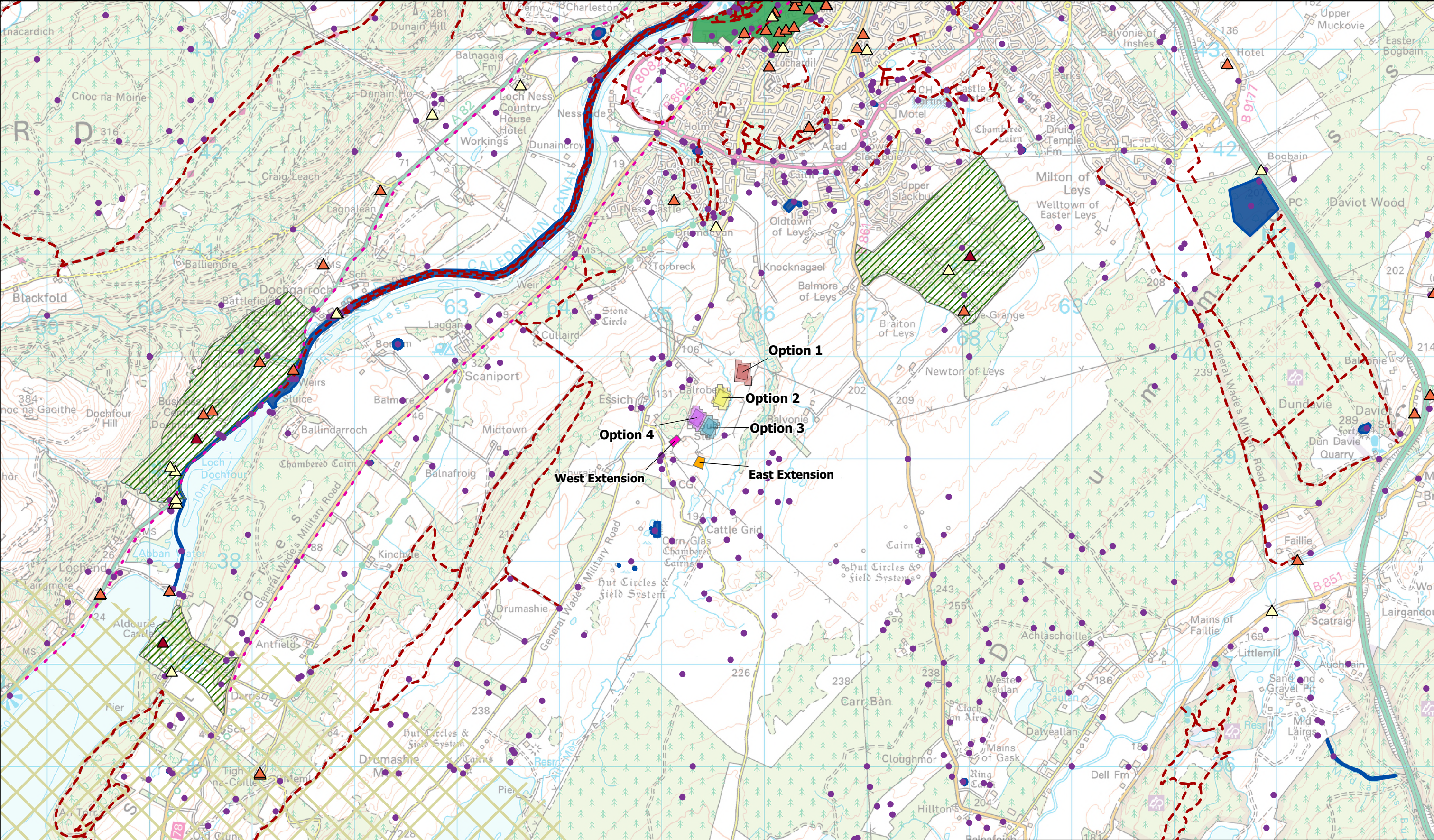
Statcom Option - Site Option 1 - Site Option 2 - Site Option 3 - Site Option 4 - Site Option 5 - Site Option 6	Substation Extension Option - Option 1 - Option 2	0 200 400 600 800 Meters SCALE: See Scale Bar SIZE: A3 PROJECT: 0802534 DATE: 03/08/2026	VERSION: A01 DRAWN: MW CHECKED: WF APPROVED: ES	Knocknagael HV Project Figure 3.1 Stage 1 Site Selection Options		
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Statcom Option ● Site Option 1 ● Site Option 2 ● Site Option 3 ● Site Option 4		Substation Extension Option ■ Option 1 ■ Option 2		 		Knocknagael HV Project Figure 4.1 Stage 2 Site Selection Options	
SCALE: See Scale Bar SIZE: A3 PROJECT: 0802534 DATE: 03/08/2026		VERSION: A01 DRAWN: MW CHECKED: WF APPROVED: ES					



Statcom Options Option 1 Option 2 Option 3 Option 4	Ancient Woodland Inventory 1a 2a 2b 3 Sites Of Special Scientific Interest Special Protection Area	Carbon And Peatland Importance Class 1 Class 2	0 200 400 600 800 Meters N	Knocknagael HV Project Figure 5.1 Natural Heritage Constraints	
Substation Extension Option Option 1 Option 2			SCALE: See Scale Bar SIZE: A3 PROJECT: 0802534 DATE: 03/08/2026	VERSION: A01 DRAWN: MW CHECKED: WF APPROVED: ES	 ERM  TRANSMISSION



Statcom Options - Option 1 - Option 2 - Option 3 - Option 4 Substation Extension Option - Option 1 - Option 2	Core Paths Etape Loch Ness Non-Designated Assets Listed Building - A - B - C Conservation Areas	Scheduled Monument Gardens And Designed Landscapes Special Landscape Area	0 200 400 600 800 Meters N	Knocknagael HV Project Figure 5.2 Cultural Heritage Constraints	SCALE: See Scale Bar SIZE: A3 PROJECT: 0802534 DATE: 03/08/2026	VERSION: A01 DRAWN: MW CHECKED: WF APPROVED: ES		
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